

Outline of the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

National Research Institute of Brewing
Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association
June 20, 2025

1. Contest

Honkaku Shochu and *Awamori* are the Japanese spirits distilled in a pot still.

The judgement of 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest was held under the joint auspices of the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB) and the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS) on June 3 and 4, 2025. For this contest, a nationwide research of pot distillation *Shochu*, particularly *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*, were conducted with the aim of clarifying the current manufacturing technology and trends in liquor quality, as well as contributing to the improvement of pot distillation *Shochu* (*Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*) qualities.

2. Special rules for entry

(1) Qualification for entry

Manufacturers which hold a license to produce pot distillation *Shochu* (*Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*).

(2) Applicable standard for entry

Entries must be products of *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori* to be sold on the market or during storage as commercially available. The number of entries per a manufacture is limited within 8 items.

(3) Entry fee

Members of the JSS: 5,800 yen per entry. Others: 8,700 yen per entry.

3. Overview of entries

A total of 185 entries (93% of entries compared with previous year) were exhibited from 66 manufacturers (88%) in 23 prefectures. The overall number of entries decreased by 15 compared with that in the previous year (Table 1).

4. Trends among entries

(1) Production area

As for the production area, the number of entries from Kyushu (Fukuoka and Kumamoto Regional Taxation Bureaus; Table 1) (137 entries) and Okinawa (12 entries), which are the main production areas for *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*, are 149 that made up 81% of the total (Table 1).

(2) Varieties of raw materials

The following entries were received, rice *Shochu*: 27 (decreased by 4 compared with that in the previous year), barley *Shochu*: 67 (decreased by 5), sweet potato *Shochu*: 56 (increased by 2), Awamori: 14 (decreased by 5), sake lees *Shochu*: 10 (increased by 2), buckwheat *Shochu*: 4 (no change compared with that in the previous year), brown sugar *Shochu*: 2 (decreased by 1), and other *Shochu*: 5 (no change) (Table 2).

(3) Varieties of products techniques

Entries from normal products numbered 140 (96%). Entries from the special products, including long-term aged, cask-aged or earthenware jar-aged *Shochu*, numbered 45 (83%) (Table 3).

5. Judging panels and methods

The judging panel consisted of 15 members who were appointed by the president of NRIB from *Shochu* and *Awamori* manufacturers recommended by JSS, *Shochu* and *Awamori* specialists from prefectural research centers, technical officers of Regional Taxation Bureaus, and the president and staff of NRIB (Table 4).

The individual judgement process, which has been conducted from the 43rd Honkaku *Shochu* and *Awamori* Contest in 2020, were conducted for this judgement. In order to total the judging results, tablet computer devices were used in this judgement as substitutes for mark cards following last year, although paper-based mark cards had been used since the 11th Honkaku *Shochu* and *Awamori* Contest in 1987.

The sensory evaluation was conducted by a profile method, whereby 5 characteristics (raw material characteristics, rich/light, sweetness, aftertaste, and the total evaluation) were assessed on a 5-point scale. In addition, the presence/absence of 17 positive and 24 negative characters was considered in a check-all-that-apply manner (Figure).

6. Quality trends

- (1) *Shochu* made from rice and barley was mainly fruity and mild tasted, that made from sweet potato was mainly floral, that made from sake lees was mainly highly fruity, and *Awamori* was mainly full-bodied.
- (2) As for normal products, fruity aromas were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled rice *Shochu*, vacuum-distilled barley *Shochu*. Fruity aromas and roasting aromas were highly expressed in the blend of both distilled barley *Shochu*. Roasting aromas, characteristics of raw materials and rich tastes were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled rice *Shochu* and atmospheric-distilled barley *Shochu*. Fruity aromas, floral aromas, characteristics of raw materials and mild tastes were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled sweet potato *Shochu*. Floral aromas, roasting aromas and characteristics of raw materials were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled sweet potato *Shochu* and the blend of both distilled sweet potato *Shochu*. Roasting aromas, oily or mushroom-like aromas and rich tastes were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled *Awamori*. Fruity aromas, characteristics of raw materials, sweet tastes and clear tastes were highly expressed, and the average evaluation value was relatively good in vacuum-distilled sake lees *Shochu*. Fruity aromas, characteristics of raw materials, mild tastes, smooth tastes and clear tastes were highly expressed, and the average evaluation value was relatively good in vacuum-distilled buckwheat *Shochu*.
- (3) As for long-term aged products, long-term aged sweet potato *Shochu* had floral aromas, roasting aromas, clear tastes and smooth tastes, and the average evaluation value was relatively good.
- (4) As for cask-aged products, the properties derived from cask were highly evaluated in cask-aged barley *Shochu*, cask-aged rice *Shochu* and sake lees *Shochu*. In addition, sweet tastes were highly expressed in cask-aged sake lees *Shochu*.
- (5) As for earthenware jar-aged products, matured aromas, aromas from earthenware, smooth tastes, sweet tastes and rich tastes were highly expressed in earthenware jar-aged sweet potato *Shochu*.

