

**Competition and Advancement
Guidelines and Rules
Photography Club of Sun City Hilton Head
Effective January 2026**

A. Participation

1. You must be a paid member of the Photography Club to participate in any competition.
2. A submitted photograph and **all** components of a composite photograph must have been photographed and edited by the member submitting it for competition.
 - a. Stock photos, textures, skies and all other stock backgrounds not photographed or created by the submitting member are not permitted.
 - b. Elements that are not photographs such as drawings and software programmed brushes that create shapes are not permitted.
 - c. The time limit for all components of a composite photo is the same as the original submitted photo.
 - d. All post processing (editing) must be done by the hand of the submitting member. You may receive advice, feedback and critiques, but you must actually do the work yourself.
3. Artificial Intelligence. For competition purposes, artificial intelligence in photography is defined as the use of computer algorithms and machine learning techniques to generate imagery that is not the work of the submitting photographer. While members are free to pursue and use AI-generated imagery on their own, the use of it in our club's competitions is not permitted.

B. Photo Rules

1. You may submit only one (1) photo per competition.
2. Unless otherwise stated, photo must have been taken within the last 24 months.
3. Photos that have previously won a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd or Honorable Mention in the monthly competition may not be entered again.
4. Photos may be color, black and white, sepia, or other each month unless the called-for theme is specified to be color related or black and white specific.
5. All identifying marks, such as watermarks, signatures and initials, must be removed by the photographer prior to entry. Complete anonymity is necessary to prevent any bias, favorable or unfavorable, that may exist with a particular judge.

6. If time permits, and a photograph does not meet guidelines or relate to the competition theme, the member will be notified and the image returned to for correction and re-submission. Should time not allow or if the member fails to respond to notification, the entry will be disqualified.
7. If you participated in a workshop with a person who is selected to be a judge for a particular month, you may NOT enter any image that you took during that workshop in that month's competition. Such entries compromise our goal of entry anonymity and our desire of fairness. A violation of this guideline will subject the entry to disqualification and revocation of award and points.

C. Acceptable Images

1. A painting, photograph, statue, or work of art that is displayed in a museum, art gallery, or an indoor/outdoor art/craft show is considered copyrighted material and is in violation of competition rules. Statues or works of art in public areas such as parks are acceptable.
2. A key element of our club competition is creativity. In the spirit of creativity, exactly duplicating another person's painting, photograph or work of art is against club rules. You may be inspired by other artists' images, adding your own interpretation.
3. Novice, Intermediate, Advanced and Experts can use all editing tools, including Composites.

D. Competition Entry – Digital and Print

1. Print. For print competitions, both a digital version and a printed version are required.
 - a. Submit the digital version by the deadline time and in accordance with the digital version guidelines below.
 - b. Bring your printed entry to the meeting. See Print Competition Entries below for more specifics.
2. Digital. For digital competitions, only a digital version is necessary.
3. See Club Website for complete listing of each type of competition, themes and deadlines.

E. Entry Specifics

1. **For Print Competition Entries:** All photos must have a hard backing such as dry mounting, foam core (no thicker than ¼") in order for the committee or judge to handle it. **Mats are not permitted.** The picture cannot be framed. Rectangular shaped entries must be between 14" and 16" on the long side. Sides of square entries must be between 12" and 14".

2. **Photo Identification** – All prints must be labeled on the back with the following information:

- a. Photographer's name
- b. Title of photograph
- c. Level of photographer (i.e. Novice, Intermediate, Advanced or Expert).
- d. Date photo was taken.
- e. The Sun City Photography Club website has a label template that can be used to identify your photo submission. The form can be found at pcschh.org. Then go to programs, competition, labels.

3. **Digital Version (Required for both print and digital entries)**

- a. Submit your file **before Midnight on the Friday prior to the Tuesday meeting** to enter your image. Entries after this deadline will not be accepted. You should receive a confirmation that your entry has been received. Be on the lookout for this!
- b. A Minimum file size is ONE (1) megabyte, or 1000 kilobytes is preferred. Anything less runs the risk of delivering an image that is of lower quality. As a result, a judge may not give it due consideration.
- c. The submitted photo file attachment should be a JPG.
- d. **Rename the photo file following this naming convention:**
 - a. **Level – Photo title – Photographer's name**
 - b. **Example: Novice – Blue Bird – John Doe**
- e. **Email your photo file as an attachment to: pcschh1@gmail.com**

F. Studio Window Display of Winners

If your entry wins a first, second, third or honorable mention, it is eligible to be placed in the studio window. This image will be printed and mounted at no cost to you. When the new display has been set up, please pick up your mounted print and your ribbon.

