

IACC Competition Manual

2025-26, Revised 2026-03-11

This manual applies to IACC monthly and annual competitions. If entering other competitions (e.g. CAPA, PSA, World Wildlife, Spider, etc.), read and follow their published rules and regulations,

General Information

IACC Competitions

IACC competitions exist to:

1. Provide opportunities for members to learn and improve.
2. Provide a venue for members to showcase their work.
3. Provide an atmosphere conducive to fellowship and fun.
4. Provide a mechanism for healthy and fair competition.

(IACC Board minutes, May 2015)

IACC Competitions are administered by the Competition Chair, who is a voting member of the IACC board, assisted and advised by an informal competition committee. The Competition Chair and committee review competition procedures and rules at the end of each club year, and make any necessary changes. The committee will normally try to avoid instituting any rule changes during a competition year, and if such are necessary, will disseminate the information as widely and rapidly as possible.

Use of Images

Members who submit a digital image to any IACC competition agree to limited usage of that image by the Club. The photographer retains ownership (copyright) at all times. Credit will be given for any image displayed, except when the image is awaiting scoring.

Submitted images will be used for assessing if entries meet competition submission guidelines and rules.

Digital category submissions may be placed on the members-only section of the IACC website for previewing, and will be forwarded to judges for scoring.

During competition evenings, digital category images will be shown to the membership. They may also be placed in a slideshow or used as individual images for competition evening critiques.

Following each competition, all images will be displayed on the IACC website, and winning images will be highlighted. Images will be displayed with their title and the photographer's name. Occasionally, additional public galleries will be created to display members' winning images in relation to club special projects. Slideshows, of various themes, are created throughout the season to display members' images. Any or all the winning images from the year may be featured in a slideshow at the end of the season.

Images from competitions may be posted on club social media accounts to help promote the club. As per the club policy on *Use of Member Images*, "(t)hese will be displayed at low resolution and with the download option disabled. However, IACC cannot prevent people from screen-capturing them."

Types of Competition

The IACC has two types of internal (club) competitions, monthly and annual.

Monthly Competitions

Monthly competitions are held on the fourth Thursday of September, October, November, January, February, and March. The deadline for submission of entries for all categories is 10:00 pm on the Sunday 11 days before the competition night. All prints must be received at the competitions desk at the meeting hall prior to the start time of the meeting.

Since September 2024, monthly competitions have included two different types of categories: competitive and exhibition. This reflects the changing nature of competitions and our members' interests. Photographic competitions increasingly concentrate on technical excellence and 'straight photography'. While many members wish to pursue this approach, a roughly equal percentage have expressed a desire to do more with the creative side of their photography, or prefer to show their images outside of direct competition. The exhibition categories cater to these photographers.

Competitive categories.

These categories emphasize learning and competition (purposes 1 and 4 above), while showcasing members' work and encouraging fellowship and fun (purposes 2 and 3 above). To enhance learning, and to help members have more success in external

competitions, they will conform to the normal rules of those competitions. For the same reasons, both competitive digital categories will be scored by certified external judges, who will also provide a short critique for each image. Certificates of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place will be awarded based on their scores.

Entrant scores from each competitive category in each monthly competition are recorded and aggregated. Overall awards are given each year for performance in each category.

Competitive digital categories will also be voted on by the membership. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place 'peoples' choice' will be awarded based on these votes. For prints, only peoples' choice will be awarded. All voting will be at the hall. Online voting was discontinued due to high workload and low uptake.

Each monthly competition has three competitive categories: theme (digital submissions, where the image should illustrate or conform to the month's theme), open (digital submissions, any subject matter is allowed), and print (no subject restrictions). Members may enter as many or as few categories as they wish but may submit only one image in each category (see Submission Procedures below for how to enter, deadlines, etc.). Themes for each month are published on the IACC website Competitions Page after the previous awards night.

Exhibition Categories

These categories emphasize showcasing and fun (purposes 2 and 3 above), while still encouraging learning. Any type of photograph can be showcased here, from pure 'straight photography' to experimental and artistic, and anything in between. This is accomplished by more relaxed rules, especially regarding the use of AI.

Entered images will be made into a slide show, which will be shown at the hall, and posted on the club website. Members' names and image titles will be displayed with each image. Members are encouraged to discuss these images with the photographer.

Each monthly competition has two exhibition categories, both digital. The first of these is themed. The second is open. Themes for each month will be published on the IACC website Competitions Page after the preceding Awards Night. There are no exhibition print categories.

