

PHOTOGRAPHY *Frequently Asked Questions...*

General & Entry Questions:

Q: Are there entry fees?

A: No. Alaska State Fair does not charge entry fees for exhibits.

Q: How many pictures can I enter in the same class?

A: Only one photograph may be entered per class. You may enter a total of three photos – each in a different class.

Q: Can I enter the same photo three times in different classes?

A: This has happened in the past and it is usually allowed, but the judges will notice any duplication and generally ignore the entry. You are better off showing a range of your work.

Q: Do I retain rights to the photos or what are the copyright conditions?

A: The Alaska State Fair reserves only the right to display your photo publicly and to release your name in a press release should you win a premium. You must claim your entries at the end of the fair at the designated places and times (see the Photography Exhibitors' Guide pages).

Q: I only shoot one style of photograph, why am I limited to only one entry per class?

A: Allowing any entrant to have more than one photo per class would put other entrants at an unfair disadvantage. You may, however, enter another photo under Class 15 – Miscellaneous. A third photo may qualify for one of the other classes where it could be displayed and appreciated.

Q: Do the photos have to be taken in Alaska?

A: With the exception of Class 12, Life in Alaska, no. Any photo that falls within the Photography Department guidelines can be entered, however, a judge may favor an Alaska scene when choosing a winning entry between two photos of equal merit. Such decisions are at the judge's discretion and we do use Alaskan photographers as judges.

Q: Can I enter photos that I entered in other contest?

A: Yes, provided there are no copyright restrictions associated with the other competition and the photo conforms to Alaska State Fair entry restrictions, especially mounting and display.

Q: Can I enter photos that I have previously displayed at the fair?

A: Yes, but it may be ill advised. We request that photos have been taken within the previous two years and we do have some judges with long visual memories, so it may be that by entering a previously displayed photo the judges may remember it and pay it little attention.

Q: I can't make it to the fairgrounds. Can I mail my photos in?

A: Yes. Please mail your photos (including your full name, address and phone number) to:

**Alaska State Fair
Attn: Photography Exhibits
2075 Glenn Highway
Palmer AK 99645**

Mailed entries need to be received at the fairgrounds by the last entry date listed in the Photography Department Exhibitor Guide. Mailed entries must include return postage and are returned to the entrant *after* the Fair. Include large (sufficient postage) stamped, self-addressed padded envelope with your entry. If you have not entered anything in the Alaska State Fair previously, you will be assigned a Lifetime Entrant number before your photos are submitted for entry. If you have a number please include it along with your other personal information. Label the back of each photo according to the instructions in the Photography section of the Exhibitor Guide.

Q: My photo is 8"X12". Do I have to crop it down to 8"X10"?

A: No. Mount the photo on an 11"X14" foam-core board. . Any entry that does not meet size restrictions will neither be displayed nor judged. (The Superintendent can make exceptions for children or persons who may need additional allowance and encouragement. Regardless, all entries submitted should be close to the display sizes specified.)

Q: I live in an outlying area and can't get professional shrink-wrapping. Can I still enter?

A: You may use self-adhesive, clear plastic archival sleeves. They are not only acceptable, but often preferred by the judges. Self-adhesive sleeves are readily available via the Internet (search for "PLASTIC ARCHIVAL PHOTO SLEEVES 8x10 or 11X14" Local photo and framing businesses also carry clear archival sleeves and many provide shipping to outlying areas. They are inexpensive and look good. Do not use 8 ½ x 11 document sleeves available at office supply stores or clear plastic food wraps. They are off-size and difficult to hang.

Q: Does my photo have to be displayed on ¼" foam core board or is there something else that can be used?

A: The ¼" foam core board is a guideline. Some foam core board is a bit thicker or thinner. The purpose is to make the print rigid but light so it can safely be displayed. Another medium that is gaining popularity is poster board. Poster board prints are acceptable as long as they are not curling (an issue) and are board-mounted prints. In any case, foam core or poster board; be sure to place it in an archival sleeve for protection and proper display.

Q: Can my friend check in my photos and pick them up after the Fair?

A: Yes. When picking up the entries they must have the yellow claim slip received when your photographs were entered.

Class-Specific Questions:

Q: Why did you eliminate the Black and White class?

A: When film media defined photography, photographers generally favored either color or black and white. This dichotomy was necessary because black and white film techniques were very different from color film techniques. Today, one can click a mouse and de-saturate a print. Because adjudication should be about the impact of the image and not the absence or presence of color, the old dichotomy has been eliminated. Additionally, digital photography has crossed the point where pixels differ in quality and size from silver halide grain and clumping of dyes, so now as much can be done with an image on the computer as can be done by hand with dodging, burning, and other exposure and processing techniques used in a wet lab.

Q: What should entries in the Fair Theme category be like?

A: Entries for the Fair Theme should try to tell the story of the theme. Entries should be more than pictures of a day at the fair. They should include story elements that make the observer think about the theme.

Q: What exactly qualifies as a "Digital Photographic Art" entry? If I take a picture with a digital camera and use a computer program to clean up the image, would that fall under that class?

A: Not necessarily. If you spent more time manipulating the image than you would have setting up the shot or printing in a wet process photo lab with test shooting, dodging, burning, and pushing, then probably. Photographers have always manipulated images. An entry becomes digital art when manipulation of the image changes its feel or adds elements that were not in the original scene. Today, much of the digital art is a combination of photography, text, and graphics via illustration and photographic software. Digital art can be anything from changing an image to look like it is no longer a photograph, to creating an image that is more akin to digital graphic arts. Please see the adjudication questions below for specific information on how these images will be judged.

Q: Are Sepia tone, color corrections, or changing a color photo to black and white considered "Digital Art"?

