

Criteria for Judging Photographs

by Bob Renker

The photos will be judged with the following having equal importance:

Impact

Composition

Technique

Impact:

When you **first see** the photo, it makes you think "Wow!" this is a great photo, for a high score. Or, you may think "Baw", I don't think this is a good photo, for a low score. This is your first impression!

Composition:

A photo that has artistic presentation. It has a focal point, great color (or black & white), and no distractions.

- It is recommended to use the "Rule of thirds", where the subject is located 1/3 from the left, 1/3 from the right, 1/3 from the top, 1/3 from the bottom, or any combination of the previous. This is artistically better than having the subject in the center. It is acceptable to break this rule for a portrait type photo.
- It is nice to have a lead in feature, such as a stem leading your eye into the subject of the photo, such as the iris bloom, or a pathway curving into a bed of irises.
- The subject may be framed, such as having bush or tree leaves on the left side, right side, top, bottom, and/or corners of the photo.
- If there are multiple subjects, it is best to have an odd number of subjects, such as 1, 3, 5, and etc., as odd numbers are more pleasing than even numbers.
- It is best to have subjects arranged in geometric patterns, such as circles, ellipses, diagonals, and etc..
- If it is an outdoor photo, it is best to not have the horizon in the middle of the photo. Move it to approximately 1/3 from the top or bottom of the photo.
- Make sure there are no distractions in the photo, such as weeds, sticks, candy wrappers, cigarette butts, and etc.. They will stand out like a "sore thumb" in the photo. Look for

these where you are going to take the picture, as they will not show up in the camera view finder, because you will be concentrating on the subject and not notice a distraction.

Technique:

Proper exposure, not too light or too dark. Good focus and proper depth of field.

- If the overall exposure is too light or too dark, use the camera "+/-" adjustment to brighten or darken the exposure.
- The exposure should show texture in both the lightest and darkest areas. If this is a problem, expose for the lightest area (showing texture) and use reflectors to add light to the dark areas (showing texture). You can use tin foil, white cardboard, or photographic reflectors made for this purpose.
- Depth of field is the amount of the photo that is in focus, from in front of the subject to behind the subject. In front of that and behind that will be out of focus from a small amount to a great amount. Depth of field is a function of the camera aperture and camera to subject distance. A large aperture (f-1.8) will have a shallow depth of field, where as a small aperture (f-22) will have a large depth of field. A small distance from camera to subject will have a small depth of field, whereas a large distance from camera to subject will have a large depth of field. The depth of field is typically 1/3 in front of the subject and 2/3 behind the subject. Therefore, focus on an object 1/3 behind the front of the subject by pressing the shutter button half way down, then move the 3/4 camera to get the exposure you want, and press the shutter button all the way down to take the photo.
- Some cameras allow you to adjust the depth of field easily when the camera is in aperture mode. By using a rotating knob to adjust the f-stop, the camera automatically adjusts the shutter speed for proper exposure.
- If the subject has a terrible background, using a very narrow depth of field will allow you to make the background so out of focus that the background will be just a blob of color that is not as distracting.
- Lighting is very important. For outdoor photos in direct sunlight, you will get harsh shadows and over bright areas, if taken between 10 AM and 4 PM, therefore take the picture before 10 AM or after 4 PM. Cloudy days are good for picture taking (no direct sun on the subject).

- Try not to use direct flash from the camera, which causes harsh shadows and over bright areas. Use bounce flash from the ceiling or walls, or use other lighting rather than flash.