Annual Competition

The Annual Competition occurs on the fourth Thursday in April, with results announced at the Annual Club Social on the fourth Thursday in May. The deadline for submission of entries to the annual competition is 10:00 pm on the Sunday 11 days before the competition night. All prints (hardcopy) must be received at the competitions desk at the meeting hall 10 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.

Aside from the Clive Mathewson and Video Presentations, all categories in the Annual competition are scored by qualified photographic judges. Digital entries are shared with the judges prior to the competition. The judges view and score the digital entries prior to the competition night. The judges will view and score the print entries on display at the meeting place, while the membership views the digital entries.

Once the judges have finished scoring the print entries, they will share some of their thoughts and/or offer critiques on a selection of competition entries. Shortly after Awards Night a summary of image numbers and rankings will be available online. This information may be accessed via a link on the Competitions page on the IACC Website.

Categories and themes for the annual competition are published on the IACC website Competitions Page during the summer preceding the club competition year.

CAPA and PSA Club Competitions

These are separate from IACC internal competitions. Entry and selection procedures are organized by the CAPA and PSA representatives. CAPA and PSA entries may be duplicates of entries from current or previous IACC Club competitions, and vice versa. All entries for CAPA and PSA club competitions must follow CAPA and PSA rules respectively. IACC members do not need an individual CAPA or PSA membership to enter these competitions.

CAPA and PSA Individual Competitions

The club strongly encourages IACC members to participate in these competitions, Members who wish to participate in CAPA and/or PSA individual competitions must have individual memberships in the appropriate organization. IACC membership does not include individual membership in these organizations.

Other External Competitions

Competitions are a great way to learn, improve, and show off your photography. Club members are encouraged to participate in any competitions they chose and may use or reuse images freely between IACC and other competitions. However, members are strongly advised to carefully check the rules, conditions, costs, and fine print of any competition they enter. The IACC does not participate in, endorse, or vet any external competitions or exhibitions, even though from time to time the club may pass on information on such competitions and exhibitions.

Submission Procedures and Specifications

The Competition Committee uses an electronic submission process for all categories, including print categories, in both monthly and annual competitions. ***This is the only way images may be entered.*** Details and image files for all categories, including print categories, must be submitted before the competition deadline. The deadline for submission of entries to all competitions is 10:00 pm (22:00h) on the Sunday 11 days before the competition night.

Links to the entry forms for the current competition may be found in the Competitions dropdown on the IACC website. For both monthly and annual competitions, there is one entry form for each category. Please make sure you are using the correct form, and follow the instructions on the form. **If you make an error in submission** (e.g wrong file, misspelled title, etc.), **simply resubmit the entire form. We always use the last entry from each member in each category.**

Entry Form Fields

Name. Choose your name from the dropdown menu.

E-mail address. We will send confirmation of your entry, and for print categories your print tags, to the e-mail address you enter here. Please ensure it is correct. If you do not get an e-mail confirming your entry, try resubmitting.

Title. The title is an important part of your image. It helps communicate your intent to the viewer.

- *Titles may be a maximum of 30 characters in length*, including spaces and punctuation, for a horizontal (landscape format) image. Vertical (portrait orientation) images reduce the available width for titles, so shorter is better.

- Make sure your title looks professional. Beware spelling errors! Titles also look better if they have initial capitals (NOT ALL CAPITALS, not all lower case, But Initial Capitals). Titles must not identify the entrant.

Image file. There is a file picker on each form, labeled “Choose File”. Click on it and navigate to the file you want to submit. **Make sure you choose the correct file!** If making a second submission in a category (e.g. to correct an error) the last file submitted will be the one used in the competition.

Images files must conform to the following specifications.

