

High Desert Photographers Judging Guidelines

High Desert Photographers asks that judges of High Desert Photographers competitions observe the following seven guidelines.

- 1) Use the 9-point/category scoring system described later in this document.
- 2) Be consistent: do not change your scoring in the middle of a session. This most often occurs when a judge notices that his or her scores are generally higher or generally lower than the scores of the other judges. The goal for a judge is to score the images so that, in the judge's best opinion, all of the 9s are better than all of the 8s, all of the 8s are better than all of the 7s, and so on all the way down. If a judge changes scoring in the middle of a session, this will not be true. It may even become embarrassing if you find that your scores are much different than the other scores, but you must stay consistent throughout the entire judging session for complete fairness of the competition.
- 3) Set aside your personal biases on subject and style. A judge has the simple but serious challenge of being as fair as possible to all photo entries regardless of personal biases or emotional response to a subject. Even though art is subjective, simply reacting to the image is not adequate; it is important for a judge to analyze his or her reaction to an image, screen out any personal biases, and using High Desert Photographers Judging and Scoring Guide consistent reasoning in evaluating the image. This is not easy, but is critical for fair judging.
- 4) Do not indiscriminately apply the "Rules of Composition". The "rules of composition" are one-size-fits-all guidelines that in many cases are completely inappropriate for a given image. Evaluate composition based on how it works in the image, not how it follows or fails to follow the rules.
- 5) Do not give a disproportionate number of high and low scores. It is possible for one judge to single-handedly determine the winners in a competition by giving only scores that are either very high or very low. This is not an acceptable practice in High Desert Photographers competitions. For almost any collection of images, the majority of the images will fall in the middle of the group, fairly close in quality to the average for that particular group. Every judge's scores should reflect this.
- 6) Take framing and presentation into account only if it detracts from the image in a significant way. For the most part score the image itself and not whether you like or dislike the framing used. Give the photographer the benefit of the doubt in this area.
- 7) If you see an image that looks like it was computer generated or manipulated, score it normally: this is okay in High Desert Photographers competitions.

Scoring Overview: A High Desert Photographers competition will use a panel of three judges, each using the 9-point/category scale described below. Ideally, a judge should not know how another judge has scored an image before presenting his or her own score. Most judges will find it helpful to preview all the images in a competition before starting to score; previewing makes it easier to maintain scoring consistency throughout a session. If time allows, you may opt to preview them multiple times.

Use the following scoring for each one of the 4 categories. The "Impact and Personal Opinion" category will be weighted X2 but you will use the same 0-9 scale.

- 0 = Dreadful
- 1 = Very poor
- 2 = Poor
- 3 = Below average
- 4 = Average (as in snap shot level)
- 5 = Above average
- 6 = Good
- 7 = Very Good
- 8 = Excellent
- 9 = Perfect

Objective Evaluation

Technical (20%)

Is it in focus? is it sharp? Could you recommend some sharpening? Exposure. Is it properly exposed? Are either the shadows or highlights clipped? Is the sky blown? Could the photo benefit from HDR? Did the photographer choose the correct shutterpeed and aperture? Could the photo benefit from a longer shutterspeed (ie "fluffy water") How is the depth of field (DOF). Is there too much noise Did the photographer use a high ISO unnecessarily? Are there dust spots on the sensor? How is the lighting? Is it Flat? Could the image benefit from some fill flash? Could the portrait benefit from short lighting? Tripod: Would the image benefit from a tripod? Does the image suffer from camera shake? Would a polarizer or a neutral density filter improve the image? Lens choice: Did the photographer choose the best possible lens?

Composition (20%)

Subject, Point of Interest, Perspective, Leading lines and curves, depth, cropping, Rule of thirds, etc. Was it well planned? Did care and thought go into taking it? Are the elements of the photo in the best places? Is anything out of place or in the wrong place?

Would the image be improved if it were a vertical? horizontal? Did the photographer obey the rule of thirds? Should it be broken? How about the golden mean? Is there a strong enough subject? Does the background distract? Would a shallower depth of field (dof) help the image? Did the photographer use leading lines? or vanishing points? Is it level? Is the image too busy? Are there unnecessary distracting elements in the photo? Did the photographer choose the right angle. Should he/she have gotten lower or higher? Could the vantage point be changed? Does the subject fill the frame? ie is it close enough? Is there nice texture in the image? Did the photographer take advantage of patterns and textures?

Subjective Evaluation

Creativity, Style and Photographic Success (20%)

How creative is the photo? Is it original? How unique is it? Is the idea a good one? Does it tell a story? Is it a successful image?

Impact and Personal Opinion (40%)

Drama, Mood, Visual Impact. How does this image affect you? Do you like it or not? Do you love it? How much? Does it speak to you? What kind of impact does the image have on you? Does it illicit any emotions? Artistic qualities?