

The 2026 Model Bridge Competition Capital District's 46th Anniversary Celebration of National Engineer's Week February 12 and 13, 2026

Model bridges to be tested March (TBD) at (TBD). Bridges will be available for pickup at the end of the testing day or will be available for pickup by your school upon request.

The Model Bridge Competition is open to full-time high school students. It involves building a model truss-type or arch-type bridge out of balsa wood with the parts joined by yellow carpenter's glue. See page 3 for helpful hints and pages 4 and 5 for model dimensions and construction requirements.



Each model will be judged on its aesthetics (appearance and quality of construction), weighed and then loaded to failure by a testing machine. Model efficiency will be computed based upon maximum load at failure divided by the weight of the model.

Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third places in categories of efficiency, load capacity, and aesthetics. There are also school prizes for best average efficiency and load rating per student.

The contest is sponsored by:

- Structural Engineering Institute of the Mohawk-Hudson Section of ASCE.
- Enginuity Engineering & Design
- C.T. Male Associates

and our **Corporate Sponsors**

Basis for Competition:

Each model will be examined by a judging panel for aesthetically pleasing design and craftsmanship, weighed, and loaded to failure. Bridges will be scored for model efficiency ratio, maximum load, and aesthetics. The model efficiency ratio is the maximum load in pounds divided by the weight of the model in grams.

Prizes:

Cash prizes will be awarded at the end of competition for:



Traditional Model Bridges

Team Bridge Prizes

Category	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
Efficiency:	\$500	\$250	\$100
Max. Load:	\$150	\$100	\$50

(Minimum of 9 bridge entries for Max. Load Category Prizes)

School Bridge Prizes

Category	1st Place
Avg. Efficiency:	\$200
Avg. Max. Load:	\$200

Enhanced Model Bridges

Team Bridge Prizes

Category	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
Efficiency:	\$500	\$250	\$100
Max. Load:	\$150	\$100	\$50

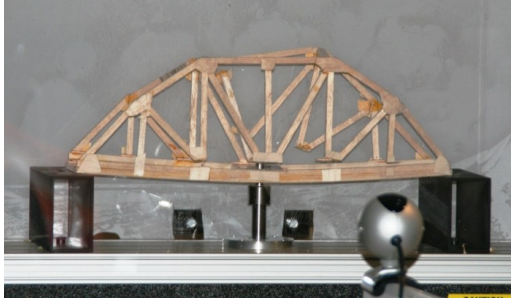
(Minimum of 9 bridge entries for Max. Load Category Prizes)

School Bridge Prizes

Category	1st Place
Avg. Efficiency:	\$200
Avg. Max. Load:	\$200

Traditional and Enhanced Model Bridges

Category	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
Aesthetics:	\$150	\$100	\$50



Pre-registration:

Students planning to enter the competition are to pre-register at the link provided at: www.EnginuityDesign.com/MBC

Pre-registration is required to be issued bridge numbers for registration (numbers will be issued after pre-registration via email) and to get update emails.

Submitting Entries:

Bridge models shall be entered by completing an on-line form using the template below as guidance to gather the required information. Model entries shall be hand delivered or shipped to:

- C.T. Male Associates - 50 Century Hill Drive; Latham, NY 12110
- All bridges to be in boxes for transport to testing site.
- Please write "2026 MBC" on outside of package.

Models shall be marked on the top of bridge deck with team bridge number with 1/2" numbers in black sharpie marker.

2026 MODEL BRIDGE CONTEST REGISTRATION

Go to www.EnginuityDesign.com/MBC for link to form

NAME _____ BRIDGE NUMBER _____

From Advisor

Personal Email so we can send you event updates

EMAIL _____ TEAMMATES _____

TELEPHONE (HOME) (____) _____ - _____ TEAMMATES _____

AGE _____ GRADE _____ TEAMMATES _____

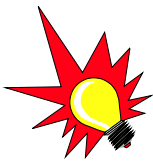
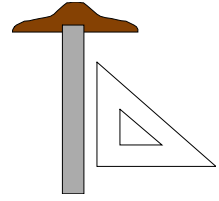
ADVISOR NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

Deadline for receipt of models hand delivered or shipped is February ??, 2026.

Helpful Hints:

1. Draw a sketch of your bridge first. Try different designs and select a design that you are able to construct (See last page for examples of bridge types). Design counts towards the aesthetics awards.
2. Make sure your bridge meets the rules (See first and fourth pages).
3. Practice assembling the pieces of your model using clothes pins before gluing them together.
4. Top chord (horizontal) members of trusses will go into compression and tend to bend or buckle. These members should be large enough so they will not buckle too soon. They should also be straight and symmetrically aligned. Horizontal and diagonal bracing members between top chords will help resist buckling and increase load capacity.
5. Bottom chord (horizontal) members of trusses will go into tension. These can be smaller than top chord members.
6. Tension diagonals (webs) slope downward from the top chord towards the middle of the span.
7. Compression diagonals (webs) slope downward from the top chord towards the end supports. These should be larger than tension diagonals.
8. Connections tend to be the weak points. Compression members will push on connections while tension members will try to pull away. Reinforcing gusset plates glued to each member at connections will strengthen connections.
9. Wood is stronger parallel to its grain, weaker perpendicular to its grain. Align gussets with grain parallel to tension forces.
10. Clamp joints when gluing for stronger bond.
11. Load is greatest at midspan where the load is applied. Strong deck and connections are required here to transfer load from the load plate through the deck to the bottom chords and web members.
12. Try testing the strength of individual members by pushing down on them (compression) or by pulling on both ends at the same time (tension).
13. Use care and work safely while constructing your bridge. Craftsmanship counts towards the aesthetics awards.