1. Images files must be in JPG/JPEG format.
2. File names should include only:
 - a. Letters (upper and/or lower case)
 - b. Numbers
 - c. Spaces
 - d. Underscores (i.e. _).
3. File names should never contain more than one file extension (the bit after the period). Here’s a valid example: my_image_07.jpg. File names containing multiple periods cause software crashes, and have to be manually modified.
4. Submitted images should have a maximum file size of ten (10) megabytes.
5. For all categories *except* Photo Essay (in the annual competition)
 - a. Submitted digital images should have a maximum size of:
 - i. 4000 pixels in any dimension
 - ii. 20 inches in any dimension
 - b. Submitted digital images should have a minimum size of:
 - i. If submitting a landscape format (horizontal) image, make sure the width is *at least* 1400 pixels.
 - ii. If submitting a square or portrait format (vertical) image, make sure the height is *at least* 1050 pixels. Our software will sample images down to fit, but will not sample up. Images that are less than the minimums will appear small on the screen and in the slide shows.
 - iii. Our software does not change image aspect ratio.
6. For Photo Essays (in the annual competition), follow the instructions found in the Annual Competition document on the [Competitions Overview web page](#).
7. Resolution (pixels per inch, dots per inch, etc), is not material to the submission process or look of the displayed image, as long as it is 72ppi or greater. However, the number you enter in that field during the export process in Lightroom, Photoshop, and most other processing software will affect file size. Generally, use a resolution between 72dpi and 300dpi.
8. Use the sRGB colour space for best results.

- a. Larger colour spaces (e.g. Adobe, Prophoto) may clip unpredictably, affecting colour rendering on different monitors and the projector. The same applies to images to be displayed on our website.
 - b. If you are changing colour space to produce the final submission image, you should check the final image in an image viewer (e.g. Windows Media Player, Apple Preview) to make sure this has not produced unexpected colour shifts or clipping.
9. If you are using an export process that asks for jpg quality, 80-100 percent should give you a good result. Lower percentages often result in banding, especially in the sky.

CopyrightContent Declaration: There is a copyright declaration and checkbox on each form. It is a required field. The form will not submit until the box is checked.

Submit: Once you have filled in all the fields, check them to make sure they are correct. It is particularly important to make sure you have chosen **the correct name** and the **correct image file**. Once you are sure everything is correct, hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Please make sure all fields are filled in completely and correctly before you submit!

Important Reminder: If you make an error in your submission, resubmit the entry with the correct information or image file. The system will always use the last entry you submit in a given category.

It is your responsibility to check that your software has correctly exported and resized your images before submission (no distortion, colours look right, reasonable file size, etc.). We strongly recommend having a look at the exported jpg in some form of image viewer (double click on the file to use the default Windows or Mac viewer) before starting the submission process. For digital categories this is the image that will be projected, scored, critiqued, and/or used for the website. For prints this image will be used for critiquing, and used for the website if it places first to third.

If you do not understand these specifications, or need help with creating or submitting images, please ask any member of the competition committee, in person or by e-mail (competitions@imagesalberta.ca).

Print (Hardcopy) Submission Specifications (except Photo Essay)

1. All print entries must have an electronic submission before the competition deadline. Prints presented at the competition desk without an existing electronic submission will not be accepted.

2. Prints should be matted or mounted, or kept rigid in some other way. Prints that will not stand on their own on the easels may be disqualified at the discretion of the competition 'pit boss'. The matting or mounting should not make the print overly heavy, as our easels will not bear the weight. For that reason, prints should not be framed or covered with glass.
3. Prints for all competitions must be printed on some form of photographic or art paper (eg. lustre, glossy, satin, metallic, watercolour, etc.). Prints on metal or glass are not accepted due to their weight and fragility.
4. Electronic print entries automatically generate a print tag for each print, which will be e-mailed to you. Print this and affix it to the upper right corner of the image, preferably to the mat or mount board so it does not obscure part of the image. Make sure the tag is affixed in such a way that your name does not show from the front. Images without print tags will not be accepted. If you are having problems with your print tags, please contact the competition chair at least 24 hours before the competition evening.
5. All prints for monthly and annual competitions must be received at the competitions desk in the meeting hall before the announced start time of the meeting. No extensions will be given. Prints will not be accepted prior to the competition night. If you cannot attend the competition evening, arrange with a fellow club member to bring in and retrieve your print.
6. Maximum allowed print size for monthly competitions is 20 inches on a side. Note that this is print size, not final matted size. There is no minimum size.

Photo Essay Submission Specifications

For Photo Essays (in the annual competition), follow the instructions found in the Annual Competition document on the [Competitions Overview web page](#). This procedure is new this year, and may be modified in subsequent years.

Competition Rules

Rules for all IACC competitions and Categories

1. All images shall conform to the published submission procedures, criteria, and rules.
2. All entries must be submitted before the published deadline for that competition.
 - a. Our software ceases accepting entries at that point. No extensions will be given.

