

Competition Basics

A jigsaw puzzle competition typically consists of individuals, pairs, and/or teams that compete against one another putting a puzzle together. Whoever completes their puzzle first wins! Here is a breakdown of the basics:

- Decide which division(s) you want to host: Individuals (1-person), Pairs (2-person), and/or Teams (4-person)
 - We recommend against mixing divisions since different sized teams usually can't compete with each others' times
- Each individual, pair, or team receives the same puzzle
- No one gets to see the puzzle until the timer begins. The puzzle boxes are hidden (inside an opaque bag is recommended) until you say Go
 - For more casual, non-USAJPA-sanctioned competitions, they can be viewable but must be equally viewable by all teams (i.e. it's unfair for only some teams to see the puzzles, but not others)
- Individuals/teams try to put the puzzle together faster than the others
- Competitions are a specified amount of time; if there is no declared winner by the end of the time limit, the winner is chosen by their remaining number of loose pieces
 - Only clusters of 3 or more pieces are counted as 'assembled.' Clusters of 2 pieces do not count.
- There are no devices or outside assistance permitted while working on a puzzle and Individuals and teams are not allowed to distract or approach team tables when the competition is in progress
- We recommend you view USAJPA Nationals Competition rules [here](#) and model your competition after them.
- Consider attending a USAJPA monthly Puzzle Club, SpeedPuzzling.com virtual competition, or watching competitions on our [YouTube](#) channel for reference.

What You'll Need to Host a Competition of Your Own

Some planning and organization will be required for your event to take place. You'll need to determine where you will host the event and how to make people aware of your event, too!

A Venue

We suggest well-lit venues with sufficient space for tables. We recommend checking out free/cheap venue possibilities like libraries, churches, schools, recreational centers, tabletop board games stores, science centers, and bars (on slow days like Mon/Tues).

Tables and Chairs

Competition tables must all be the same size, texture, height, etc. to ensure fair conditions. Tables must be at least as big as the puzzle though it is ideal to have a table at least twice the puzzle size with sufficient space on all sides of the puzzle. A common table size is 3' x 30" (half of a [plastic folding table](#)) for individuals/pairs and 6' x 30" for teams.

Puzzles

The BIGGEST challenge for planning a puzzling event is securing enough of the SAME puzzle. Puzzles are often difficult to find in large quantities of the same puzzle. However, the USAJPA maintains a list of companies that are willing to provide puzzles in bulk at wholesale prices for competitions (big and small). Some may even be willing to provide prizes with a bulk purchase. **Contact USAJPA if you'd like to access this list.** Another option is to ask local stores if they might sponsor the puzzles.

Puzzle size, image, and quality are all important. Size: 500 pieces or under is ideal for an individual or pairs event and no more than 1,000 pieces for a team competition. 500 pieces for an individual may take 2 hours or more for an individual to complete. Image: Try to pick an easy puzzle with 10-12 sections of bright colors. Avoid puzzles with large sections of one color. Landscapes are beautiful but blue sky can be brutal! However, too many different colored sections constitute a 'busy puzzle' (think Where's Waldo) and that's also difficult. Look at median times on SpeedPuzzling.com Results page for reference. Quality: Good quality puzzles are important for competitions. If there are too many false fits (pieces that seem to fit in multiple places) then it can be frustrating for the puzzlers. Ravensburger and Cobble Hill are examples of high quality puzzles.

Prizes

It's ideal to provide prizes for 1st - 3rd place individuals/pairs/teams. Puzzles are usually a sufficient prize and are often easily donated by a puzzle company or local store. Certificates, trophies, shirts, and cash prizes are other frequent prizes.

Moderators

It's ideal to have multiple moderators to help observe and record events. This is an important role, as they will be ensuring that competition rules are being followed, answering any questions participants have, timing the rounds, recording finish times, and more! Moderators should be roaming between the tables to determine which teams are likely to finish first so they can flag them and ensure their times are immediately observed and recorded. Times can either be recorded on one central sheet, or on team slips at each table that are then recorded in a central location. The latter option is used by most competitions.

Participants & Registration

For any competition success, you need participants! Advertise your event with the community – create flyers to post in shops, restaurants, breweries, game stores, recreation centers, churches, libraries, and schools. Post on social media - Meetup, Facebook, and Eventbrite events tend to have success and also offer free/cheap registration platforms to track your participants and collect registration fees. Typical competition costs:

- Individual - \$20-50
- Pairs - \$30-60
- Teams - \$40-80

Optional Swap

A great way to drive extra attendees your way is to offer a puzzle swap table for competitors and spectators alike. Avid puzzlers are often anxious to swap and will attend primarily for this reason so if you host one, make sure to advertise it.

*Thanks to our reference, Springbok, from which this resource has been adapted:
<https://www.springbok-puzzles.com/host-puzzle-competition-article-s/2022.htm/>*