

# **JUDGING GUIDELINES**

## **What is a Good Photograph?**

A photograph should be properly exposed.

The photo should be sharp and the subject should stand out from the background.

The photograph should be properly composed.

A photograph should be interesting to the viewer and sometimes challenging, like some photos cry for the photographer to answer “how did he/she do that?”

It should tell a story, make a statement or set a mood.

It should have good color rendition of the subject.

## **Six Simple Things to Remember**

- 1) Is the photo sharp or intentionally soft?
- 2) Is it properly exposed? Under or over, is there detail in the dark areas or is the highlight area washed out?
- 3) Is it properly composed? Crooked horizon, something chopped off or peeking into the frame?
- 4) Does it tell a story? Can it stand alone?
- 5) Be constructive in your comments! Be positive!
- 6) Be honest and fair to all subject matter. Do not judge a photograph for personal reasons!

## **BASIC CRITIQUING CRITERIA**

**Impact:** What is your first impression, strong or weak, does it hold your eye.

**Creativity:** Use of imagination, freshness of approach, unusual cropping/use of subject matter, design, feeling and imagination that lift the work into the realm of art, could be abstract.

**Style:** Does it set the work apart from others, different but consistent way of seeing, different approach, real, experimental, individual.

**Composition:** Good placement of subject, successful arrangement, uses dynamic symmetry in placing the most important objects, good rhythm in repetition, color, moods, division of photograph, a balanced photograph.

**Print Presentation:** Does the presentation enhance the photograph? Good cropping, straight lines, good color for matting or mounting.

**Color Balance:** Good technique, good selection of color for the subject matter, using very interpretive color, creative use of color.

**Center of Interest:** Dominance of subject matter, grouping of subject and arrangement of objects so one subject of interest prevails, subject holds the eye without distractions, mood, other subjects do not overpower the primary subject.

**Lighting:** Creates a mood, good statement of light, good portrait lighting, artistic, natural looking.

**Subject Matter:** Outstanding interpretation for the subject matter, good camera angle, dominant.

**Print Quality:** Good color tones and balance, strong contrast, artistic lighting, strong contrast, backgrounds in harmony with subject

**Technique:** Different technique for subject matter, stands out, strong.

**Story Telling:** Complete a story within the photograph, successful presentation, achievement of purpose, strong mood and emotion.

## **JUDGING CRITIQUE**

**Be Positive:** remember you are looking at someone's pride and joy. Always start with a positive point like "you have placed the subject very well in the frame" or "the road leads my eye directly to the subject without any distraction". Then let them know what little thing might have improved the photograph like "an early or late light might have given this a richer color".

**Don't find fault:** Remember that you don't have to find something wrong with the photo. If it isn't an above average photo you can let them know how it could have been improved. Sometimes they can't change what would have helped the photo (you can't move a mountain or a tree), but you can ask if they could have changed the angle or location when they took the photo and explain how that would improve it.

**Exposure:** Would the photo be better if the subject was lighter or darker? Is there some detail in the shaded areas or is the lighter area washed out? Explain how a different lighting or time of day would have helped.

**Focus:** Is the image or the subject of the photo sharp? Was the proper depth of field used? Was the correct shutter speed used? Point out the benefits of using different speeds or depth of fields to improve the photograph.

**Personal Bias:** Do not inject your personal bias into the judging and critique of the photograph. All photos should be judged evenly. Leave your personal feelings aside; because you have a personal attachment with the subject you are judging you should never give it extra points. Be fair!

## SCORING

**Note:** The top 3 scores are added and the low score is thrown out.

### **Blank Card**

Turn the card around, this means the photograph shown belongs to you  
You cannot judge your own photograph

### **Below average: 5**

Out of focus (unless intentional)  
Bad composition  
Over or under exposed  
Little impact or imagination (no subject)  
Print is mounted wrong or falls out of matte  
Matte and or print is damaged  
Not relevant to the theme (if there is a category)

### **Average: 6-7**

Technically correct (focus, exposure, etc.)  
Good color for the subject and background  
Matte and print are not damaged  
Relevant to the theme (if any)

### **Above Average: 8-9**

Technically correct

### **Outstanding: 10**

“Knocks your socks off” quality of image  
Technically correct in all respects  
Outstanding composition  
Tells a complete story or creates a mood  
If entered in a “theme category” exemplifies the theme

