Thousand Oaks Photo Group
Photo Challenge Guidelines for 2021
(November 22, 2020)

Introduction: This is a complete rewrite of guidelines for Thousand Oaks Photo Group's (TOPG) photo competitions beginning in 2021. The nomenclature we have used in the past, *Print Competition* and *Digital Composition Challenge*, has been confusing to some. In response, we have simplified the concept. For 2021, there will be only one type of challenge, the *Photo Challenge*. Submission guidelines have been simplified to foster creativity and artistic freedom. Challenges will be mix of conceptual themes, subject matter, and technical skill areas. There are now two divisions for our Photo Challenges: *Projected Images* and *Printed Images*. Within each division, there two categories: *Assigned* and *Open*. We hope that this simpler set of requirements will allow you to expand your skillsets into new areas, be more creative, and submit more images for critique.

As we begin 2021, we are still conducting virtual meetings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Print submissions are not possible until further notice is given.

Highlights:

- *Image editing rules have been greatly relaxed when compared to guidelines issued in previous years. However, there are still some rules. Please read this document carefully.*

- *Digital images must be submitted no later than 10:00 PM on the immediate Wednesday before the club meeting.*

- *Send digital images to [PhotoEntries@tophotogroup.org.](mailto:PhotoEntries@tophotogroup.org)*

- *Digital images must be no larger than 1400 pixels wide and 1280 pixels tall.*

- *Digital images should be submitted as jpeg (jpg) images using the SRGB color space.*

- *Be sure to follow our file naming requirements exactly. See Section 3.1.2 in this document.*

1.   **General Requirements:**[1]

Images submitted to TOPG photo challenges are judged for their technical and pictorial merit. They should be properly exposed, be appropriately in focus, and have appropriate depth of

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[1] General Requirements adapted from S4C competition guidelines: https://www.s4c-photo.org/competitions. Some concepts have been borrowed and adapted, statements have been paraphrased, and some sections have been directly lifted from S4C requirements because they have been succinctly and concisely written over time and we could not state them better.

field. Imagery should have impact and appeal and strong composition. Our guest judges do their best to interpret our rules and judge images accordingly. Judging by its very nature is subjective, and TOPG members should understand this before submitting images for critique and judging.

1.1.   **Eligibility Qualifications** – Only paid-up club members of the T.O. Photo Group may enter our monthly photo challenges.

1.2.   **Number of Images -** You may submit a total of 2 images per monthly challenge. Whether images are submitted into the digital or print divisions, in either the assigned or open categories, the limit remains a maximum of 2 images per challenge. You may not submit the same image two times in any one challenge. You may choose to submit your images into the same division and category, or you may submit each image into different divisions and categories.

1.3.   **Resubmission of Images** – You may submit the same image in subsequent months. Once an image has received a merit-level score, it may not be resubmitted in any subsequent challenge for the current challenge year. In subsequent years, the image may be submitted into a challenge, but it may never be submitted into the same division/category where it received recognition.

1.4.   **Basic Image Editing Requirements** – All images must be made by the entrant with a camera. The maker may add artwork and computer-generated graphics if these components are also created by the maker. The use of commercially produced textures, borders and similar features is also allowed. In all cases, the primary image must be the predominate element of the final presented image.

Certain assigned categories and themes may include additional constraints such as color, monochrome, photojournalism, date of capture, etc. In all cases, the specific monthly challenge guidelines will explicitly state any constraints and restrictions.

Finally, nothing in the submitted image may identify the maker.

1.5.   **Disqualification** – Images submitted in an assigned category that do not comply with requirements for a specific challenge will be disqualified. The maker will be contacted, if possible, by the challenge team. If time allows, the maker can submit another image or request the image be moved to the *open* category. Please note, our challenge stagers do their best to get things right. Their decision is final.

1.6. **Judging** – Judging of the images are conducted by a qualified, experienced photographer. The judge will critique that image and assign a score according to the club's image scoring system:

SCORE	Description
9	Images exhibiting exceptional technical skill and impact
8	Images with very high technical skill and impact
7	Good images, worthy of award consideration
6	Average quality images
5	Below average images, needing improvement
4	Below average images with serious defects
3	Images which do not address the Assigned Theme or Topic

2. **Categories** – There are two separate *categories* in every photo challenge, *Assigned* and *Open*.

2.1. **Assigned Category Requirements**

2.1.1. **Topic or Theme** – The intent of the Assigned Category is to challenge club members to create images that conforms to specific guidelines for each month's challenge. Images submitted in the assigned category will be judged on how well they address the assigned theme in addition to general requirements stated in the General Requirements (Section 1).

Assigned Category topics are typically announced during the first meeting of the year, posted on the club's website, and are included in TOPG email messaging.