An Excellent Link on the Web: <http://www.sciencebuddies.org>

Go to the Project Ideas tab and select Civil Engineering (under "Engineering")
Go to Page 4 and select "The Design Process: Creating a Stronger Truss"

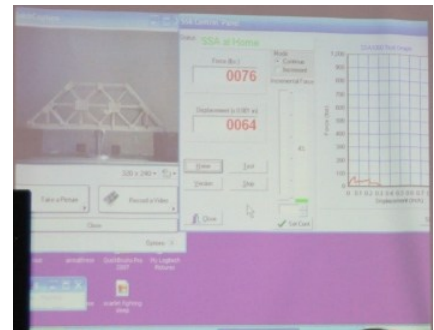
Reference Materials:

- ⇒ Trusses, A Study by the Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service (excerpt attached)
- ⇒ Wood Engineering and Construction Handbook, 2nd Ed., by Keith F. Faherty & Thomas G. Williamson, McGraw Hill
- ⇒ Timber Construction Manual, 4th Ed. by The American Institute of Timber Construction
- ⇒ Understanding Wood by R. Bruce Hoadley, The Tauton Press

Questions?

Contact Tim Schroder at 518-392-8020 or by email
ModelBridgeComp@EnginuityDesign.com.

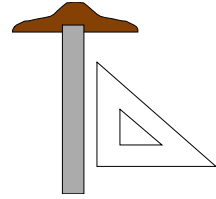
For the most current information, schedule, and E-Week program, please visit the Capital District E-Week web-site: <http://www.capitaldistrictweek.org/>



**Please join us LIVE on
March 1, 2025
at Shaker High School.
Have Fun and Good Luck!**

Details of Construction:

1. Models must be made solely by the student entrant.
2. Models **shall** be constructed entirely of provided **balsa wood** bonded only with Elmer's **yellow carpenter's glue**.

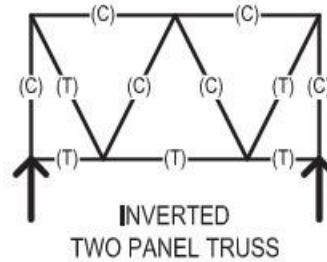
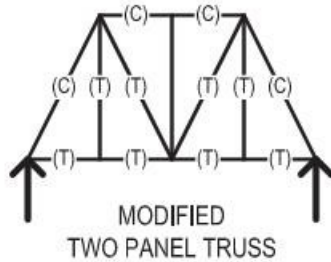
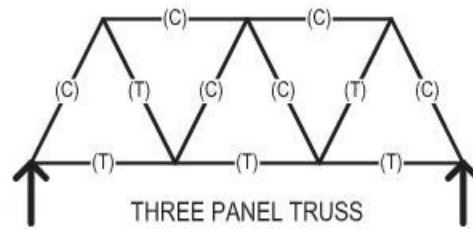
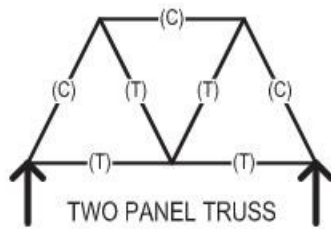


(acceptable glue)



