



Cape Fear Camera Club

Competition Rules and Judging Guidelines

September 1, 2024

Members are encouraged to print and retain this document for reference during the competition season.

Preamble

The competition rules and guidelines have been developed with the primary objective of promoting education in the art of photography. It is the club's intention to expose the membership to judges of varying backgrounds and areas of expertise. All judges have different perspectives/likes/dislikes, just like everyone in the club. While individual members may not agree with the judging, every perspective has value and should be considered as such.

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I. General Background

A. Eligibility

Cape Fear Camera Club members in good standing, i.e., having paid current dues, may submit entries to both the digital and print competitions.

Minors who are part of a family membership are eligible to compete in competitions. Parent members must be present at competitions along with the minor. Assistance from the parent in photographing and editing competition images must be kept to a minimum.

B. Competitive Divisions

The club has six competitions each year, with the competition year running from October through the following April.

Print Competitions: There are two print competitions each competition year. Dates will be announced on the club website.

Digital Competitions: There are four digital competitions each competition year. Dates will be announced on the club website.

C. Competition Levels

In providing fair competition and to promote competition for all members, the club offers two skill levels:

Level B – Novice to Intermediate

A member shall be considered a Level B photographer if:

1. The member is new to photography, or
2. The member has limited practical or technical experience, or
3. The member demonstrates abilities beyond the novice, but not as extensive as a Level A member.

Level A – Advanced

A member shall be considered a Level A photographer if:

1. The member is an accomplished amateur or professional photographer and consistently demonstrates exceptional skills at a superior level. Ribbon awards in club competitions as well as recognition in the local and greater photography community are qualifications for the Advanced level.

Procedures for Determining Competition Levels

1. Each new member who desires to compete in club competitions must send a brief statement of their photography background and five of their representative portfolio or best images to the current competition committee manager for proper level assignment. Requests from new members must be received by September 15th to be eligible to compete in the first competition of each new season, normally held in early October. Members who miss the September 15th deadline or join after the start of a new club calendar year, must submit this request by the 15th of the month prior to an upcoming competition to be eligible to compete. Please email this information request to: rlthurston@ec.rr.com.
2. Members may request self-promotion (or demotion) between competition levels by notification to the competition committee. Requests are strongly urged to be submitted prior to the beginning of a new club calendar year and not in the middle of an ongoing competition season.
3. Level B members, who win the Image of the Year in the year-end competition at the year-end judging, will be automatically promoted to the Level A competition level for the following year.
4. The competition committee will meet before the start of each new competition season and review the status of members in each competition level. A conscious effort will be made to balance member skills within the two competition levels. Promotions to Level A will be determined by the competition committee and members will be notified before the start of each new competition season.

D. Photo Restrictions

Photo Categories

Each entry in any photo competition (either a print or digital competition) shall be designated, by the competing member, in one of the two following photo categories:

Open - Any subject matter of the member's choice.

Assigned - The subject matter assigned for that specific competition. The specific subject matter assigned for the specific competition will be published on the club website.

Number of Photos Submitted

Each club member may submit a maximum of three photos per competition. No more than two of these photos may be entered in either category, Assigned or Open.

Participation

Members submitting entries must be present at the competition and dues must be paid prior to group level review and placement.

Photo Age

There is no restriction on the age of photos entered in competitions.

Image Content

All parts of the image must be that of the maker, i.e., No third party or AI generated content. The source of the image may be a digital camera, or any scanned photo, negative or 35mm slide. The photograph, in its entirety, must be the work of original material taken by the member photographer. The only exception being the use of image textures as explained in the paragraph Photo Enhancement.

NOTE: The Executive Board reserves the right to remove and/or disqualify from competitions, exhibits, our web site and all club venues, any image or other materials we feel that are not appropriate, considered obscene, is sexually provocative, is racist or sexist, or is derogatory or disrespectful to any individual or group.

Photo Enhancement

All images may be enhanced digitally.

The use of creative filters within software editing programs are permitted in competitions. Image textures from any source are permitted.

Image composites are allowed in competitions. All of the elements of a composite, excluding applied texture effects, must have been photographed by the member photographer.

All photos submitted for competitions must contain Metadata (EXIF information).

The Competition Committee reserves the right to request digital copies of all pieces of composite images to validate the origin of the image elements.

Eligibility of Ribbon Winners

Entries that have received a ribbon in a previous print or digital competition are not eligible for future intra-club competitions.

