

Photo Contest Guide

to

Judging Criteria

**NOTE:** Composition rules or guidelines are a helpful starting point, but they are useful only as long as they enhance the overall image.

# Guide to Judging Criteria for Photo Contests

## 1. Is there a clear center of interest?

- when you look at the photo, what is the first thing you see? If you are evaluating your own image, is what you see first the subject you had in mind for the photograph?
- what holds your eye the longest?
- do other elements in the image compete with the subject for attention?

## 2. Is the Image Composed Well?

- **Fill the Frame:** Filling the frame helps establish the center of interest, and, simultaneously, it helps exclude competing background details. You can fill the frame by moving closer to the subject or by using a longer focal length (or zooming in).
- **Organize elements:** In composition, the Rule of Thirds is often used to organize elements in a composition. This rule is derived from the Golden Section or Golden Rectangle that divides a space, such as a photographic frame, into equal segments to create pleasing proportions. In simple terms, if you apply the Rule of Thirds in photography you simply imagine a tick-tac-toe pattern on the viewfinder. Then, when you place the subject of the photo at one of the intersection points, the result is a pleasing composition.

**Control the background:** A non-distracting background is a compositional tool to help bring attention to the subject of the photo. You can control the background by moving your position or moving the subject to avoid background distractions and by using a wider aperture (smaller f stop) to blur the background. It's a good practice to review the entire scene and, when possible, eliminate or rearrange as many distracting background elements.

**Keep it Simple:** The fewer the elements in a photo, the stronger the statement the image makes. Simplicity also helps prevent the viewer's eye from being distracted.

To evaluate the composition of your images, try asking these questions:

1. Is there a sense of order and balance in the image that helps lead the eye through the composition?
2. Are elements included that do not contribute to the subject of the image?
3. Are elements excluded that, if included, would have enhanced the subject of the image?
4. Do the depth of field, focal length (lens or zoom setting), light, angle, and perspective enhance the composition?
5. Does the crop enhance the composition?

### 3. Is the Focus Crisp and is the Exposure Appropriate

- Is the sharpest point in the image on the center of interest of the subject of the photo?
- Does the depth of field enhance the subject, mood, look of the image or does it distract from it?
- Does the focal length or zoom setting enhance the subject and message?
- Does the image have good overall contrast for the type of image the photographer intended?
- Does the colour appear natural and/or does it help set the mood of the image?

#### 4. Does the photo tell a story?

- At a minimum, does the photo make a statement that is clear and articulate?
- Does the photo elicit an emotion? In other words, can you relate to the subject or situation?
- What could be changed in the image to give it a stronger impact or message.



## 5. Does the Lighting Enhance the Subject and Message?

=- Is the intensity and colour of light appropriate for the photo?

- Is the light too harsh, too contrasty, or is it too soft and flat?

- Are all the important aspects of the subject well lit, or could the lighting be improved by using a flash, fill flash, reflector, or auxiliary light?

- Does the light help convey the overall message of the photo?

- In a colour photo, is the colour balanced or corrected for white light temperature (in other words, the overall colour should appear natural-looking). And if it isn't, does the colour cast contribute to the photo?

## 6. Is the Approach Creative?

- Does the photo disclose more about the subject, or show it in unexpected ways?
- Does the photo relate visual elements in unusual and intriguing ways?
- Is the photo interesting and fresh, or is it just too well explained for words?

# STYLE

Style is like your signature

It's a visual way of expressing

via how you use the 6 elements