



KENNETH T. RYBARCZYK MEMORIAL MODEL BRIDGE CONTEST

<https://www.abcdwny.com/model-bridge-contest>

Each year during the months of February through April, the Association for Bridge Construction and Design (ABCD) sponsors multiple balsa wood model bridge contests throughout the Western New York area. Each is open to all middle or high school students who would like to participate. High Schools are strongly encouraged to incorporate the fundamentals of bridge design into their curricula, as this will help students gain the most understanding when developing their contest bridges.

Entries will be scored based on the attached evaluation criteria and trophies will be awarded for the top finishers. An entry certificate (enclosed) with the name of the individual(s) responsible for the design and construction of the model bridge shall accompany each entry.

Entry Rules:

1. If there is more than one participant responsible for the design and/or construction of the model, all names shall appear on the entry form.
2. A student (or group of students) may enter only one bridge.
3. No student can be a member of more than one group, nor can a student enter as an individual for one bridge and part of a group for another bridge.
4. No student or group can compete in more than one contest in a given year (i.e. If a student enters the Buffalo Area Contest, they cannot compete in the Rochester Area Contest).
5. The entry certificate shall clearly state the name of the school attended by the participant(s).

MODEL BRIDGE CONTEST INSTRUCTIONS (APRIL 2026)

The model bridge must be built in accordance with the following instructions.

REGULATIONS

- A. Have fun and enjoy the design process!
- B. The material to be used for each structure shall consist of balsa wood and glue. The weight of each structure shall be less than **300 grams** (10.6 oz.).
- C. See the attached Figures for required bridge dimensions.
- D. The bridge and deck shall have a 1/2" diameter hole at the geometric center of the bridge (center of bridge length & center of bridge width) so there is clearance for a 3/8" diameter rod to extend downward from this hole to facilitate set up of the testing device.

***Clarification:** There must be sufficient clearance between bridge members to allow the judge to reach inside the bridge (from either the top or side) and tighten the nut used for attaching the bridge to the testing device. See Figure 5. If necessary, members which interfere (e.g. bracing) may be removed at the judges' discretion to allow for tightening the nut.

- E. Specific definitions and requirements:
 - a. **Failure:** Failure is defined as:
 - (1) The bridge collapsing from the load placed on the test block by the testing device;
 - (2) The superstructure below the deck touching the face of the testing device;
 - or
 - (3) The structure is unable to carry any increased load from the testing device after **(5) consecutive rotations** of the testing device to apply load.
 - b. **Deck:** The part of the bridge that is meant to be traveled on by a vehicle.
 - (1) The deck must extend the full length of the bridge and maintain a vehicular roadway area without any obstruction.
 - (2) The deck shall be constructed using a single, solid balsa wood sheet no more than 1/4" thick or multiple pieces with uniform thickness and no more than 2 joints (longitudinal or transverse).
 - (3) The deck shall be level (or flat) and shall not be curved (or arched).
 - c. **Beams & Girders:** Main horizontal support members for the bridge, which may or may not support other beams or girders.
 - (1) No beam or girder may have a cross-section larger than 1" x 1" square.
 - (2) Beams and girders are to be made of solid balsa wood. The wood shall be non-laminate.

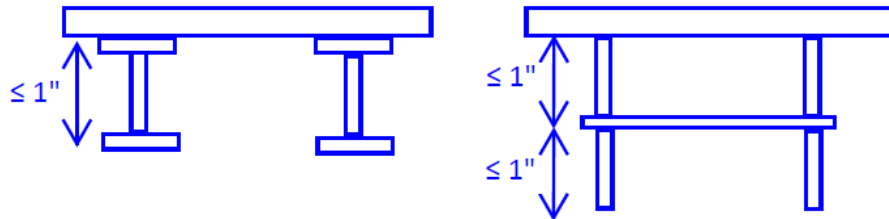
(3) Beams and girders may be constructed using multiple pieces of balsa wood, if the intent is to simulate a typical beam shape (I-beam, C-beam, L-beam, etc.), or to create a larger moment of inertia. No built-up beam or girder may be larger than 1" x 1" square.

(4) Beams and girders shall not be stacked to increase the cross-section.

Example:

Acceptable

Not Acceptable



d. **Trusses:** Trusses are main horizontal support members that are built-up from smaller members. Trusses may be above deck, below deck, or a combination of above and below deck.

(1) No truss member may have a cross-section larger than 1" x 1" square.