II. Judging/Scoring Guidelines

A. Elements of Image Merit

Judges will evaluate each photograph using the following major criteria:

Print Competition

1. Impact
2. Composition and Interest
3. Technical Quality
4. Presentation (Including Print, Mat and Mounting) Quality

Digital Competition

1. Impact
2. Composition and Interest
3. Technical Quality

During the competition the judge will comment, in specific terms, on each photograph -- what they like and what can be improved -- in one or more of the major criteria listed above. The following guidelines are an elaboration of the criteria listed above. Judges will use the following guidelines when making comments on the entry.

Impact

1. Creates a strong first impression.
2. Commands one to look, holds the eye.
3. Reflects strength in any of the elements listed below.

Composition and Interest

1. Has good placement of the subject matter.
2. Reflects harmonious proportions.
3. Good cropping adds to the composition.
4. Uses dynamic symmetry for placement of most important objects.
5. Has good rhythm from repetition, whether color, spaces, moods or divisions of the image.
6. Objects or subject matter dominates.
7. Subjects or objects grouped in order for one center of interest to prevail.
8. Subject matter holds the eye without distraction.
9. Strength and definition give the center of interest secondary points.

Technical Quality

1. Has good, strong contrast.
2. Has good tonal values across the spectrum with detail in white and black areas.
3. Has good color balance.
4. Captures expressions and artistic lighting.
5. Makes strong, simple statements.
6. Has good angles.
7. Uses appropriate background that enhances the subject.

Presentation and Print Quality

1. Print Presentation with proper mat and mounting enhances the image.
2. Mat must be clean, firmly mounted, with print firmly affixed to mounting board.

B. Competition Commentary

The judge will make a brief live commentary on each entry. He / she shall use the “Elements of Image Merit” described in II.A. above when making comments on the entry.

C. Scoring Guidelines

The judge will use the following guidelines for scoring each photo:

- 5 Points: Technical defects or serious content problems.
- 6 Points: Acceptable without strong merit.
- 7 Points: Reasonably solid and interesting.
- 8 Points: Very Strong.
- 9 Points: Exceptional.

D. Award of Ribbons

For each competition, the highest scoring 20% of entries will receive ribbons.

The judge will be asked to pick one of the highest rated entries as “Best in Category.” This photograph will be awarded a **Gold ribbon**.

Among the remaining top 20%, those receiving a score of nine will receive a **Blue ribbon**.

A **Red ribbon** will be awarded to the remainder of the 20%.

Scores and ribbon points will be compiled throughout the year for each competing member to determine recognition awards to be presented at the end of each season. Each ribbon winning image of the competition season will complete in the end-of-year competition.

III. Print Competition Preparation and Presentation

A. General Requirements

All entries must meet the Photo Restrictions detailed in section I.D. above.

Images may be printed from a printer of choice including commercial printers.

Prints must be unsigned on the front. Signed images will be rejected from the competition.

Images submitted to print competitions are to be printed on photographic paper only. Images printed on metal, glass, plastic, or canvas surfaces are not eligible.

Prints must be mounted on photographic-type mat board or foam core, and may be matted. Mounting and matting must be with white or black materials. If matted, only single mats may be used. Double matting is not allowed. Please refer to size of entries in III.B below.

Shrink-wrap, bags, glass or frames are not permitted.

B. Print Size Requirements

Minimum print size is 8x10 or 10x8 inches, or equivalent of an 80 square-inch area. If the photo is matted, the mat must allow a minimum of 80 square inches of the photo to show through the window of the mat. Please note that some commercial 8x10 mats may not meet this requirement.

The maximum size of the finished image including the mat is 16x20 or 20x16 inches. Note: Larger prints tend to make stronger impact with the judge and viewers.

C. Pre-Registration and Delivery of Prints

Entries must be pre-registered. The submittal window, typically 7-10 days before the day of competition, will be specified on the Club web site.

1. All prints must be pre-registered on the club website within the designated receiving date window specified by the competition committee and listed on the club website calendar. Please follow the registration rules listed in Appendix C.
2. Members entering the print competition should **arrive early, delivering their prints no later than 15 minutes before the competition begins**. Late arrivals may be accommodated up to the beginning of the competition at the discretion of the competition chair.

D. Image Labeling

Please follow the instructions in the text block below Option 3 in Appendix C on printing image labels for registered entries for Print Competitions. The appropriate image label must be placed in the upper right corner on the back of the print (as viewed from the back of the print).

IV. Digital Image Competition Preparation and Presentation

A. General Requirements

All entries must meet the Photo Restrictions detailed in Section I.D. above.