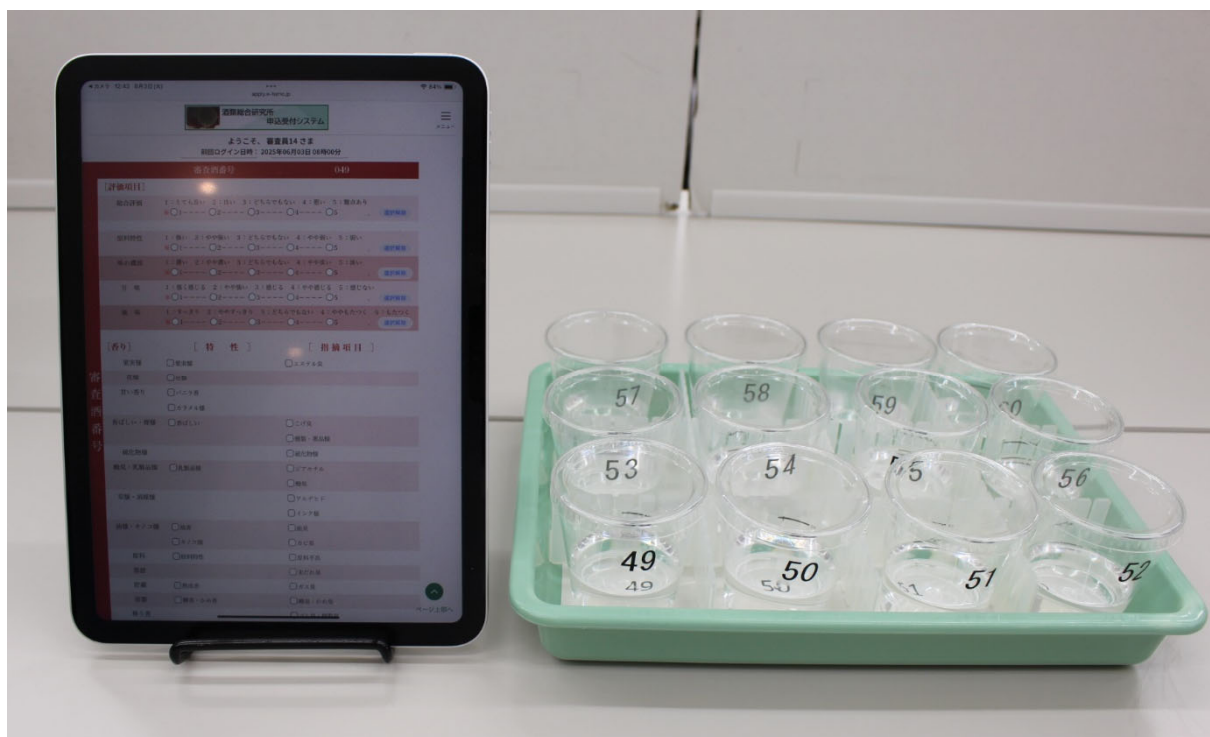
7. Chemical analysis

To evaluate the level of manufacturing techniques, the chemical compounds, which are potential indicators of fermentation management, distillation operations, and storage management, are currently being analyzed. The individual results of the sensory evaluation and the chemical analysis will be informed to all the manufacturers applied for entries. The overall results will be summarized and analyzed, and published in Report of the Research Institute of Brewing.

Judging room



The individual judgement process was conducted.



Serving: A plastic cup (140 ml volume) was filled with a sample (30 ml), and each cup was covered with a cap. The tray was then individually served to a judge. The tablet computer device was used in this judgement.