(2) Truss gusset plate dimensions shall be no larger than 2" x 2" square.

e. **Arches:** Arch bridges, where the main horizontal support members are arches cut from a larger solid piece of balsa wood or are built-up from multiple thin sections that are laminated together to form an arch are permitted as long as they are within the required bridge dimensions.

f. **Other Bridges:** Other bridge designs, such as cable stay bridges or other unique designs are permitted as long as they are within the required bridge dimensions.

FIGURE 1

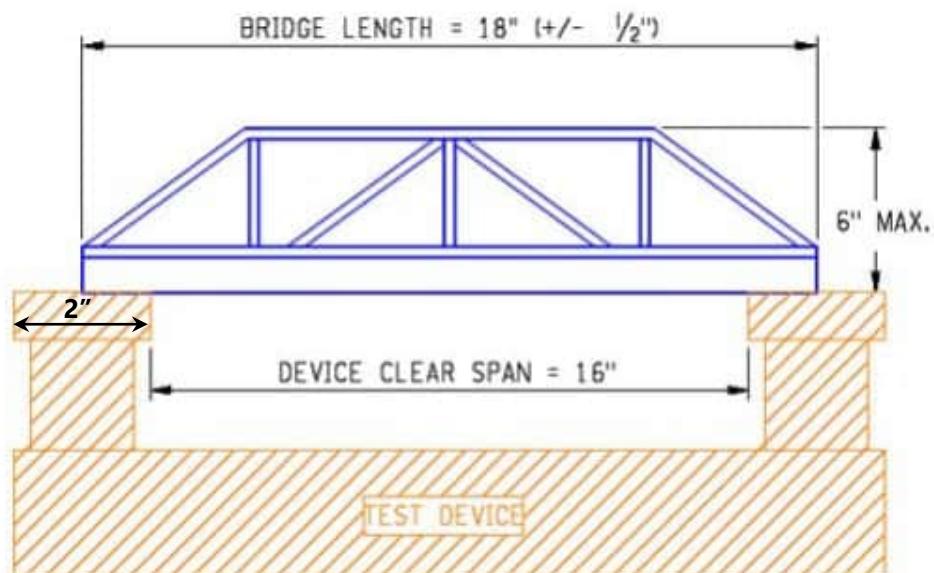


FIGURE 2

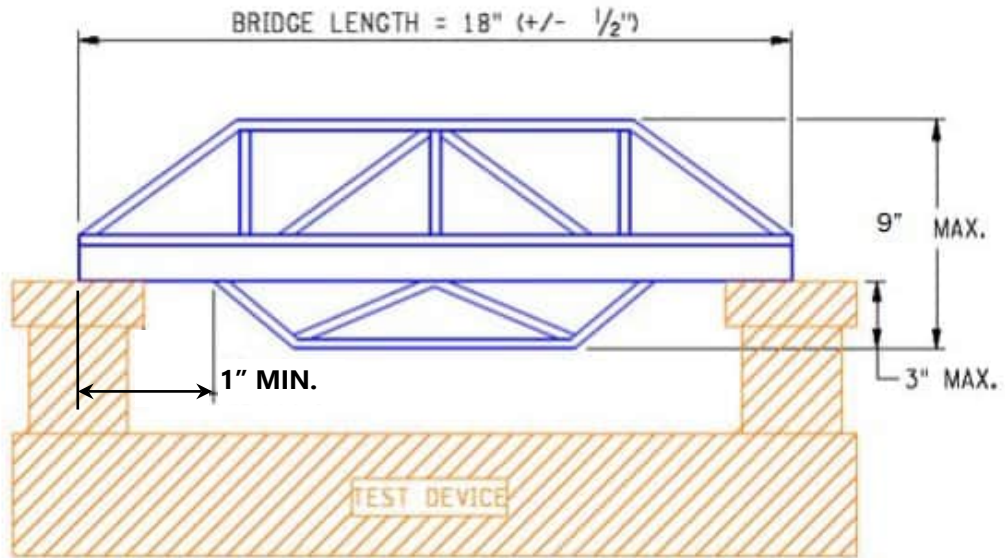


FIGURE 3 (TRUSS EXAMPLE)