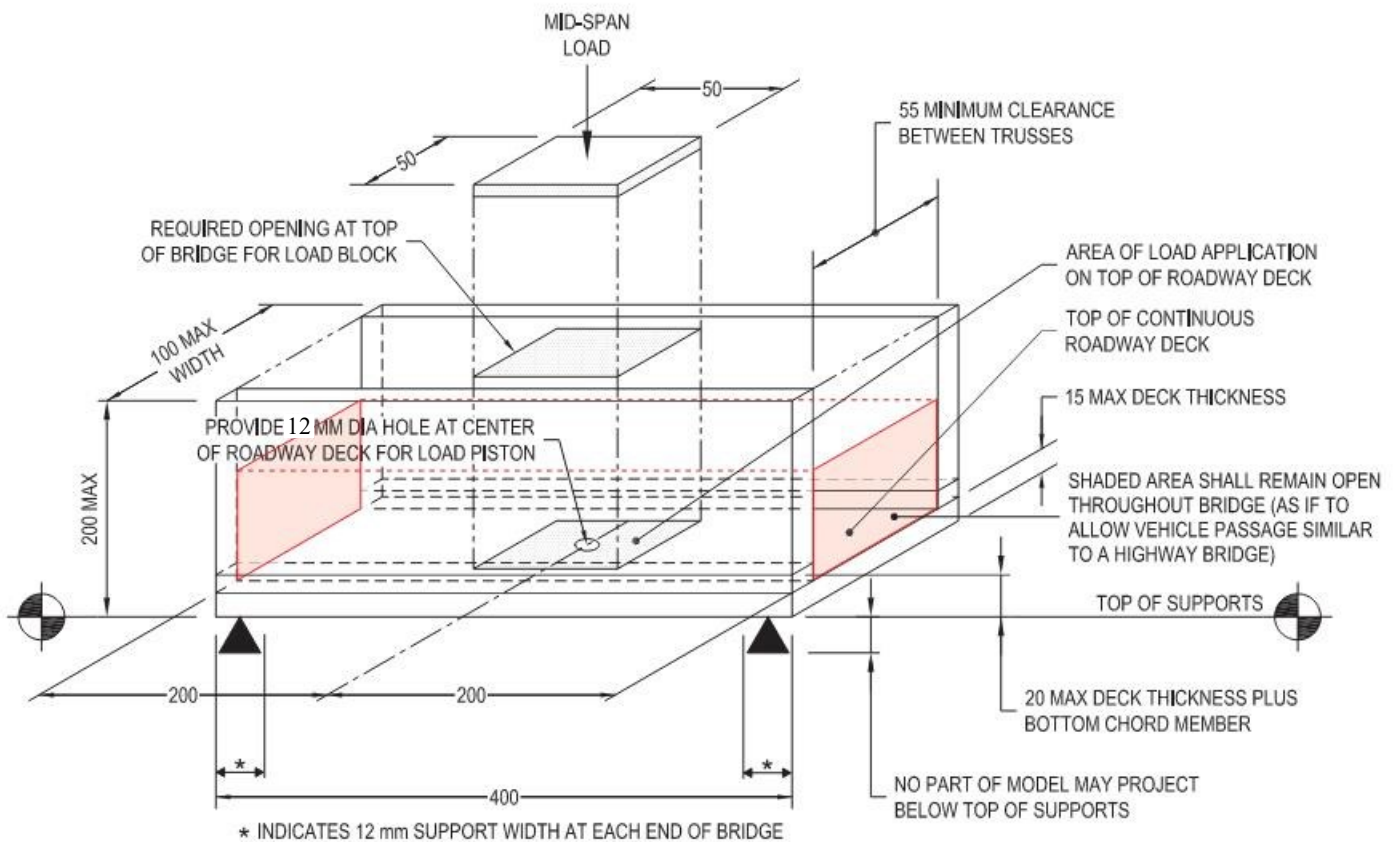
(unacceptable glue)

3. Decorative painting of the balsa wood members is acceptable, but no painting or other coating shall be applied over the glued joints. The yellow carpenter's glue must remain visible. "Dipping", soaking, or painting to add strength is **not** allowed.
4. Models shall be constructed as a truss bridge with each side containing at least two (2) panels. See the attached sketch for examples. No solid (one piece) models, or models carved from one piece of wood, are allowed.
 - Traditional model bridges shall be of non-laminated construction
 - Enhance model bridges can use laminated construction techniques and have a maximum weight of # grams.
 - Non-laminated Construction shall be defined as:
 - All members constructed of only one single solid piece of stock
 - Joints to have no more than one layer of reinforcement on either side of primary member
5. Model dimensions and requirements shall be as follows and in the attached sketch.
 - The model shall be **400 millimeters (mm)** long, no more and no less. This is critical for the bridge to fit on the supports of the load test machine.
 - The model shall be no greater than **200 mm** high and no greater than **100 mm** wide.
 - The interior distance between the truss sides shall be at least **55 mm**.
 - The "roadway deck" shall be continuous without openings or gaps, and shall not be greater than **15 mm** deep. The total thickness at the truss bottom chords shall not be greater than **20 mm** deep including the "roadway deck".
 - The area immediately above the roadway deck shall be clear for "vehicular traffic" to pass as if the bridge were an actual highway bridge. Cross members between truss top chords are recommended, but any additional bracing between the side trusses shall not extend more than one third of the distance from the top chord to the roadway deck.
 - Testing machine supports are **12 mm** wide at each end and will not support lateral thrust developed by the model.
 - No part of the model shall extend below the end supports that bear on the testing machine. **No exceptions.**
 - The model **must have an opening** centered in the top of the structure through which the loading plate can pass to bear on the "roadway deck". A **12mm** hole through the "roadway deck" shall be provided for the load piston. This hole must be at the center of the bridge (in width and length). This is critical for the bridge to accommodate the load mechanism of the test machine.
 - A load plate **50 mm x 50 mm** will be used to load the structure at mid-span. This is a common point for bridges to fail prematurely due to inadequate deck or connection strength. The "roadway deck" and its connection to the side trusses should be strengthened (reinforced) at this load point.



EXAMPLE TRUSSES

(T) = TENSION (C) = COMPRESSION



MODEL DIMENSIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MILLIMETERS