Table 1 Number of manufactures and entries per prefecture in the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

Regional Taxation Bureau	Prefecture	Number of manufactures		Number of entries										Total number of entries per Taxation Bureau Office		Compared with previous year (%)
		48th	47th	Varieties of single distilled <i>shochu</i>								48th	47th	48th	47th	
				Rice	Barley	Sweet potato	Awamori	Sake lees	Buckwheat	Brown sugar	Other					
Sapporo	Hokkaido	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
Sendai	Aomori	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	7	7	100
	Iwate	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2			
	Miyagi	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1			
	Akita	1	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0			
	Yamagata	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2			
	Fukushima	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2			
Kanto-Shinetsu	Ibaraki	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	5	8	63
	Tochigi	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Gunma	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Saitama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Niigata	4	5	1	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	5	6			
	Nagano	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Tokyo	Chiba	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	5	4	125
	Tokyo	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Kanagawa	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1			
	Yamanashi	2	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	2			
Kanazawa	Toyama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
	Ishikawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Fukui	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Nagoya	Gifu	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2	5	40
	Shizuoka	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2			
	Aichi	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	3			
	Mie	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Osaka	Shiga	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	1	1	100
	Kyoto	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Osaka	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Hyogo	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Nara	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Wakayama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Hiroshima	Tottori	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	7	5	140
	Shimane	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Okayama	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3			
	Hiroshima	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Yamaguchi	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1			
Takamatsu	Tokushima	1	0	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	9	1	900
	Kagawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Ehime	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Kochi	2	1	3	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	8	1			
Fukuoka	Fukuoka	6	7	5	15	-	-	1	1	-	4	26	27	44	46	96
	Saga	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5			
	Nagasaki	6	6	-	11	4	-	-	-	-	-	15	14			
Kumamoto	Kumamoto	3	5	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	12	93	104	89
	Oita	5	5	1	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	19			
	Miyazaki	5	5	-	6	17	-	-	2	-	-	25	25			
	Kagoshima	12	15	-	6	31	-	-	-	2	-	39	48			
Okinawa	Okinawa	7	9	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	12	19	12	19	63
Total		66	75	27	67	56	14	10	4	2	5	185	200	185	200	93

Table 2 Change in number of entries according to the varieties of single distilled *shochu*

(Number of entries)

Raw material		Rice		Barley		Sweet potato		Awamori		Sake lees		Buckwheat		Brown sugar		Other		Total	
Awards			Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards		Compared with previous awards
1st		38	-	16	-	78	-	24	-	24	-	5	-	4	-	15	-	204	-
6th		59	21	47	31	48	▲ 30	24	0	26	2	29	24	6	2	33	18	272	68
9th		69	10	100	53	26	▲ 22	24	0	<u>60</u>	34	<u>31</u>	2	7	1	<u>78</u>	45	395	123
10th		86	17	<u>110</u>	10	37	11	<u>37</u>	13	38	▲ 22	<u>31</u>	0	10	3	<u>78</u>	0	<u>427</u>	32
11th		<u>96</u>	10	105	▲ 5	48	11	23	▲ 14	25	▲ 13	26	▲ 5	8	▲ 2	53	▲ 25	384	▲ 43
16th		55	▲ 41	76	▲ 29	24	▲ 24	19	▲ 4	17	▲ 8	21	▲ 5	<u>11</u>	3	27	▲ 26	250	▲ 134
21st		63	8	70	▲ 6	22	▲ 2	17	▲ 2	27	10	19	▲ 2	4	▲ 7	23	▲ 4	245	▲ 5
26th		67	4	71	1	37	15	10	▲ 7	20	▲ 7	16	▲ 3	8	4	24	1	253	8
28th		76	9	94	23	69	32	15	5	21	1	22	6	<u>11</u>	3	27	3	335	82
31st		57	▲ 19	90	▲ 4	<u>103</u>	34	28	13	22	1	21	▲ 1	7	▲ 4	26	▲ 1	354	19
36th		23	▲ 34	54	▲ 36	68	▲ 35	20	▲ 8	14	▲ 8	0	▲ 21	3	▲ 4	8	▲ 18	190	▲ 164
37th		31	8	57	3	53	▲ 15	13	▲ 7	13	▲ 1	2	2	6	3	7	▲ 1	182	▲ 8
38th		21	▲ 10	50	▲ 7	66	13	16	3	6	▲ 7	2	0	2	▲ 4	4	▲ 3	167	▲ 15
39th		25	4	67	17	74	8	15	▲ 1	14	8	3	1	4	2	11	7	213	46
40th		32	7	67	0	88	14	22	7	13	▲ 1	3	0	4	0	7	▲ 4	236	23
41st		26	▲ 6	77	10	98	10	18	▲ 4	13	0	4	1	7	3	5	▲ 2	248	12
42nd		24	▲ 8	95	28	85	▲ 3	17	▲ 5	8	▲ 5	3	0	2	▲ 2	4	▲ 3	238	2
43rd		22	▲ 2	71	▲ 24	73	▲ 12	17	0	8	0	3	0	1	▲ 1	2	▲ 2	197	▲ 41
44th		24	2	71	0	68	▲ 5	13	▲ 4	11	3	2	▲ 1	2	1	2	0	193	▲ 4
45th		24	0	73	2	69	1	17	4	12	1	2	0	4	2	4	2	205	12
46th		35	11	66	▲ 7	82	13	23	6	11	▲ 1	4	2	4	0	3	▲ 1	228	23
47th		31	▲ 4	72	6	54	▲ 28	19	▲ 4	12	1	4	0	3	▲ 1	5	2	200	▲ 28
48th		27	▲ 4	67	▲ 5	56	2	14	▲ 5	10	▲ 2	4	0	2	▲ 1	5	0	185	▲ 15