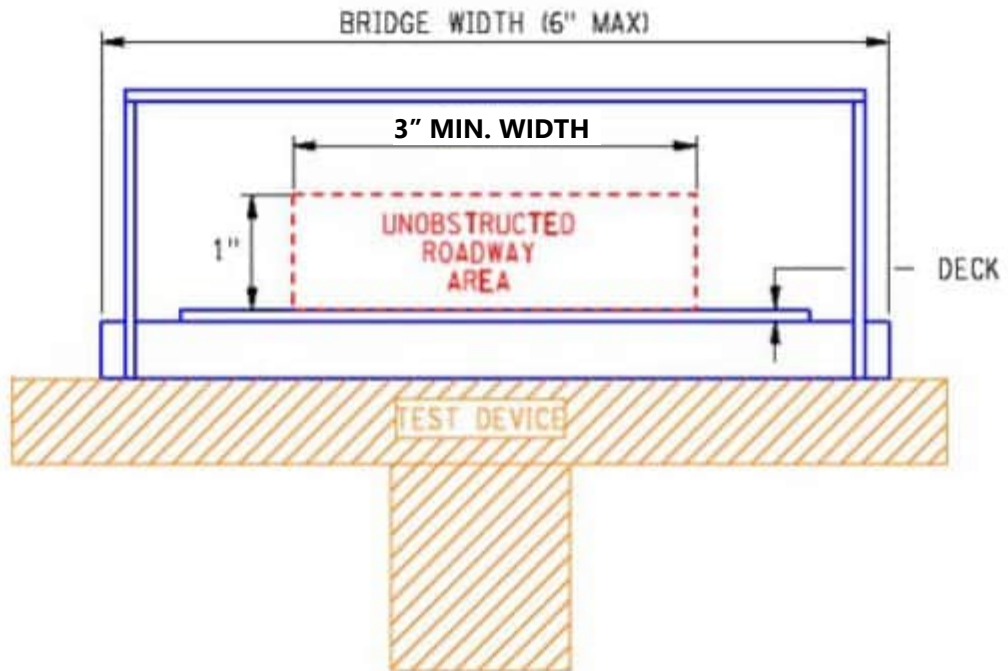


FIGURE 4 (MULTI GIRDER EXAMPLE)

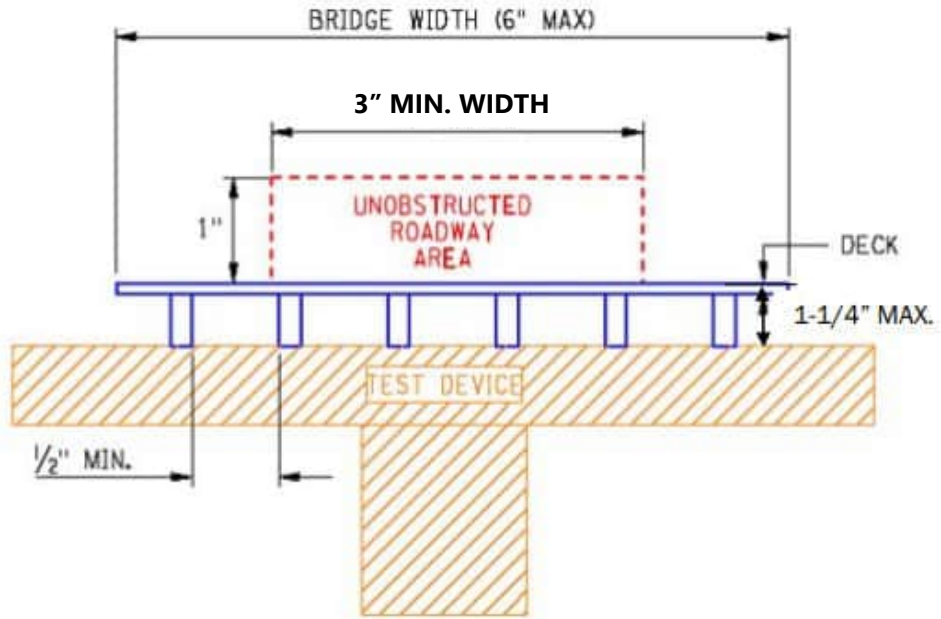
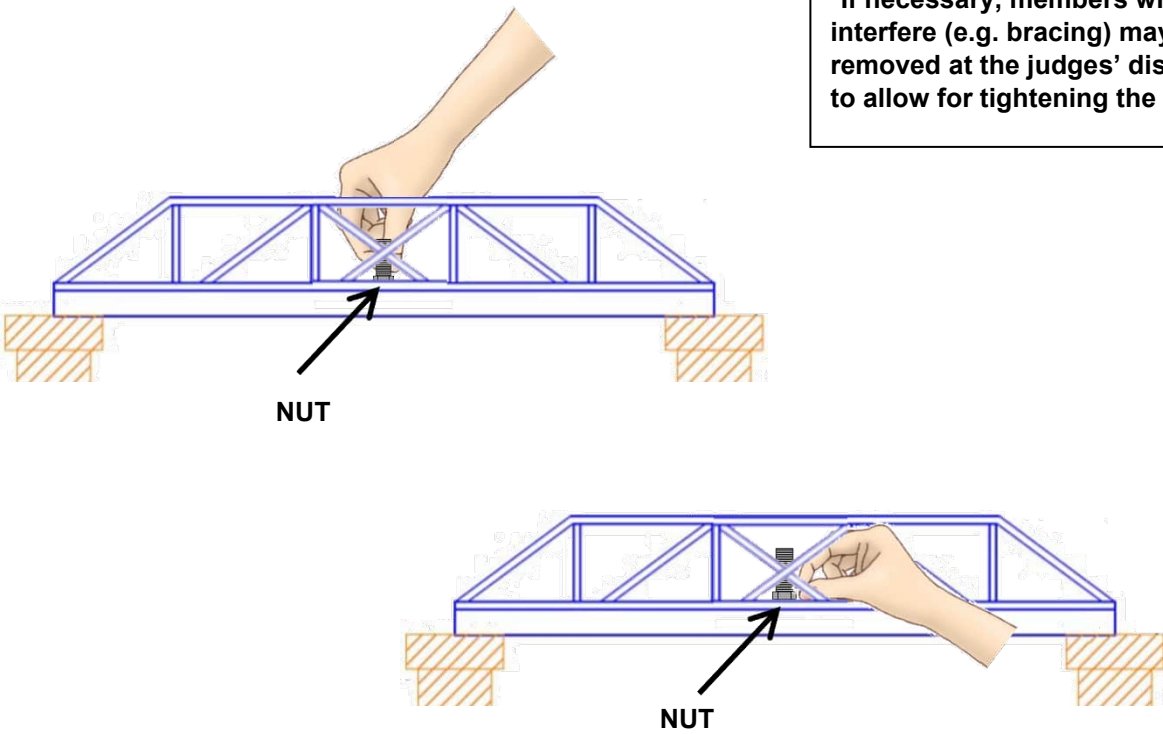


