Thousand Oaks Photo Group
Photo Challenge Guidelines

(December 19, 2024)

Revision Summary: There are very few changes to our photo challenge guidelines this year. They are as follows:

- **Image Size** - All images must be resized to a **maximum of 1920 pixels wide and 1080 pixels high**. We are making this change to be in compliance with the most common image sizing guidelines for PSA Exhibitions and for S4C competitions.

- **Use of Artificial Intelligence** – Images created by image creation software (frequently called 'AI' images) are not allowed in competition. TOPG members should refrain from submitting AI generated images (in whole or in part). This does not restrict the use of tools which may contain AI components in them for purposes of noise reduction, dust removal, sharpening or similar cosmetic enhancements. However, the maker's original photograph should remain the primary information content for the final product.

- **Print Division Requirements** – We have removed requirements for print competitions from this documentation**.** Since we have not conducted print competitions in several years, requirements for any print competitions will be announced in advance of any print competition. There are no plans for conducting print competitions at this time.

Introduction: The image submission guidelines for the Thousand Oaks Photo Group's (TOPG) photo competitions were completely revamped in 2021. Since then, we have not made any changes to these guidelines. However, advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have changed the photographic world online and in print media. Some AI enhancements can be beneficial, but we are also at the brink where computer generated imagery can supplant photography. Hence, the TOPG stives to strike a balance between free use of AI tools and totally banning them. Members may use AI tools for purposes of noise reduction, dust removal, sharpening or similar cosmetic enhancements. However, the use of AI tools for replacing large parts of an image or an image in total is strictly prohibited. It is not our intention or the intention of the judges to "pixel peep," and makers should use their best judgment in the use of AI tools.

Highlights:

- *Images submitted in the assigned or open category are typically pictorial. With the exception of the use of AI as explained above and restrictions on use of your own images, makers are free to utilize the wide assortment of photo editing tools available to them.*
- *All 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.*
- *Images must be no larger than 1920 pixels wide and 1080 pixels tall.*
- *Images must 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 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. You may choose to submit your images into the same category, or you may submit each image into different 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 utilizing a camera as the primary recording device. 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 maker's primary image must be the predominate element of the final presented image**.**

Certain assigned categories and themes may include additional constraints such as

[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.

color, monochrome, photojournalism, date of capture, etc. In all cases, the specific monthly challenge guidelines will explicitly state any constraints and restrictions.

1.5. **Use of Artificial Intelligence** – Images created by image creation software (frequently called 'AI' images) are not allowed. TOPG members should refrain from submitting AI generated images (in whole or in part). This does not restrict the use of tools which may have AI components in them for purposes of noise reduction, dust removal, sharpening or similar cosmetic enhancements. However, the maker's original photograph should contain the primary information content for the final product.

The TOPG stives to strike a balance between free use of AI tools and totally banning them. Members may use AI tools for purposes of noise reduction, dust removal, sharpening or similar cosmetic enhancements. However, the use of AI tools for replacing large parts of an image or an image in total is strictly prohibited.

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

1.7. **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.

1.8. **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 conform 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 your images according to the General Requirements in Section 1 above, *unless restricted by 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 your images according to the General Requirements in Section 1 above.

2.2.3. **Size Restrictions** - All images must be resized to a **maximum of 1920 pixels wide and 1080 pixels tall** (*neither dimension* may exceed those measurements). See the article entitled, *Resizing Your Images for Contests* on our website.

2.2.4. **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's 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.

2.2.5. **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. Image Competition Process

Images are submitted by club members to the TOPG Photo Challenge Manager several days before the monthly photo challenge. The Photo Challenge Manager prepares the images for the monthly review by cataloging them and building necessary spreadsheets for recording the challenge results. Prior to the monthly photo challenge, two activities occur. First, the Photo Challenge Manager makes the images available for review by the judge prior to the monthly meeting. Care is taken to ensure the anonymity of the maker and the title of the imagery. Second, the Photo Challenge Moderator prepares a web presentation for public review by the assigned judge. Web-based presentation tools are used to present the images to the judge and the viewing public simultaneously at the time of the photo challenge. The following procedure is followed:

- The moderator reviews the scoring guidelines with the judge.
- The moderator describes the challenge description.

For each image submitted for review, the moderator presents each image for review, one at a time:

- The moderator will display the image and 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.

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.