COMPETITIVE EXHIBITS
PHOTOGRAPHY INFORMATION GUIDE
Department P

Superintendents:
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EXHIBIT LOCATION | HOSKINS BUILDING

For mail-in instructions, please review the Competitive Exhibits General Information Document (click here to view)

IMPORTANT: There have been several changes to the guide that impact Division numbers and classes. **AS OF 2026, PHOTOGRAPHY HAS 6 DIVISIONS!**

Credentials are not required to enter the Fairgrounds. Entrants drive to their respective exhibit building, enter items, and leave to accommodate others.

Exhibit Entry:

- Friday, August 7, *11 am – 7 pm*

- Saturday, August 8, *11 am – 7 pm*

Exhibit Pick-up:

- Wednesday, September 9, *1 pm – 6 pm*

- Saturday, September 12, *1 pm – 6 pm*

All judging decisions are final. Judges are handpicked professional photographers and artists from the community. Some judges may be elected representatives from Special Donor Companies that donated prizes to a specific class.

All entries are adjudicated, but will not win by default if it is the only entry in a class. Superintendent reserves the right to disqualify and/or not display an entry at any time, for any reason.

The Fair and Superintendents are not responsible for damaged, misplaced, or stolen items. All entries are submitted at your own risk.

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 designated places and times at the end of the fair. You need to show the yellow ticket provided during entry drop-off to pick up your entry.

Qualifications / Guidelines for All Divisions:

Entries must meet the following guidelines to be considered for judging and display:

- All entries must be the work of the person making the entry.

- Photographs should have been taken within <u>two years.</u>

- Images must be securely mounted on <u>foam-core board </u>(no thicker than ¼")

- Finished sizes of entries must be either <u>8"x10" </u>or <u>11"x14"</u>. Sizes pertain to the total size, including foam-core board, print, and any matting.

    - Please note that judging is based solely on the photograph, not the mounting or matting.

- Entries in **Panoramic Class** (Class 10) ONLY: Entries can be a maximum size of` 12"x24".

- **IMPORTANT:** Completed mounts must be in a fitted clear sleeve or properly shrink-wrapped. Many frame shops can mount and wrap your photos or sell clear fitted sleeves.

- **Label the back** of each entry with the following information and in the following format:

    - **Full Name**
    - **Address**
    - **Phone**
    - **Title of Work**
    - **Division/class/sub-category**

(Entries without entrant contact/mailing information on the back will not be accepted)

DIVISIONS 1 - 4

Only one entry per class; up to 3 total entries per entrant. *No exceptions.* Entrants submitting more than 3 entries risk disqualification of all entries. Each of the classes listed below includes all forms of photography (black & white or color from either film or digital sources).

If you have any questions for more information, please contact the Superintendents.

SUB-CATEGORIES:

A: Junior, ages 12 and under
B: Junior, ages 13 through 17
O: Adults ages 18 +
If a sub-category is not specified, the entry will be classified as O for OPEN.

DIVISION 01: TELL A STORY

Entries in this new division should convey a story that fits one of the classes. We want to see creativity, something that sparks emotion, and/or really brings the wow factor!

Class:

- **01 Alaska State Fair Theme: "90 Years With You"** – Using any photographic technique.

- **02 Digital Photographic Art** – Heavily enhanced, morphed, or manipulated photographic art and graphics. Entries may include writing or text, but cannot identify the photographer. All images used must be created by the entrant and not stock/AI images or backgrounds.

- **03 Life in Alaska** – Moments or activities that show your love for living in Alaska. Any technique, restricted to Alaskan subject and theme. Photos must be taken in Alaska.

- **04 Those Who Serve** – Photos of people or pets who serve and what they do. Military, emergency, health, and human services.

- **05 Superintendent's Challenge: "*Trapped in Time.*"** [1] Using any technique from other classes, create a photo that illustrates this idea.

- **06 Panoramic** [2] – Includes images assembled from multiple frames or made with a panoramic camera. All parts used to assemble the panoramic must be created by the entrant and not pulled from stock/AI images.

- **07 America250 "A Milestone in the Making" -** It's the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence! This class is dedicated to the celebration of America!

- **08 Miscellaneous** – Open category.

[1] 2026 Superintendent's Challenge theme: Trapped in Time

Think about what best represents this theme AND how are you going to get there? Subject, image quality, print quality, editing techniques, and use of imagination will all be required for a blue ribbon here. We will be looking for your interpretation of the challenge.

[2] Panoramic photos are now under this division because they can be landscape images or images showing progression in movement and action; remember the Division title is Tell A Story!

DIVISION 02: SCENERY

Class:

- **01 Aerial / Drone Photography** – Aerial or drone images of landforms, buildings, people, and wildlife.

- **02 Astrophotography / Astral Photography / Aurora Photography** – Photos of celestial objects and events, and photography of the aurora.

- **03 Architectural** – Interior and exterior photos of manmade structures such as buildings, bridges, dams, towers, etc.

- **04 Planes, Trains, and Automobiles** – Interior and exterior photos of modes of transportation

- **05 Landscapes** – Includes scenic, horizon, sunset, geographical, climatological, or intimate landscapes.

- **06 Waterscapes** – Includes scenic, horizon, sunset, geographical, climatological, or intimate landscapes with the focus on bodies of water.

- **07 Cityscapes** – Photos with an urban focus, such as city skylines or street photography. People may be in the photo, but cannot be the focus of the image.