3. Entrants must have a valid IACC membership prior to the submission deadline. In practice, you need to get that valid membership a few days before the entry deadline, so the membership chair can update the membership list.
4. Competition images must be suitable for viewing by any age group.
 - a. The competition chair is solely responsible for making this decision in regards to each image.
5. Entries rejected by the competition committee will not be allowed to re-enter that competition. If suitably corrected, they can be entered in future competitions.
6. Images that have previously placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in any IACC Competition may not be resubmitted in any subsequent IACC competition.
7. The same image cannot be entered into more than one category per competition.
 - a. Significantly different treatments of an original may be considered as separate images. Please contact the competition chair at least a week prior to the deadline for an adjudication.
8. Only one entry per entrant is permitted in each category.
 - a. If the committee receives more than one entry from an entrant in a single category, the last submitted entry will be used. If you make a mistake, fix it and resubmit (before the deadline).
 - b. Note: The Photo Essay category in the annual competition consists of multiple images, but they must be assembled into one image for submission. See the Annual Competition document for more details, or ask the competitions chair at competitions@imagesalberta.ca.
9. Entries must originate at least partly as photographs (image captures of objects via light sensitive film or sensor). This can be supplemented by other media.
 - a. "Sensor" includes all kinds of digital cameras (including cell phone cameras) and scanners. 'Film' can include paper (e.g. photograms).
 - b. If in any doubt about this, please contact the competition chair at competitions@imagesalberta.ca at least a week before the entry deadline.
10. Post Camera Processing is allowed for all competition categories, but is not mandatory (straight out of camera (SOOC) images are just fine!).

Additional Rules for Competitive Categories (Monthly and Annual)

1. **All elements of the submitted image must be the work of the submitting photographer.**
 - a. For example, you can replace a sky, as long as the replacement sky is also your own image. Commercially purchased or licenced textures, skies, and other content are not allowed. Content downloaded off the internet is not allowed, even if you have a license to use it (e.g. Creative Commons, etc.).

2. **Use of generative AI programs and tools is not allowed in IACC competitive categories.**
 - a. **AI is** a new, fluid, and controversial element of photography. The committee reserves the right to modify the rules regarding generative AI and generative AI tools in competitive categories both as more experience and data become available, and as the tools themselves change.

 - b. **The IACC**, as a CAPA member club, uses [the CAPA list of permitted and not permitted AI tools](#).
 - i. A great many post processing tools are marketed as AI. Not all of these are generative AI, and indeed many do not use any form of AI at all. CAPA has invested considerable time and resources into researching these tools, and keeping an up to date list of which use generative AI, and which do not. The IACC does not have the have the resources to keep an independent list.

 - c. **Notes and rationale:**
 - i. **Generative AI image programs**, such as Adobe Firefly and Midjourney, use text prompts combined with machine learning, large language models, and image contents and information gleaned from a wide variety of photographs and other art works to create new content. Use of images or materials created using these programs **is not allowed** in competitive categories.

 - i. **Generative AI tools** (e.g. Photoshop generative fill and expand, Lightroom generative remove) **may not be used** in competitive category entries.
 1. It is now clear that generative AI tools introduce image elements not of the original photographer's making. *This is the case even if no text prompt is involved.* This violates rule

1 above. In addition, generative AI alters the original image in other less obvious and predictable ways, even outside of selected areas.

2. This restriction has the added benefit of allowing all competitive category images to be entered in CAPA, PSA, and other external competitions without reprocessing. Note that CAPA (and probably PSA and other external competitions) runs all images through software that detects the use of AI tools. Use of generative AI tools bakes certain changes into the image even if the visual change is undone. Therefore, once an image has been altered by any form of generative AI, it will still be flagged as a generative AI image.
 3. The use of Generative AI tools such as generative remove, fill, and expand, can be mimicked without invoking the AI, through the use of content aware fill, removal, and expand. We are aware that this is often more work than using generative fill, and may not produce as nice a result, but the work remains unambiguously yours.
 4. If you use a generative AI tool on your image, it is uploaded to the AI's database, and used to create new images and elements without your express permission.
3. **Effects** (often called **filters**) are allowed, including in-camera effects, and effects in post-processing software. This includes non-generative "AI" tools, such as Gigapixel AI, as they rely only on information from your own image to produce a new result.
 4. **Frames and borders** are allowed, as long as they have been created by the entrant.
 - a. Many (most?) judges dislike digital frames and borders. Therefore, it is probably best to avoid these in competitive categories.
 5. **Combining Images** is allowed, as long as they are *all the work of the entrant*. This includes but is not limited to, HDR, panoramas, filtered or processed variants of a single image, focus stacking, in-camera multi-image scene modes (e.g. double/multiple exposures), and post-camera combining of multiple different images *the entrant has made themselves*. If in doubt about a specific technique or image element, contact the competition chair at least a week before the entry deadline for an adjudication.