Note 1: "Compared with previous awards" for 36th, 31st, 28th, 26th, 21st, 16th, 9th and 6th refers to comparisons to

the 31st, 28th, 26th, 21st, 16th, 11th, 6th and 1st Awards, respectively.

Note 2: Underlined numbers are the highest numbers of entries in the past.

Table 3 Details of products in the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

(Number of entries)

Varieties of single distilled shochu		Normal products								Special products								Total	
		Vacuum distillation		Atmospheric distillation		Blend		Subtotal		Long-term aging		Cask aging		Earthenware jar aging		Subtotal			
		48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th	48th	47th
Rice		18	19	3	2	-	-	21	21	2	5	4	4	-	1	6	10	27	31
Barley		28	32	7	8	10	14	45	54	2	3	19	14	1	1	22	18	67	72
Sweet potato		7	4	36	38	6	2	49	44	4	3	-	2	3	5	7	10	56	54
Awamori		-	-	10	12	1	1	11	13	2	5	-	-	1	1	3	6	14	19
Sake lees		3	6	2	-	-	-	5	6	2	4	3	2	-	-	5	6	10	12
Buckwheat		3	2	-	-	1	1	4	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	4
Brown sugar		-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	2	2	3	
Other		4	4	1	-	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	5	5
Detail	Gyokuro	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Matcha	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Kudzu vine	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Sesame	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Squash	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Japanese barnyard millet	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Yam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total		63	67	59	61	18	18	140	146	13	22	27	24	5	8	45	54	185	200

Table 4 List of Judging panels for the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

	Name	Workplace and Position	
1	KONDO, Hiroo	Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association	Technical Advisor
2	HAYASHI, Takafumi	Munemasasyuzou, Co., Ltd.	Manager, Seizoubu Jozoka
3	HAYASHI, Yasuhiro	Hayashi Shuzo, Co., Ltd.	President
4	TANIMURA, Takeshi	Unkai Shuzo, Co., Ltd.	Section Chief, Manufacturing Department
5	IKEHARA, Yu	Ikehara Syuzo, Co., Ltd.	CEO
6	OBA, Takahiro	Biotechnology and Food Research Institute,Fukuoka Industrial Technology	Microbiology and Fermentation Team Leader, Food Section
7	INAI, Tomomi	Industrial Technology Center of Nagasaki	Chief Researcher, Food Development Support Center
8	GOTO, Yuji	Oita Industrial Research Institute	Principal Researcher, Food Industry Section
9	OTANI, Taketo	Kagoshima Prefectural Institute of Industrial Technology	Chief Researcher, Food and Chemicals Dept.
10	ITO, Shinichi	Fukuoka Regional Taxation Bureau	Director, Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology
11	KOHAMA, Hajime	Kumamoto Regional Taxation Bureau	Director, Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology
12	IEHARA, Maki	Okinawa Regional Taxation Office	Technical Officer, Indirect Tax Division
13	FUKUDA, Hisashi	National Research Institute of Brewing	President
14	OKUDA, Masaki	National Research Institute of Brewing	Director, Brewing Technology Division
15	KOYAMA, Kazuya	National Research Institute of Brewing	Deputy Director, Analytical Research Division

