

TOBAGO HERITAGE FESTIVAL FOLK FIESTA RULES AND JUDGING CRITERIA 2026

Registration for the THF Folk Fiesta Competition will take place from Monday 22nd June to Monday 29th June 2026 at 4:00 p.m. online or in office. All interested individuals, groups, communities, and cultural performers must complete the official registration process within the stated registration period. Each group will only be permitted to enter one time in each category.

Short Story

Rules

- This is a solo category.
- Participants must present a short, original piece.
- The story may be delivered through spoken word, dramatic narration, or character-driven performance.
- Stories should reflect elements of Tobago’s heritage, folklore, community experiences, historical moments, or contemporary interpretations of traditional themes.
- Emphasis should be placed on narrative clarity, cultural authenticity, creativity, and audience engagement.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
CONTENT	Strength of Storyline, originality, clear beginning, middle and end and relevance to the heritage focus	35
DELIVERY	Voice projection, clarity, expression, pacing, confidence and dramatic interpretation	25
PRESENTATION	Effective use of stage, staging choices, appropriate costume, physical presence and overall visual presentation	20
ADHERENCE TO THEME	Clear connection to Tobago’s heritage, folklore, community life, historical experiences, traditional values or cultural identity	15
IMPACT	Overall audience engagement, emotional connection, message and lasting effect of the presentation	5
	TOTAL	100

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Folk Song Medley

Rules

- Any combination of at least three (3) folk songs must be used.
- Each of the three songs used must have at least eight (8) consecutive bars of music.
- Songs must be selected from folk songs with a traditional or authentic folk melody.
- All choirs must have no less than fifteen (15) members.
- The performance must be a minimum of three (3) minutes and a maximum of four (4) minutes.
- A penalty will be applied for going over or under the allotted time.
- One (1) point will be deducted for every minute, or part thereof, over or under the allotted time.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
DICTION	Clarity/Enunciation (5) Pronunciation (5)	10
PRESENTATION	Costume – Visual Impact and Appropriateness (5) Appropriate or relevant interpretation (5)	10
VOICING	Distribution of spaces, notes and chords among the instruments	20
TONE & INTONATION	Quality of the voice and instruments (10) In Key or Out of Key (10)	20
RHYTHM	Consistency (timing/beat) (10 points)	10
ARRANGEMENT	Dynamics – Volume of Music (5) Balance and Blend (10) Musical Organisation & Innovation (10)	25
IMPACT	Overall effect of the sound and performance (5)	5
	TOTAL	100

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African-Influenced Folk Dance

Rules

- Presentations may include Bongo, Limbo, Kalinda, Congo Belé, Saraka / Salaka, and Nation Dances such as Coromanti, Igbo, Congo, Manding, and Temne.
- Food, flags, prayers, ancestral gifts, or offerings must precede the Nation Dance.
- Groups must consist of at least six (6) dancers.
- The performance must be a minimum of three (3) minutes and a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- A penalty will be applied for going over or under the allotted time.
- One (1) point will be deducted for every minute, or part thereof, over or under the allotted time.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
CHOREOGRAPHY	Use of Space (5) Dynamics (10) Creativity (5)	20
CONTENT	Dance Vocabulary/Authenticity of Form (10) Communication (5) Authenticity of Tradition (5) Technique (10)	30
PRESENTATION	Synchronization (10) Authenticity of Accompaniment (5) Execution (10)	25
COSTUME	Authenticity (10) Functionality (5) Suitability/Appropriateness (5)	20
IMPACT	Overall effect of the dance	5
	TOTAL	100

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Cultural Fusion Dance

Rules

- This category was formerly known as Folk Ballet.
- Participants must present a creative dance presentation inspired by the Tobago Heritage Festival 2026 theme, “Leh We Tell the Whole Story.”
- Performances must depict Tobago’s cultural and historical journey from the pre-colonial period to present day.
- Presentations should highlight two or more of Tobago’s rich diverse ethnic influences.
- The presentation must test choreography and the creative interpretation of Tobago folk dance.
- Participants must create a dance presentation using various types of Tobago folk styles.
 - The dance may include styles such as Belé Jig, Pique, Grand Belé, or other traditional Tobago folk forms.
- The dance must not be more than five (5) minutes long.
- The presentation must be done to folk music.
- Participants must wear appropriate costumes.
- A penalty will be applied for going over or under the allotted time.
- One (1) point will be deducted for every minute, or part thereof, over or under the allotted time.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
CHOREOGRAPHY	Use of Space (5) Dynamics (5) Style & Step Technique (10)	20
CONTENT	Expression (5) Communication (5) Theme (10) Creativity & Innovation (15)	35
PRESENTATION	Synchronization (10) Execution (10)	20
COSTUME	Suitability/Appropriateness (10) Fit & Design (5)	15
IMPACT	Overall effect of the dance	10
	TOTAL	100

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Speech Band

Rules

- Groups must be appropriately and traditionally attired.
- Groups should consist of traditional Speech Band characters such as Show Boy, Great Commander, Valentine, Creator, Poopool, Doctor, The King, Pompey, and Young Sealey.
- The performance format must include opening speech / introduction; four speeches;
- and closing speech / conclusion.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
CONTENT		25
ARTICULATION	Clarity/Enunciation (10) Pronunciation (10)	20
PRESENTATION	Costume – Visual Impact and Appropriateness (10) Appropriate or relevant interpretation (10)	20
USE OF VOICE		15
IMPACT		10
USE OF BODY		10
	TOTAL	100

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