DIVISION 03: NATURE

Class:

- **01 Wild Animal Portraits**– Includes candid images of animals and fish in the wild as the major focus.

- **02 Wild Animals in Action**– Includes images of animals and fish in the wild *in action*, such as running, jumping, hunting, swimming, etc.

- **03 Birds in the Wild** – images of non-captive birds in their natural habitat.

- **04 Insects / Bugs** – images of insects, arachnids, etc

- **05 Flora and Fungi** – Includes photos in which flora are the major focus.

- **06 Macrophotography** – *Extreme* close-ups of natural objects such as flora, insects, <u>textures</u>, etc. Traditionally, using a 1:1 magnification ratio. These images should be so close that they reveal details not normally visible to the human eye.

DIVISION 04: PORTRAITS

Class:

- **01 Portraits of People** – Formal and candid photos with the focus on a single person

- **02 Group Portraits** – Formal and candid photos of multiple people or people with their pets

- **03 Portraits of Pets** – Formal and candid photos of pets. This class includes pets such as cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, rodents, reptiles, etc.

- **04 Portraits of Livestock** – Formal and candid photos of larger animals. This class includes: Horses, Cows, Sheep, etc.

- **05 Spotlight** – People or pets with a theatrical, fashion, costume/cosplay, dancing, or performance focus.

- **06 Action!** – A focus on candid photos of people or pets in action. For example, they may be working or competing in sports.

DIVISION 05: PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Unlike the other Divisions, Division 2 entrants can enter up to 3 entries in a single class; up to 3 entries total per entrant. All 3 entries must be in this division. *No exceptions.* Entrants submitting more than 3 entries risk disqualification of all entries. Each of the classes listed below includes all forms of photography (black & white or color from either film or digital sources).

Please note that judging is based solely on the photograph, not the mounting or matting.

Optional: Pros may bring in a single business card to be displayed with all 3 of their entries.

What makes a pro?
Professional photographers are individuals who sell their photography, have been published, featured in a gallery, and/or are instructors.

Class:

01 Alaska State Fair Theme: "90 Years With You" - Using any photographic technique in Classes 02-06.

02 Landscape – Includes scenic, horizon, sunset, geographical, climatological, aurora borealis, and intimate landscapes.

03 Portraits – Includes formal and candid photos of people or pets.

04 Wildlife (non-captive) – Includes animals, fish, and birds in the wild as the major focus.

05 Digital and/or Graphic Art – Heavily enhanced or manipulated images, advertising, digital art. May include text and graphics, but cannot identify the entrant as a visual element in the photo. All images used must be created by the entrant and not stock/AI images or backdrops.

06 Miscellaneous – Open category

DIVISION 06: STUDENT CHALLENGE 2026 "REFLECTION"

Unlike the other Divisions, Division 6 entrants are students given a challenge by the Superintendent. Each student given the challenge may only enter 1 photo in this Division. They can enter up to 2 entries in the other Divisions; up to 3 entries total per entrant. *No exceptions.* The challenge includes all forms of photography (black & white or color from either film or digital sources) and may include any style as long as it follows the guide rules and fits the challenge.

Class:

01 Juniors 12 and Under

02 Juniors 13 through 18

03 College Students

04 Extended Learning - Adults who have joined a group or private photography class.

Disqualifiers:

No framed or glass-mounted images will be accepted.

Do not use a magazine board or any board thinner than ⅛"

Do not apply hangers to the back of entries. Fair-provided Velcro will be used to hang all entries.

Do not place any identifying text, watermark, or logo on the front of the entry.

Do not enter any lewd or illicit images. They will not be judged or displayed, as determined by the superintendent. Tasteful representations may be entered. Contact the superintendent with questions, concerns, or for clarification.

Do not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create or heavily edit your image.

Do not try to enter the same image in multiple classes.

Do not try to enter the same image from previous years.

Do not use 8 1/2" x 11" document sleeves OR clear plastic food wraps. They are bulky, oversized, difficult to hang, and break down during fair display.

You May:

- Shoot in a manner that fits the challenge.
     Costumes, lighting, subjects - setting the scene.
- Process the print to represent the theme.
     S*epia toning, changes in color, filters, basic cropping, and editing.*
- Advanced processing
     Creative effects, filters, added art, and digital enhancement.

     You can be creative on every step of the challenge. ***What will you do?***

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.*
- **Theme -** *does the image represent the Division and Class*

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, then the rest are more carefully examined, and additional prints are 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**[1] and is there a focal point?*

[1] *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.*

- *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 and 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 pixelated. They need to have smooth transitions from image to image. Digital Art entries should have a 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.

SPECIAL AWARDS - PHOTOGRAPHY
Outstanding entries will be recognized by these generous donors:

PSA
Photographic Society of America
WORLDWIDE

Judge's Choice
OUTBOUND
HELI ADVENTURES

Best of Show:
THE ALASKA RAILROAD
AR
ESTABLISHED 1914

Superintendent's Award
Major
MARINE TOURS
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40 YEARS
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Alaska SeaLife Center
Seward, Alaska

The Alaska ZOO
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ALASKA CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS

ALASKA ROCK GYM
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Alaska
RACEWAY PARK

MOOSES TOOTH
PUB & PIZZERIA

BEAR TOOTH
THEATREPUB & GRILL

BROKEN TOOTH
BREWING

Black Birch Books & Curiosities
Wasilla, Alaska
Let's Crack Some Spines!