B. Image Size / Color Space / File Type Requirements

We recommend a minimum of the new PSA standard of 1920 pixels wide and 1080 pixels high. If your photo has pixel dimensions significantly smaller than the recommended PSA sizing, the website software will not upsize your photo. If you submit an image larger than the system maximum size of 7680 x 4320 pixels, your image will be resized to conform with the system limits. If your image file size exceeds 20.0MB, you may see an error message and the file will not be uploaded. It is recommended that you try to keep your image sizes under 4MB.

The sRGB color space is recommended with the image saved in a .jpg format. If your photo is not in the required sRGB color space the website will convert it for you. Although the website will perform some of these functions for you, you are strongly encouraged to learn to perform these adjustments on your own.

C. Image Naming Requirements

When uploading images to the competition website portal, you will be asked to title your image. Please do not use the image file number as your image title. A good image title assists the judge in interpreting the image. Do not insert your name in any part of the title or the image. Image titles with the member names will be rejected from the competition.

D. Image Copyright / Watermark Logo

Placing a member name, copyright identification or watermark logo on an image in a competition entry is not allowed. If any of the preceding information is included on the image it will be rejected from the competition. Please refer to Section V. for more detailed information regarding the club posture for image copyrighting.

E. Submission of Digital Images

Digital photos will be submitted directly to the appropriate competition on the club website at capefearcameraclub.org. The submittal window is typically three to eight days prior to the day of the competition and will be specified on the club web site. There are three options for image entry. Instructions for these three options are detailed in Appendix C.

V. Club Use of Competition Winning Images

Please note that by submitting images to any competition, either print or digital, you are providing the club with the right to:

1. Post your ribbon winning image on the club website – www.capefearcameraclub.org.
2. Use your ribbon winning image to promote the club and its activities, e.g., use your image as an attachment to a newspaper article promoting the club or use your image on a poster to promote a club event or exhibit.
3. Once an image is uploaded to the club website and after each competition is complete, a software generated member copyright identification is automatically applied as an overlay to the image. This copyright will remain on the image as long as it remains on the club website.
4. In no case will any ribbon winning image be used by the Club for any commercial sale.

Appendix A

Print Preparation

I. Printing – General Comments

A. Your images may be printed commercially.

Over the internet

There are many potential resources. One service which is popular with many members is MPIX.com. Many other possibilities can be found by searching for photo printing services online.

Local printing

Below is a short list of local printing services that our members use:

1. Frameworks Digital Imaging
2. Dock Street Printing
3. Curtis Krueger (club member)

The club does not receive commissions for using these or any local printing service.

B. Your images may be printed on your own printer.

There are many ink jet printers available (HP, Epson, Canon, etc.) which do an excellent job.

The key to a quality print is to calibrate the monitor to the printer to ensure print colors are true and proper luminosity is achieved. Calibration systems are available from a variety of vendors.

II. Matting and Mounting

There are number of ways to mat and mount your pictures. Following are excerpts from two of our members detailing how they go about matting the photo and then mounting the matted photo to the backing board.

A. Method 1

Supplies Needed:

1. Tape - Either acid free scotch tape, artist tape or linen tape for attaching the photo to the mat. Double- sided acid free tape to mount the matted photo to the back mounting board. You could also use professional mounting tape, but that is a permanent tape. The others may be peeled apart to reuse the matting on other photographs.
2. Window Mat - A window mat for the front of your photograph.
3. Backing Board - A backing that is the size of the outer dimension of your window mat. This can be another piece of mat board or a piece of foam core.

Adhering the Photo to the Window Mat:

Using 2 pieces of the acid free scotch/artist/linen tape, tape the top of your photo to the back of the window mat. Do not tape all 4 edges. As time passes, the image and the mat expand and contract differently and you will end up with buckling.

When you are mounting the window mat/photo to the backing board, do not use only a top hinge taping. This will not be secure.

Adhering the Matted Photo to the Backing Board:

Place double stick tape onto your foam core or mat backing board. Use approximately 8 pieces - 3 down each longer side, one in the center of each shorter side. You can use the acid free scotch tape on the back of your window mat in exactly the same pattern, so that when sticking these two pieces together, the tapes match up. This will allow you to peel the two pieces apart after the competition and reuse the mat.

B. Method 2

This method uses a slightly varied application which results in a more permanent mounting.