2.1.2. **Editing** – You may freely edit to your images according to the General Requirements in Section 1 above, *underline unless restricted for an Assigned Category topic/theme*. Guidelines for the monthly topic/theme will explicitly describe any limitations for that particular challenge.

2.2. **Open Category**

2.2.1. **Topic** - There are no assigned topics in the Open category. You pick the theme for your image.

2.2.2.   **Editing** – You may freely edit to your images according to the General Requirements in Section 1 above.

3.   **Divisions** – There are two distinct divisions for TOPG photo challenges, *Projected Images* and *Prints*. Procedures for both divisions are similar but differ slightly depending on the mode of presentation.

3.1.   **Projected Image Division** – Images submitted in the projected image division are presented for critique via a digital presentation device, according to the procedure outlined below:

- A moderator will present all images one image at a time. For each image:
- The moderator will announce its name.
- The judge will critique the image and assign a score according to the club's image scoring system.
- The names of makers whose images receive a score 8 or 9 will be announced by the moderator.

The following guidelines procedures pertain to the Projected Image Division.

3.1.1.   **Size Restrictions** - All images must be resized to a **maximum of 1400 pixels wide and 1280 pixels tall** (*neither dimension* may exceed those measurements). See the article entitled, *Resizing Your Images for Contests* on our website.

3.1.2.   **File Naming** – Digital images must be renamed according to the following template:

category_maker name sequencer_image title

The *category* will always be either "assigned" or "open." The *maker name* is the first and last name of the maker. The *sequencer* defines the order of presentation, 1 or 2, if you submit more than one image into the project image division. Finally, the *image title* is a descriptive title (not a file number). As an example, the following are sample file names:

Assigned_David Smith 1_Sultry Sunset.jpg and
Open_David Smith 2_Cool Sunrise.jpg

Do NOT use ALL CAPS. DO use *spaces* and *underscores* for legibility and readability. Even if you only submit one image in the monthly challenge, you must include the sequencer.

For details see Resizing and Naming Instruction on the TOPG Website.

3.1.3.   **Submitting Your Digital Images** – Digital images are submitted via email to the following email address: PhotoEntries@tophotogroup.org. An email will be sent back to you to confirm receipt of your images(s) or to notify you if corrections are. If you do not receive a confirmatory email, presume that your images(s) were not received and contact the club for assistance. Enter early to be sure you have time to get your images entered with the correct naming conventions.

3.2.   **Printed Image Division**– Prints submitted to the printed image division are presented for critique as mounted prints. A companion digital image is also required for archival and challenge processes.

- A moderator will present all prints to the judge, one image at a time. For each image:
- The printed image will be placed on a well-lighted viewing platform. A companion digital image will be displayed for club member viewing.
- The moderator will announce the photo's name.
- The judge will critique the photograph and assign a score according to the club's image scoring system.
- The names of makers whose prints receive a score 8 or 9 will be announced by the moderator.

The following guidelines procedures pertain to the Projected Image Division.

3.2.1.   **Print Dimensions, Mounting and Companion Digital Images** – Print submissions may be any size up to a maximum physical outside dimension of 16" x 20". You must mount your printed image on Foam Core or inside a rigid mat, (no paper mats, no double matting allowed). The outside of the mount or mat dimensions cannot be larger than a maximum of 16"x 20". Hard frames of any kind are not allowed, and prints may not be mounted behind glass or plastic.

A Companion Digital Image must be submitted with each print. These images will be projected at the meeting so club members can view a copy of the image while the judge is viewing in printed form. File size, naming and submission procedures for companion images match those stated for image submissions to the Projected Image Division. See sections 3.1.1 through 3.1.3 for details.

3.2.2.   **Labeling your Prints** – All prints must contain the proper labeling information printed on the back side of the print. You must include the following information.

         3.2.2.1.   Category (Assigned or Open)
         3.2.2.2.   Full name of the maker
         3.2.2.3.   Image Title (title of the companion digital image must match)

3.2.3.   **Descriptive Titles** – You may add a description or a title to the front of the print, but your Category and Name must only go on the back along with the title of the image.

4.   **Use of Images** - Any image entered in a club challenge will be published in a gallery on the club's website. It may also be posted on the club's Facebook and Instagram pages and/or used in a club newsletter and publicity materials.

5.   **Conformity of TOPG Photo Challenge Guidelines to Rules and Guidelines for Other Organizations** – TOPG members are welcome to submit the same imagery to TOPG and other organization's photo competitions. However, we caution the maker to understand submission rules for each organization may differ. Thus, images submitted under TOPG guidelines may not be eligible for other organization's competitions and vice versa. Be sure to understand the rules for each organization that you wish to submit images for competition.