Figure

Tablet Judging Screen for the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest (Image)

審査酒番号		001
【評価項目】		
総合評価	1:とても良い 2:良い 3:どちらでもない 4:悪い 5:難点あり ※ ○1----- ○2----- ○3----- ○4----- ○5 . 選択解除	5-point scale evaluation
原料特性	1:強い 2:やや強い 3:どちらでもない 4:やや弱い 5:弱い ※ ○1----- ○2----- ○3----- ○4----- ○5 . 選択解除	Overall evaluation
味の濃淡	1:濃い 2:やや濃い 3:どちらでもない 4:やや薄い 5:薄い ※ ○1----- ○2----- ○3----- ○4----- ○5 . 選択解除	Raw material characteristics
甘 味	1:強く感じる 2:やや強い 3:感じる 4:やや感じる 5:感じない ※ ○1----- ○2----- ○3----- ○4----- ○5 . 選択解除	Body
後 味	1:すっきり 2:ややすっきり 3:どちらでもない 4:ややもたつく 5:もたつく ※ ○1----- ○2----- ○3----- ○4----- ○5 . 選択解除	Sweet taste Aftertaste
【香り】 【特 性】 【指 摘 項 目】		
果実様	<input type="checkbox"/> 果実様	<input type="checkbox"/> エステル臭
花様	<input type="checkbox"/> 花様	
甘い香り	<input type="checkbox"/> バニラ香 <input type="checkbox"/> カラメル様	
香ばしい・煙様	<input type="checkbox"/> 香ばしい	<input type="checkbox"/> こげ臭 <input type="checkbox"/> 燻製・薬品様
硫化物様		<input type="checkbox"/> 硫化物様
酸臭・乳製品様	<input type="checkbox"/> 乳製品様	<input type="checkbox"/> シアセチル <input type="checkbox"/> 酸臭
草様・溶媒様		<input type="checkbox"/> アルデヒド <input type="checkbox"/> インク様
油様・キノコ様	<input type="checkbox"/> 油香 <input type="checkbox"/> キノコ様	<input type="checkbox"/> 油臭 <input type="checkbox"/> カビ臭
原料	<input type="checkbox"/> 原料特性	<input type="checkbox"/> 原料不良
蒸留		<input type="checkbox"/> 未だれ臭
貯蔵	<input type="checkbox"/> 熱成香	<input type="checkbox"/> ガス臭
容器	<input type="checkbox"/> 樽香・かめ香	<input type="checkbox"/> 樽臭・かめ臭
移り香		<input type="checkbox"/> ゴム臭・樹脂臭
【味】 【特 性】 【指 摘 項 目】		
濃さ	<input type="checkbox"/> 濃醇	<input type="checkbox"/> 過多
淡さ	<input type="checkbox"/> 淡麗	<input type="checkbox"/> うすい
甘辛	<input type="checkbox"/> 甘い	<input type="checkbox"/> からい
きれいさ	<input type="checkbox"/> きれい	<input type="checkbox"/> くどい
刺激感	<input type="checkbox"/> なめらか	<input type="checkbox"/> あらい <input type="checkbox"/> 酸味 <input type="checkbox"/> 苦味 <input type="checkbox"/> 渋味
【調和】 【特 性】 【指 摘 項 目】		
	<input type="checkbox"/> 調和	<input type="checkbox"/> 不調和
【短評・助言】		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		
入力文字数: 0/100		

Optional checks(aroma)

Fruity
Floral
Sweet
Roast, Smoky
Sulfury
Volatile acids, Milk product
Herbal, Solvent
Oily, Mushroom
Raw material characteristic
Distillation-derived
Cask-aged,
earthenwarejar-aged
Lingering scent

Optional checks (taste)

Full body
Light body
Sweetness
Clean
Smooth

Optional checks (balance)

Total balance

Comment/Advice