

Tips

General Photography and Contest Tips



Basic tips for better photography and contest entries.

1. Choose subjects that are especially interesting or appealing. “Less is more”, experiment by keeping your photo very plain except for the subject.
2. Look for repetitive patterns to add interest to a photo.
3. Try photographing reactions to events rather than the event itself.
4. To increase the impact of your photos, try photographing a special expression, create exceptional placement of the subject or find a beautiful location.
5. Anticipate and plan photo opportunities before a “great” shot might happen.
6. View and learn from other photographer’s work and change the technique to create your own unique style.
7. Create a photograph from someone else’s perspective. For example, a baby’s view out of his crib or the view a dog would have looking out of a doghouse.
8. To increase creativity try new angles, different times of daylight, filters, subjects or colored lighting to create different effects.
9. Use lighting to your advantage to create a mood for the photograph. Late evening sunlight creates a wonderful atmosphere for subjects, or use backlighting to create a different effect.
10. Color photographs can be made to exhibit a warm (red or orange colors) or cool (blue colors) feeling depending on lighting.

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11. To best compliment your subject, try to place your center of interest anywhere but the center of the image. By offsetting your subject, your photographs will appear more interesting and compositionally pleasing.
12. Look for visually interesting textures or subjects that others may overlook, such as a close-up of a horse's eye rather than the traditional photo of the entire head, or a lighted pattern on the waves rather than a traditional seascape.
13. Lighting may be improved by using silver, gold or white reflectors, or bounce your flash off the ceiling. Direct flash often creates "red eye" and harsh shadows.
14. A photograph is of light bouncing off a subject. Keeping this in mind, experiment with as many light sources as possible to create the best lighting for your subject and to create the desired mood.
15. Study photography books, magazines, websites and product catalogs to keep current on the newest trends and equipment available and to learn new ideas and techniques.
16. Set aside time for your photography. In a busy world, photography can be an enjoyable hobby. Invest in yourself and schedule times in your appointment book for your interests and hobbies.
17. Try to bring out the personality that makes up any and every subject
18. With digital photography, don't be afraid to take many shots of just one subject. A special photo usually takes many shots to create, and with digital, the ability to erase the mundane ones is a great advantage.
19. Use a tripod or a monopod to increase the details and lessen the blur in your photos. Professionals are rarely without one.
20. Try using foreground objects to "frame" landscapes or seascapes.
21. Keep your backgrounds simple to help push the viewer to focus in on your subject.
22. Crop out as much background as possible to help direct the viewer to your subject in the photo, unless the background has compelling information important to your composition such as a scenic sky or other important element. Close-ups may provide the most visual impact, as the subject matter is taking up most of the composition.
23. Your photograph should provide a compelling reason for the viewer to look at it. When selecting photos for competition, only pick the ones that "jump out" at you from the bunch. They will offer the most visual interest for the viewer.
24. A change in aperture is a great technique for creating depth of field.
25. The photograph should have an interesting or thought provoking title.
26. Try to keep your expectations realistic when entering competitions. It is better to win and to have not expected it, then to not place after hoping for a big win.
27. Set goals and a timeline for your photography career. Entering competitions is a great way to encourage and challenge you to create new quality photographs.
28. Winning in competitions gives your professional resume and photography added credibility and valuable recognition.
29. You can't win if you don't enter. Enter as many competitions as you can, but be certain that you are able to retain the copyright of your photographs.
30. Enter competitions in numerous categories to help stretch your creative abilities.
31. Judging in photo competitions is somewhat subjective, so a print that didn't win in one competition may win in the next. If you don't win, and you feel your print is great, try a different competition and the next judges may agree with you.
32. Try to avoid the last minute massive rush of entries at the competition deadline. Procrastination may mean a missed deadline and a missed opportunity.
33. When you win in a contest, be sure to notify your local newspapers (with a press release), they are often looking for "good news" stories and the free news coverage will only increase your credibility as a photographer and you will gain valuable recognition.
34. Learn from viewing winning images in competitions to understand why the judge may have selected them. You are likely to find many positive qualities, try to incorporate these qualities into your work.
35. Choose subjects that clearly fit the competition's themes.
36. In competitions ornate borders can actually distract the judges' attention away from your subject and lower your print score.
37. When entering series of photographs, be sure that all the images are equally appealing. One weak image in a series can pull the score down on the entire set.

Important things to look for in a winning entry.

1. Impact

- An extraordinary photograph with strong visual impact.
- The image should “grab” the viewer and demand attention.

2. Creativity

- A unique way of looking at a subject or object.
- Fresh and imaginative approach to the subject.

3. Style

- The photograph should be original in style.
- Does the image stand out from the others?

4. Composition

- Placement of subject well executed.
- Posing of subject interesting.

5. Print Presentation

- Print presentation should be flawless.
- A well-presented print will score better than one that is sloppy, bent or dirty.

6. Color Harmony

- The photograph should follow an interesting color palette, such as complimentary, analogous or primary colors, or other interesting combinations.

7. Center of Interest

- A photograph’s center of interest should be presented in such a way as to complement and draw attention the intended subject.

8. Lighting

- Photograph should exhibit good control of lighting with detail throughout the image, even in highlights and shadows.
- The photograph should have nice contrast, with a quality white and true black.

9. Subject Matter

- The subject should have a special quality that will interest the viewer.
- The photograph must have the appropriate content for the category that has been entered.

10. Technical Excellence/Print Quality

- The photograph should be printed in the highest quality possible. The better the quality, the more likely the photograph will catch the judges admiration and increase the score.
- Proper exposure to convey a mood.

11. Technique

- Photograph should have quality technical execution.
- Correct exposure for the subject matter or mood of photo.
- Excellent composition, contrast and clarity.

12. Story Telling Ability

- The photograph should give enough interesting visual information for the viewer to take interest, then be able to tell a story either complete, to make the viewer want more, ask questions or simply create a starting point.