Securing the Photograph to the Mat:

Use Scotch single sided, acid free scrapbooking tape. Use this tape only to hinge mount the photo to the back of the mat. Use three pieces in an "I" formation on each side of the top of the photo. (You can also use a third "I" in the middle of the top of a larger photo if desired.) The mat opening should allow the photo at least 1/4" overlap on all four sides. The photo should hang loosely from the top.

Securing the Matted Photo to the Backing Board:

Glue the matted photo to the backing board with acid free photo glue. Be careful not to apply the glue near the edge of the photo. The photo must hang freely, secured only by the tape hinges at the top of the photo. For glue pattern: use a line of glue along top of mat, a line along bottom of mat and 3 dots down each side, evenly spaced.

Carefully marry the mat to the backboard without sliding the two pieces together as not to buckle the photo.

Supplies:

1. Scotch scrapbooking tape - single sided, acid free, document safe
2. UHU stic (photo glue stick)
3. Mat board or foam core board for backing, but never the self-stick stuff

Supplies are available locally at Hobby Lobby, A.C. Moore or Michael's.

Appendix B

Digital Image Preparation

The following is a description of the steps to prepare a digital image for submission using Photoshop. Although not described here, preparation in **Lightroom and Photoshop Elements or other software** should follow a similar process.

Photoshop Digital Image Preparation

Often members save their original image and create a copy for club competition purposes. The instructions below will assist you in this process.

1. Open your photo in Photoshop. Once you have completed your editing, Select < Image> from the top menu and then select <Image Size...> from the drop down list. This will open the Image Size menu box below.
2. Make sure all three check boxes at the bottom (Scale Styles, Constrain Proportions and Resample Image) are checked.
3. Make sure that Resample is selected in the bottom box.
4. Type in the desired image dimensions that you prefer in terms of inches or pixels. Save your photo as a .jpg as follows: Select < File> from the top menu and then select <Save As> from the dropdown list. In the Format box Select <JPEG Under Format Options, choose Baseline ("Standard"). Click OK to complete the file saving action. You are now ready to forward the photo for the competition.

Appendix C

Instructions for Entering Images in Digital Competitions

Log on to the capefearcameraclub.org with your Username and Password. Click on:

Activities > Club Competitions > Submit Images to a Competition. You will then see our upcoming competition listed by date and subject. Each competition event is listed as two separate competitions. Select the appropriate competition (Assigned or Open) that you wish to enter. You will see 3 options: 1) Upload or Catalog a Single Image into the Competition, 2) Upload Multiple Images into the Competition, and 3) Add Images from my Image Library.

A. OPTION 1: Click on Upload and Catalog a Single Image. Click on the Select button & find your image file on your computer and click on open. The image will now upload to the site and the round green button will indicate it is complete. Enter the name of your image in the Title block. When you are finished, click on Save at the bottom of the screen to commit your image to the competition. You may Remove or Edit your image, if necessary by using the respective buttons on this screen. You can now click on Return To Competition List and repeat the process for your next entry.

B. OPTION 2: Click on Upload Multiple Images. Enter the title of your first image in the block Image Title. Click on the Select button & locate your first image file on your computer. Click on open in your window for the image to load. Enter the name of your image in the Title block. Then, click on Next Image and repeat the process. When you are finished, click on Save Images and your images are committed. Note: you are uploading multiple images from this screen to either the Assigned or Open competition. You cannot upload both Assigned and Open entries in one step from this screen.

C. OPTION 3: This option is for those members who have previously added photos to their personal Image Library. Click on Add Images from my Image Library and you will see your images. Place a check mark on the image(s) that you choose to enter. On the bottom of the screen you will see the option: Finished Marking Desired Images. When you click on this button, your images are committed.

- This step applies to entries to Print Competitions. After committing your images using any of the 3 methods listed above, you will see "Print Labels for Print Submissions" just below the image(s). Click on that link and it will give you 2 label format options for printing. Either option can be printed on standard 8.5 x 11 inch copy paper. After selecting the label option, click on the printer icon (the last icon on the right just above your image) to print your labels. Place the corresponding label on the back of each mounted image in the top right-hand corner, when looking at the back of the image.

We recommend using Option 1 for those who are new to the website and want to use a simpler process. Your competition level, A or B, has been programmed into the website with your club membership and there is no requirement to specify your competition level. Images directly uploaded from your computer into competitions will automatically be loaded into your Image Library.

A tutorial video is available by logging on to the website and clicking on: Help > Videos > Uploading Images To Competitions. The same video can also be found by clicking on: Competitions > Submit Images to a Competition > Show Me How to Submit Images to a Competition.

For those who need additional assistance, please contact a member of the Competition Committee.