

# HOW TO PACK AND SHIP BEERS FOR COMPETITION

## BOTTLES AND CAPS

When entering competition, it's best to use plain brown 341ml or 12oz longneck bottles with plain gold crown caps. Every competition will accept plain bottles with gold caps, but not all competitions will accept bottles with raised lettering like Sam Adams or New Belgium bottles. And not very many will accept cork and caged bottles. Most competitions will accept a blacked out cap, but not all. A great tip here is to write a couple letters on the caps of bottles with a sharpie so you can identify the bottles. When you go to ship the beer, you can use [91%+ rubbing alcohol](#) and a paper towel or cotton ball to remove the writing and make the cap plain again.

## LABELS

The competition you enter will probably have you fill out or print a form to attach to your bottle. The only proper way to affix the label to the bottle is with a rubber band. Don't glue it, tape it, or attach it with wire or string. Doing any of those things might get your beer disqualified, which would defeat the purpose of entering the competition. The competition staff have to remove the labels and attach an entry number on the bottle so that the judging process is anonymous. If it's difficult or impossible to get the label off the beer may be disqualified.

The National Homebrew Competition recommends that you place the bottle label in a plastic sandwich bag in case the bottle breaks they can identify which beer broke and possibly contact you for a replacement. This is good practice for

any competition and as long as the label is readable while rubber banded to the bottle in the bag, you won't be disqualified.

## TAG 'EM AND BAG 'EM

Once you have the labels rubber banded onto the bottles, place each bottle in a [gallon size Ziploc bag](#). This will contain any leakage if a bottle cap were to fail or if a bottle were to break. I like the freezer bags because they are thicker plastic that's less likely to be cut open if a bottle breaks. As long as the breakage is contained, the box will likely still be intact and therefore still be delivered by your preferred carrier. Your bottle should look something like this now:



## PROTECT THE BOTTLES

1. Protect each bottle individually with a layer of bubble wrap. Use a rubber band or two to secure the bubble wrap to the bottle. The person who unpacks your bottles will be thankful you didn't use tape here, and from my experience it is a perfectly effective way to secure the [bubble wrap](#). Secure all bottles to each other so they don't collide with each other. If you have some large and sturdy rubber bands, use those to secure each bottle to a buddy, then secure the pairs to each other until you have one large mass of secure bottles. If you can't make rubber bands work for whatever reason, use packing tape to secure the bottles in a similar manner. When you are done you should have a solitary mass of bottles that doesn't do much shifting. This will prevent the bottles from crashing into each other and breaking. Protect the collective bottles with additional padding. Wrap a layer of bubble wrap around the mass of bottles and secure with a piece of tape. This will protect the bottles from outside threats such as the box being dropped on a sharp corner or piece of metal.
2. Another method that works well is a wine box with the dividers intact. Newspaper or foam is stuffed into the bottom of each compartment to a depth of about 3 inches. The bottles are placed and secured with more stuffing material around the necks. Generally the compartments bordering the outside of the box are not used.
3. Yet another method involves using six-pack holders putting three bottles in each holder. Place the bottles in alternate holes so the risk of glass contacting glass is reduced. Fill the unused holes with

rolled up newspaper. Also, bag each six pack holder to make sure the bottles stay in the holder.

## BOX 'EM UP

Find a suitably sized box and place the protected bottles inside. Use more padding to make the box tightly filled. Don't over stuff the box, but you should have to hold the flaps down manually to make the box closed. Tape the outside of the box securely with packing tape on all the seams and the edges.

## SHIP IT

Ship the box using a courier system with a tracking number or bill of lading. It's illegal to ship alcohol with Canada Post. I know there are some people that do it anyway, but I can't recommend it since there is some tiny risk of legal trouble by shipping that way.

### References

"How to pack your beer", Russ Wigglesworth, San Andreas Prost (Spring 1991)

"How to pack and ship beers for competition", IN Bounds Brewing (March 8, 2016)