FIGURE 5 *Clarification



*If necessary, members which interfere (e.g. bracing) may be removed at the judges' discretion to allow for tightening the nut.

SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

- A. Model bridges shall be submitted at the ABCD contest table on the date of the competition. Entries are assessed against the regulations, weighed, judged, and load tested.
- B. An increasing load is applied to the structure via the testing device until the structure fails. The load will consist of a uniform load, applied over a 2” wide and 4” long area on the deck at the center of the structure.
- C. The Failure Load is recorded.
- D. The Efficiency is determined by the following equation: (Failure Load) / (Structure Weight)
- E. The Efficiency is recorded.
- F. The winner is determined by a point system as follows. A judge will rate each bridge in each of the following (4) categories.
 - o **Complexity** (out of 7 possible points)
Based on the structural member types involved in the design.

Points Earned	Criteria
7	Top braced above-deck truss (or bottom braced under-deck truss) with stringers and floor beams
6	A score of 6 is used to shade between 5 and 7 points.
5	Open truss (no top bracing interconnecting each truss)
4	A score of 4 is used to shade between 3 and 5 points.
3	Multi-girder and deck (with at least 4 longitudinal girders)
2	A score of 2 is used to shade between 1 and 3 points.
1	Slab bridge

- o **Engineering** (out of 7 possible points)
Based on how much thought is placed into the design. (e.g., positioning of stringers and floor beams, positioning of truss members, location of connection points, how connections are made, whether compression members (top chord of a truss) are laterally braced, whether larger members are used at locations of higher force, efficient use of member shapes)

Points Earned	Criteria
7	Excellent Engineering
6	A score of 6 is used to shade between 5 and 7 points.
5	Above Average Engineering
4	A score of 4 is used to shade between 3 and 5 points.
3	Average Engineering
2	A score of 2 is used to shade between 1 and 3 points.
1	Poor Engineering

- **Workmanship** (out of 4 possible points)
Based on neatness of construction. "Clean" bridges with neatly glued and sanded edges and members matching at connections will be awarded full credit.
- **Efficiency** (out of 25 possible points)
Based on the ratio of Failure Load to Structure weight, i.e. the Efficiency calculated in Step D above. The bridge with the highest efficiency in the competition will be awarded the full 25 points and the lowest efficiency in the competition will be awarded the least number of points. Efficiency scores will be given only to qualifying bridges that meet the regulations defined on pages 2-5 of these instructions.

G. The best possible score will be 43 points. In case of a tie, the first prize will be awarded to the structure, which in the opinion of the Judges, displays the best application of Civil Engineering principles, innovative ideas, and general overall appearance.

H. **The judges' decisions will be final.**

TROPHIES

Trophies/prizes will be presented at the conclusion of the contest. 1 trophy per team for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place finishers. Multiple prizes will be awarded based on the number of students on a winning team.