6. **No visible form of identification of the entrant is allowed.** Each entrant is responsible for checking their image before final submission. Entries containing a watermark, signature, or other visible identification will be disqualified, to ensure fairness in scoring. Metadata is not visible or examined. Your file name may contain identifiers, as it is replaced with a computer generated file name during pre-competition processing. Your image title should not contain anything to identify you.

Additional Rules for Exhibition Categories (Monthly Only)

1. **You must be the creator, and/or own the copyright, and/or have a valid license for all elements of your submitted image.** Commercially purchased textures, skies, presets, LUTS, filters, watermarks, digital frames, etc. are allowed. Content downloaded off the internet is allowed, if you have a license to use it (e.g. Creative Commons, etc.). Unlicensed materials violate copyright and expose both the entrant and the club to possible legal action.
2. **Generative AI program content is allowed,** as long as you have a valid license for the program you are using.

Appendix 1: Art Works in Competition Images

Photography of artworks is a contentious issue. Please consider the following before submitting photographs wholly or partially of someone else's artworks.

All artworks are or were copyright. This includes unsigned works (e.g. graffiti), and works you might think are now out of copyright due to their age (e.g. 19th C paintings). Even works with significant antiquity may still have copyright under specific circumstances. Therefore, you should assume an artwork is in copyright until proven otherwise.

Taking photographs of publicly displayed copyrighted material is allowed in most jurisdictions. It is the end use that can be legally and/or ethically dubious.

Use of someone else's artwork in your image is acceptable if it meets the criteria of incidental use, transformative use, and/or fair use.

A photograph including an artwork meets the criteria of **incidental use** if the artwork is:

- not recognizable (or is virtually unrecognizable) in the submitted image.
- not the main purpose of the submitted image.

A photograph including an artwork meets the criteria of **transformative** use if the submitted image gives new meaning to the art work. This is a complex topic, but includes parody, criticism, and commentary.

A photograph including an artwork meets the criteria of **fair use** if the photograph is used for private study, research, review, news reporting or news summary

It is unclear if entering a photograph of an artwork in a competition is "fair use", even if there is no monetary prize. Therefore, the competition committee discourages the submission of such images, unless they meet one of the other two criteria. For further discussion see the following:

- <https://digital-photography-school.com/basic-look-ethics-rules-photographing-graffiti/#:~:text=A%20good%20rule%20of%20thumb%20is%20that%20if%20the%20graffiti.may%20amount%20to%20copyright%20infringement> .
- <https://indyarts.org/docman/artist-services/85-blog-post-re-public-art-copyrights/file#:~:text=This%20means%20that%20although%20someone.creation%20and%20the%20artist%20must>

Appendix 2: Why does My Image Look Different on the Projector or on Someone Else's Monitor or TV?

Electronic displays vary hugely in terms of brightness, contrast, contrast curve, gamma, colour rendition, white rendition, black rendition, colour temperature, etc. Even if you have two calibrated monitors, an image will vary quite a bit in how it looks on each. If both are the same manufacturer and model, and both are brand new, they might be close, but don't bet on it! Calibrating a monitor improves its consistency, allowing for more predictable printing. It does not make it look the same as another monitor.

Front projected images (where the projector is on the same side of the screen as the viewers) will never look the same as images on a monitor. Front projected images are seen by the viewer as reflected light, while monitors (and TVs) are seen as transmitted light. Therefore front projected images will never have as much dynamic range as a monitor (just like prints never had the same dynamic range as colour slides).

To get the best results when your images are shown in the hall, you have to learn how your images present on the club projector and adjust accordingly. For example, if you think your images look less contrasty on the club projector, submit images with a bit more contrast than you prefer on your home screen. If you think they look too cold on the projector, submit images a bit warmer than you prefer on your own screen.

Rear projection of images can produce an experience closer to viewing on a monitor or TV, although all the caveats that apply to electronic displays still apply. Unfortunately, at this time, high quality large screen rear projection is limited to expensive static installations, such as commercial movie theatres.