

Tips for Photography Competitions

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Making Your Image; How to improve your chances.

No - I don't mean bribe the Judge!

- Stand out from the crowd - Keep in mind the judge will be viewing possibly hundreds of images in some competitions. Find ways to make your photos unexpected. Change your perspective by getting down low or climbing high. Use bright colours or an unusual composition.
- Tell a story - We all love a story. Even in the beginning we did this in cave painting and dance. The best story evokes an emotion or conveys an idea.
- Inspiration - Look at the work of others. This one of the best ways to get those creative juices flowing. Also look at previous competition winners, but be sure to maintain your originality.
- Get a second opinion - It can be helpful to have someone else look at your work. They may notice something you have missed because you are too close to your subject. Ultimately it is your work so go with your instincts.
- Your Camera - You don't need the latest equipment. Learn all you can about what you have. Take your camera off automatic and try manual.
- It is more about what is going on in your head, and your willingness to learn and experiment.
- Don't give up - If you do well then congratulations! If not, think of it as an opportunity to better your photography. Above all have fun.

A Quote from Mary Pickford

(A silent screen actress and producer)

*"For this thing we call 'failure' is not the falling down,
but the staying down"*

Preparing Your Entries

- Timing. Don't leave your entry till the last minute. Many things are missed if you are in a hurry.
- Rules. Read them, then read them again!
- Category. Enter your photo in the correct category. Be particularly careful with the difference between abstract and impressionism. If you can tell what it is, it is not abstract.

- **Presentation.** Look at your photo carefully. Remove any spots and marks. Go around the borders and remove any distractions. Check again! Have you cropped too tightly or perhaps not enough. Keep your subject on the third if this suits.
- **Technical.** Check for technical problems such as contrast and brightness. If your image is not sharp and it needs to be, then throw it out.

Digital Entries

- **Size.** Make sure you have sized your entries correctly.
- **Borders.** Beware using a border. Particularly a large white border. This stands out and detracts from your image as they are generally viewed on a black screen. Keep borders to a fine line and only use if appropriate.
- **Name.** The filename must conform to the competition guidelines.

Prints Entries

- **Mats.** Make sure your mat is clean and tidy and can be hung without bending if your entry is accepted.
- **Coloured mats** can detract from your photo. Black and grey, or white and cream are easiest to reuse.
- **Size.** Most competitions use a maximum mat size. Check this.
- **Mounting.** Your photo must be secure in the mat as you don't want it to shift.
- **Name** on the back, in top middle, to the competition guidelines.

A Note on Judging

Remember that judges are human beings, and human beings can have vastly different opinions and different tastes. If you think your image deserves another chance then enter it in another competition. Take something from the remarks of each judge and gradually your photography will improve.

Also remember that judges give freely of their time to assess your photography and regardless of whether you were awarded or not, they deserve our thanks, not criticism.

Without our judges there would be no competitions or evaluations.

I have found during my years in a camera club, that entering competitions has been my best way of improving my photography. However please respect that not everyone is interested in the competitive aspect of photography.

The social interaction is by far the most enjoyable part of a camera club.