A: Not necessarily. Modifications to tones, tint, and minor touch ups using photo-editing software are as much a part of modern photography as digital cameras. If you overdo a touch up by making the changes garish or blatant, oversaturating color, or adding unwanted text, the judges may disregard the photo and move on to the next entry. Converting a photo to sepia, black and white, or high contrast is a part of the printing and display process. Entrants are encouraged to limit the amount of touching up done to a photo unless specifically for digital art entry.

Q: What exactly should entries in the Those Who Serve class be like?

A: Those Who Serve is intended to show the action and tension involved in service to the public. An entry should reflect the impact of that service on our lives and the lives of those who serve. Subjects can be individuals, groups, equipment, and locations, so it is meant to be a broad category; however, the subject needs to give the viewer a sense of the emotion the situation imparts. The photo needs to tell a story.

Q: What should entries in Macrophotography be?

A: Macrophotography includes extreme close-ups of flora and fauna, insects on flowers, textures, and inanimate objects in order to show things we don't normally see without magnification or at least getting really close. Macrophotography is usually done with focus as tight as possible on the camera or with lenses or filters that allow extreme close-up work. Macrophotography is not an extreme blow-up of the subject that makes it grainy or pixilated. Quality should be high and well-detailed.

Q: What are you looking for in an entry in the Panoramic Class?

A: Entries in the Panoramic Class are wide views that are made by either joining together multiple exposures or by using panoramic cameras and lenses that allow a wide, scanning view. Historically, individual prints were glued together physically. Today, several panoramic-capable cameras are on the market and most software provides image-merging capabilities. As a result, we have added this class to allow for the larger formats necessary to display these images. The prints should be as seamless as possible and consistent in color, tone, and contrast. **Panoramic photos are not a blown-up section of a single exposure.**

Changes to Division 2: PROFESSIONAL

Q: What is so different about entering in the Pro Division?

A: Professional entries have historically been blended in with all other photo entries; however, a few years ago we decided to make pros stand out and display them differently in an effort to increase the number of professional entries. Additionally, we have eliminated the restriction of one entry per class allowing professionals to showcase either the range of their skills or a concentration into a specific class. Professionals still have only three entries, but they have more control over how they are entered.

Q: What does this new change mean for how the show is organized?

A: As usual every year there are unforeseen situations that occur. Because of the change we may have a professional division that is all portraits or all landscapes some years. That's fine. That is what the professionals are doing at the time and it will vary every show.

Q: Do all the photos have to be entered in different classes?

A: No. You can enter your three photos in any class you choose and put one, two, or all three in a single class.

Q: What does this new change mean for adjudication?

A: Adjudication for the pros is always more stringent. That hasn't changed. Entries will be adjudicated within the class in which they are entered. Any class that has less than four entries may not be adjudicated as a separate class but instead be combined with other photos in miscellaneous.

Q: Why are there only six classes?

A: Because we have only a small number of professional photographers who showcase their work at the fair we need to limit the number of classes otherwise we don't have enough entries in some classes to adjudicate them effectively. This is something we review ever year.

Q: I'm just starting out and I don't know if I should enter as a pro or not. What should I do?

A: It isn't an easy decision to make the leap from amateur to pro. It is a process and often it takes a few years to really make the jump. Much depends upon where you are in development of your skills. Actively selling prints or working or teaching in the field is usually the guideline. If you're not sure, then this is the venue for you to see if maybe It is time to take the step forward.

Tips & Judging Criteria:

Q: How does the judging work?

A: The Photography Superintendent is charged with securing qualified and considerate judges. Art is a challenge to evaluate and even though someone is an excellent photographer or instructor, he or she may not be a good judge of the artistic merits of a photograph.

Judging criteria generally include the following:

- First impression – artistic merit. How well does this photo capture your interest?
- Focal Point – is there a main point of interest that is in focus and dominant?
- Impact or Mood – photos should tell a story or evoke a mood or an emotion.
- Lighting/Contrast – proper lighting techniques define the art of photography.
- Quality – technically correct in such areas as composition, exposure, focus, printing, and grain.

Judges differ in their approaches. Sometimes a judge will go through and gather first impressions from the class being adjudicated. Any that stand out clearly as superior are separated out then the rest are more carefully examined and additional prints selected to move on. At the same time, definite rejects will be removed. The first impression isn't the final one, it does, however, measure the wow factor of an image and its technical merit. Oftentimes photos that initially stand out will go on and win, but not always.

Surviving this first cut is a matter of two things: artistic merit and technical merit. Your first questions when looking at the photo you want to enter should be:

- Is it artistic in nature? Does it stand out and seem a cut above a snapshot?
- Is it well composed? Does it follow the rule of thirds* and is there a focal point?
- Does it tell a story or evoke a mood? You may see it, but do others? Ask a friend.
- Does the lighting enhance that mood or story?
- How do the technical aspects look? Is it focused, well lit? Is it grainy or pixelated? Is it clear or muddy?
- Is the printing high quality? Are the colors correct, the details clear, and the contrast correct? Often a bad print will cover up your hard work. Don't skimp on printing.

Further technical adjudication in the "Panoramic" and "Digital Photographic Art" will focus on the quality of the integration of multiple images. Panoramic entries should be sharp and not be pixelated. They need to have smooth transitions from image to image. Digital Art entries should have smooth blending of photographic and artistic elements. The key in either of these classes is to make the final entry look like one image, not an assembly of multiple images even though it is.

* The rule of thirds is a basic premise of art. Look at your print and divide it into thirds both horizontally and vertically. This creates a tic-tac-toe board on the print. Elements of most interest should be placed in the four intersections created. Careful placement of these elements enhances the quality of your composition and gives a photo the look human beings instinctively expect.