

Adding Gundam Categories to Model Shows

Gundam modeling is the largest segment of the worldwide scale model universe.

While Asian markets enjoy the greatest market penetration, Gunpla in North America is showing significant growth, especially with younger segments - women and men in the late-20s-to-40plus demographic - although their broad appeal attracts modelers of all ages.

Since Gunpla is an underserved segment in many IPMS clubs, this initiative offers an opportunity for existing IPMS club members to interact with younger enthusiasts, based on a subject they like, to promote acceptance, inclusiveness, and the cross-pollination of skills and genres from which many present Society members have benefited over the years. If model clubs intend to thrive in the future, acceptance of new modeling genres ought to be one of our recognized goals.

A few local chapters have enjoyed success in attracting Gundam modelers to local shows. This paper hopes to provide some practical suggestions for adding Gundam competition categories to your show.

First, let's fact-check our terminology. **Gundam** models are plastic kits depicting the mecha machinery and characters of the fictional Gundam multiverse, as produced by Bandai. The term **Gunpla** is a truncation of 'Gundam plastic model'.

There are significant differences between a Gundam model, and a more traditional military or civilian equipment kit. Enhanced molding technology allows for multiple colors on the same sprue. Parts snap together, allowing for articulation and pose-ability, often aided via a display stand. And perhaps most importantly, there are two distinct accepted methods of finishing a Gundam kit:

Method 1: Assemble the kit, making sure to eliminate all 'nubs', sanding marks, and unintentional surface imperfections, add stickers or decals, and apply a *uniform non-paint finish* (usually polishing, or a clear coat) to the model.

Method 2: Assemble the kit as above, but utilize kit bashing, conversion kits, and/or custom parts to enhance the model, and conclude with a *painted finish*, utilizing one or more of the following - panel scribing and/or painting, weathering, and battle damage.

Clearly, there are material differences between these two methodologies. Further, attempts to apply a uniform judging metric to both methods will result in sizable inequities. Chapters ought to be cognizant that this is how the Gundam 'guild' does things, and be willing to adapt judging protocols for the benefit of their guests.

There are four (4) main classifications of Gundam models currently, along with a few minor groupings. Please note: the chart does not cover the various 'non-gundam Gundam' models - such as other Mecha subjects, Machinen Krieger, Hello Kitty, "imaginary" space machines, etc. - that usually get placed in Space/SciFi and/or Miscellaneous classes.

Grade	Scale	Size	Level	Price	Description	Releases
High (HG)	1:144	5 in.	Beginner	Low	Easy build/stickers/ltd detail	Frequent
Real (RG)	1:144	5 in.	Advanced	Moderate	Scaled down versions of MG	Frequent
Master (MG)	1:100	8 in.	Advanced	Mod/High	More detail/pieces than RG	Limited
Perfect (PG)	1:60	12 in.	Advanced	Expensive	Lots more detail/pieces	Annual

If a Chapter has, among its members, judges who have experience with the Open System, it is possible to run a local show with just **two added Gundam Categories** - let's call them the Beginner & OOB Category, and the Advanced & Modified Category.

The Open System allows for fair assessment of different Grades of Gundams (see chart above) within each Category. The awarding of Bronze, Silver, or Gold medals/trophies provides each contestant (many of whom will not have experience with IPMS-style contests) with a level of feedback regarding their current skills development.

Attached are two documents - the first is an Information Sheet that should be displayed at the Registration table, as well as placed on the appropriate contest table(s), while the second is a summary Judging Criteria Sheet.

Conversely, if a Chapter prefers to utilize the traditional IPMS 1-2-3 approach, an array of six Gundam categories is recommended, as follows:

1:144 Beginner	1:100 Beginner	1:60 Beginner
1:144 Advanced	1:100 Advanced	1:60 Advanced

In some clubs, there may be voices urging a conventional IPMS three Category setup, by scale, thus forcing both Beginner and Advanced entries to 'compete' with each other.

Chapters encountering this scenario are reminded of two significant issues: first, this is NOT how the Gundam modelers expect to be judged; and second, it virtually ensures that the only way a Beginner will medal is in an underpopulated category. Closing off competition to an interested-but-inexperienced portion of the exhibitors should be seen as counter-productive to the outreach approach this paper proposes and endorses.

In either scenario, the actual judging process would entail two steps - first, select the entrant's best model, and second, assess its aspects and assign an appropriate award.

The two attached table cards (editable for your requirements) may be appropriate to instruct and inform visiting contestants as to where they should place their entries.

If a Chapter wishes to attract Gunpla modelers, the members ought to commit to meaningful outreach opportunities.

For some clubs, it likely starts with locating a local Gundam shop, and asking them to vend at the local IPMS club show. Thus, as Society members, we will need to visit the area Gundam retailers, and meet and interact with their friends and customers

In addition, asking experienced Gunpla builders to judge, alongside club members, will in many cases shrink learning curves for both parties, foster interest in the entries, and perhaps address manpower issues that we all seem to be encountering, as existing club members age.

Lastly, Gundam modelers may not seek to 'join' our clubs - but if we offer an enjoyable show experience, they will attend, they will see other modeling genres, and they may observe that an airplane or a tank is not THAT much different than what they are working on presently.

And THAT is how we can work to ensure that our scale modeling hobby remains vibrant for oncoming generations. No, it may not look the same to us . . . but does our present hobby bear ANY resemblance to that of our fathers, uncles, and grandfathers?