



CANADA
4-H Manitoba

Judging Photography

Photos, particularly the family snapshot variety most commonly exhibited at fairs, are very personal -a moment of a person's life caught in time.

Photography Scorecard

(for amateur competition)

Impact, First Impression	20
Composition	20
Presentation Mounting	20
General Acceptance	40

NOTE: General Acceptance encompasses such things as points covered under "Types of Pictures", good camera techniques, shadow and light used effectively, creation of depth through the use of perspective and proportion, and whether the photograph is generally pleasing to the viewer.

Some Things to Look For

The single, most important characteristic of any good picture is simplicity.

Impact

- First impression -What did the photographer want to say? How successfully have they carried it through?
- Impact may depend upon timeliness, originality, contrast between light and dark, humour, mood, dramatic effect, human appeal.
- One way of achieving impact is to eliminate distracting detail from the picture, and focus in on the one aspect that gives the picture its appeal.

Composition

- The arrangement of all elements in a picture. It's where the subject looks best in a picture.
 - Camera angle
 - choosing the camera angle carefully gives more impact and interest.
 - long distance -establishing shot -tells you "where"
 - close-ups focus attention on people or action
 - shot from below -low angle
 - shot from above -high angle
 - sometimes shooting vertically rather than horizontally will create a more effective photo.
 - location of subject within the photo.

- Framing the subject
 - often, results are more pleasing if the subject is not right in the center of the picture.
 - the same thing applies to horizons. They can be above or below center, but should be straight.
- Background
 - in general, the background should be simple -one that draws the eye to the subject. Exception -if there is something in the background that helps to tell the story.
 - foreground -may distract, or add to the photo.
 - foregrounds and backgrounds need not be in sharp focus, as long as the subject/focal point is sharp.
- Lighting
 - lighting is a very broad subject and can be quite technical. However, two things you might watch for are:
 - Shadows
 - harsh, undesirable shadows on the subject's face. Subject shadowed by trees, or buildings. Part of the picture lost in shadow.
 - shadows can also create pleasing effects if the photographer is aware of where they fall in the composition (e.g. snow scenes) interplay of light and shadow.
 - Good use of natural light.

Presentation

- Mounting
 - clean, neat, should enhance picture, not detract from it
 - preferably on white or black mounting board or poster paper; color may be used but shouldn't distract from the photo.
 - generally speaking the mounted picture shouldn't be "flimsy" to avoid damage to the photos.
 - rubber cement, photo mounts, two sided tape are all possible mounting materials; photos should be firmly attached to the backing. -picture can be mounted flush or with margins. Usually more attractive if bottom margin is wider than sides or top.

Law of margins:

bottom of mount is always wider than sides or top

1. Vertical picture -top margin wider than side
 2. Horizontal-side margins wider than top
 3. Square -side and tops equal.
- Title or Caption -short and to the point -supply only essential information; should only be included if requested in the class description
 - If there are specific requirements in the rules, these should be observed e.g.
 - size of picture -snapshot, 5x7, 8x10, 4x6
 - number of pictures in collection
 - mounted or unmounted, etc.
 - color or black-and-white
 - title or caption if required in the class ex. "list location". This may specify that it be entered on the entry tags.

General Acceptance

Basic points of Good Photography to watch for:

- Picture is clear and sharp, is interesting, and is appealing.
- The picture is simple, with no unnecessary details that take your eye away from the main subject. The background of the picture is plain and makes the subject stand out. If there is something in the background, it shows where the picture was taken or helps to tell the story.
- Pictures of people show them doing something, looking natural, not posed. (A formal portrait is an exception).
- Close-up shots draw attention. The person or subject fills most of the picture. Close-ups tell details of a story.
- The person or subject is slightly off centre in the picture. No important parts are cut off! Watch for objects above and behind the subject-it shouldn't appear that a telephone pole or tree branch is growing out of someone's head.
- Edges of buildings (or other straight lines) line up straight with edges of picture. The person taking the picture held the camera level.
- Good lighting lets you see the subject in the picture clearly. People squint in a picture if the sun was shining directly into their eyes -not so good! Important parts of the picture should not be lost in shadows.
- Look for these common mistakes:
 - light leaks -under or over exposure
 - part of subject is blurred through movement (of the subject or the camera)
 - picture not sharp, unless this effect was created intentionally either through weather conditions, the use of a filter or other special effect.
 - photo foggy because lens was dirty.

Types of Photos

1. People Pictures

- background not too 'busy'
- unless it's a formal portrait, people should be doing something
- should look natural, spontaneous, not posed
- classes may be broken down by age, number of people, candid vs. posed, or activity.

2. Landscapes

- Landscape photos are as varied as the environment around us. Landscapes can be natural or manmade. City skylines, mountains, sunsets, lakes, fields of grain -all are subjects for landscape photography.
- have something in the foreground -people, a tree, flowers, etc. to give an idea of the scale, This emphasizes the size of the surrounding scenery, as well as providing a focus of interest for the photo.
- "Frame" your scene with tree branches, or other natural frames; the frame should not detract from the focal point
- Focal point -something that the eye comes to rest on
- Perspective -if there are definite lines in a picture such as roads, footsteps in sand or snow -they should carry your eye toward the focal point
- Use of colors
- Consider the rule of thirds, but keep in mind that composition isn't an exact science. The rule of thirds doesn't always create the most dynamic composition.

As a judge be aware of the rules of the event -there may be separate class for "natural" and "manmade" landscapes, or it may ask for particular locations or seasons.

3. Animals

- usually easier to pose if someone is with them. The child-pet combination is hard to beat for general appeal
- large animals (cattle; horses), are often photographed from the side with the animal's head turned slightly toward the camera
- there may be separate classes for "wild" vs. "pets or domestic" or " animals and people"

4. Buildings/Architecture

- most often the camera is held level so that the buildings look, straight up and down.

5. Other classes:

- you may see other classes including still life, agriculture and flowers. The same principles of good photography apply to these classes as to people or landscapes.

6. Action

- Composing a scene with a moving subject is not different from composing a still scene, except for one thing-the subject is moving. Usually a picture will be more pleasing if the subject appears to be headed into the picture, rather than out of it. The subject should have some room to continue in the picture. It's especially important when panning.
- action photos may show some blurring of the background to give an impression of speed. The focal point of the picture should be in focus.
- A good action photo should convey a sense of movement and excitement -it caught the subject in the act!

7. Collections of pictures

- Chronological series -follows some procedure through step-by-step (e.g. building a house; same tree in different seasons, icing a cake etc) OR
- Non-chronological series -should still relate to one another (e.g. group of flower pictures)
- **Both these series should:
 - carry a common theme
 - tell a story

NOTE: There are always exceptions to all the guidelines listed above. The photographer may have planned a "special" effect or result (i.e. Diagonal framing to add interest).

Note on digital photos -you may be asked to judge a class where computer enhancement is allowed; generally a before and after shot are included.

In the past competitions often had rules on the acceptability of digital photos that are not enhanced in the photo classes. Digital cameras are so common now, that you will likely see predominately digital photos – including those taken on cell phones, tablets, etc.

Sections of the Judging Fact Sheets were adapted from a publication by
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