G. Levels of Competition and Criteria for Advancement

1. **Initial Competition Level** – Typically a new member will begin competition at the NOVICE level. However, the club encourages all members to compete at a level appropriate with their photographic skill, not their relative newness to the club. Therefore, members who join the club with considerable prior photographic experience because of other club memberships, educational or professional activities may request to compete at a level higher than NOVICE subject to review by the Competition Committee.
2. **Advancement Through Skill Levels** – Progression through skill levels is based on competency and every club member may not achieve the highest level. Moving to Advanced and Expert requires considerable technical and creative skills that some members may not have the time or inclination to pursue. The more a member participates, the greater the learning and the chance to move up.
3. **Points** – Beginning in the 2016 calendar year, progression through the levels will be accomplished by the accumulation of points from various wins. Every time a member moves up one level, the requirements of the new level apply and the previous points are reset to zero.
4. **Club Competition Points** are achieved as follows:
 - a. First Place 9 points
 - b. Second Place 6 points
 - c. Third Place 3 points
 - d. Honorable Mention 1 point
5. **Points Required to Advance to a Higher Level**
 - a. Novice – A Photographer with a very basic understanding of photography.
 12 Points are required to move from Novice to Intermediate.
 - b. Intermediate – A photographer with some years of experience in photography who can use several shooting modes and understands the basic principles of photography.

 18 points are required to move from Intermediate to Advanced. A first-place finish is also required in the intermediate category as part of the required 18 points.
 - c. Advanced – A photographer with many years of experience in photography who knows how to achieve a creative and technically excellent image.

30 points required to move from Advanced to Expert. Two first place finishes are also required in the Advanced category as part of the required 30 points.

- d. Expert – A photographer with many years of experience in photography who can teach at all levels and has mastered the technical aspects of photography and exhibits a solid portfolio.

6. Explanation of How Points are Totaled

- a. Any combination of award points is possible for advancement.
- b. A Novice must accumulate a total of 12 points to move to Intermediate.
- b. An Intermediate must accumulate the 18 points but one of those point values must be a first place to move to Advanced. Example: A first place (9 points) and three third place wins ($3 \times 3 = 9$ points) and has achieved 18 points and will move up to Advanced.
- c. An Advanced must accumulate 30 points but two of those point values must come from first place wins. As an example, two first place wins would accumulate 18 points, a second place would add 6 points for a total of 24 points and two third place wins would add an additional 6 points for a total of 30 points. The Advanced would then move to Expert.

7. Award Definitions

- a. A “WIN” is considered being awarded a 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place or an Honorable Mention.
- b. Only “WINS” that were awarded from January 2008 forward will be counted towards advancement from one level to the next.

H. Competition Committee

- 1. The competition committee consists of a committee chair and an open number of volunteer members. The chair is appointed by the club president and serves an unspecified term. The committee chair may increase or reduce the size of the committee depending on need.
- 2. The Competition Committee will:
 - a. Develop photographic themes for monthly competitions.
 - b. Be responsible for distribution of award ribbons.
 - c. Check in and organize photos for the print competition meetings.
 - d. Display the winning photos in studio window.

- e. Maintain a ledger of member points earned in competitions.
- f. Advise the club leadership on competition matters.
- g. Coordinate with other committees as necessary.

I. Judging

At each meeting where there is a competition unless otherwise specified, only the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Honorable Mentions will receive judge's comments.

In order for awards to be given, the following number of entries must be submitted:

- a. For a First Place, there must be three photos entered.
- b. For a Second Place, there must be six photos entered.
- c. For a Third Place, there must be nine photos entered.
- d. For an Honorable Mention, there must be 10 photos entered.

J. Awards and Displays

- 1. Ribbons will be awarded to 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Honorable Mention winners.
- 2. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Honorable Mention winners will be eligible for their photos to be displayed in the studio window until the next competition.

K. People's Choice Awards

- 1. All 1st place photos for the calendar year will be eligible to contend for People's Choice awards.
- 2. All members in good standing are eligible to vote for the People's Choice awards and for the Best in Show.
- 3. Method of voting will be announced in advance of the competition.