

2026 WPPA Image Judging and More Competition Rules and Guidelines

Judging and Registration Details

Judging for the 2026 WPPA Image Judging and More competition will be held on **Sunday, March 8, 2026, beginning at 9:00 a.m. (Central Time).**

Registration for the event opens on January 8, 2026, and all registrations are to be completed at www.printcompetition.com.

The entry **deadline** is set for **5:00 p.m. (Central Time)** on **Saturday, March 7, 2026.**

All participants are required to read and fully understand the 2026 WPPA Image Judging and More Competition Rules prior to submitting their entries.

Purpose and Educational Goals

The WPPA Image Judging and More competition is designed to provide photographers with the opportunity to submit digital files for evaluation based on a standard of excellence, specifically utilizing the 12 Elements of a Merit Image. For additional information regarding these elements, participants are encouraged to refer to the PPA 12 Elements of a Merit Image. The competition aims to foster educational growth in technical excellence and to enhance understanding of what constitutes an exceptional image, ultimately helping photographers distinguish themselves within the profession.

Scoring Scale

Images submitted to the WPPA Image Judging and More competition are evaluated and can receive scores up to 100 points, reflecting how well they meet the Elements of a Merit Image. The scoring scale is as follows:

- 100–95: Exceptional
- 94–90: Superior
- 89–85: Excellent
- 84–80: Deserving of a Merit
- 79–75: Above Average
- 74–70: Average
- 69–65: Below Exhibition

Discussion

For entrants **who purchase the Discussion Fee**, all of the submitted images by that entrant will be discussed at the time of judging, with the feedback recorded and made available to the entrant on printcompetition.com.

General Information

The WPPA is hosting three distinct competitions:

- **Photographic Open Competition**
- **Artist Competition**
- **Senior Folio Competition**

Participation is open to everyone, members and also non WPPA Members. Everyone is eligible to win Sponsored Awards, though each individual is limited to one Sponsored Award. (See Specific Rules)

WPPA members are specifically eligible for WPPA State Awards if they have **renewed or obtained WPPA membership for 2026 before entering the competition**.

Further information on membership is available through the membership application process on www.wppa-online.com.

Participants may submit **unlimited entries** in each category.

Entry fee: \$15 for each individual submission.

The Discussion Fee: \$36 which covers discussion and recording of all images entered by that entrant in any of the competitions. These discussions occur on the day of judging, with a juror assigned to discuss each image after the score is announced. If an image is challenged and or discussed, that recording will be uploaded to printcompetition.com.

Being a Premium Member of printcompetition.com allows access to these recordings as well as learning from other image competition entries.

Please allow up to one week after the competition for discussions to be uploaded to the site.

Entries may consist of any mix of digital images and digital albums.

General Rules

The following rules apply to **all three competitions**:

- All entries must be submitted via www.printcompetition.com, and participants are responsible for an additional fee paid to PrintCompetition.com for use of their service.
- Only digital images may be submitted for judging.
- Participants may submit unlimited images in each competition.
- A minimum of four entries may be required to be considered for top awards in each competition. Refer to the Sponsored and WPPA Awards Rules for details.
- No changes or refunds are permitted after the entry deadline or after entry fees are paid.

Eligible Images

Images eligible for entry include:

- Images that have received a Merit or Imaging Excellence score in PPA's Merit Image Review (MIR).
- Images previously entered in IPC that **did not** receive a TOP 32 designation.
- New images not previously entered in any competition.
- Images that were previously entered in WPPA Image Judging and More, provided they did not receive a score of 80 or higher.
- Images from other image competitions, except those specifically excluded below.

Ineligible Images

Images that are not eligible for entry include:

- Images selected for any World Photographic Cup Competition.
- Images that received a TOP 32 designation in any of PPA's IPC Categories.
- Images that merited in any of PPA's IPC prior to 2023.
- Images that have received a WPPA State Award.
- Images that received an 80 or higher in any WPPA Competition.
- Images that have received an ASP or PPA District Award.
- Images that have received an ASP Medallion Award.
- Images that have received a PPA Grand Imaging Award.

AI Statement

No entry in any category may be created as a whole or in part using text-to-image prompts with Artificial Intelligence (AI) image-generating software designed to produce entire images or backgrounds from programmed sources.

Creative control over the work's expression must remain with the human creator, and all elements must be produced with traditional authorship methods.

However, non-text-to-image prompted features, such as Photoshop's generative expand and photoshop retouching tools, are permitted.

Entries found to violate this AI policy will be disqualified, will not receive a score, and may not be entered in any future WPPA competitions. If disqualification occurs after scoring, the score will be voided and the image will be ineligible for awards or inclusion in WPPA materials.

Physical fabric backgrounds do not apply to the AI Statement; they are purchased by an entrant for use in the photographic creation of an image. The entrant has no control over how a background is created.

Digital Submission Specifications

All files must be sized so that the **longest dimension is 4000 pixels**.

Each file must include an embedded color profile (either sRGB or Adobe RGB1998) and should be saved at a JPEG quality setting of 10. Typically, the file size should not exceed 3.5 MB. Files should be named using only the image title. If your file size is bigger than 4000 pixels **it will be disqualified**.

Digital Album Entry Guidelines

All album entries must be submitted digitally. For guidance, see the video tutorial at PPA.com/IPC_tutorials. The following requirements apply:

1. Each page or spread file must have its longest dimension at 4000 pixels, include an embedded color profile of either sRGB or Adobe RGB1998, and be saved as a JPEG at quality setting 10.
2. There is no restriction on the number of images per page or spread file.
3. Albums must contain between 5 and 36 page/spread files.
4. Files must be numbered in viewing order using two digits (e.g., 01.jpg, 02.jpg, 03.jpg, etc.).
5. All files should be compressed into a single ZIP file, named according to the album title (e.g., Summer Wedding.zip).
6. No studio identification or entrant's name may appear on any file within the album entry.
7. When submitting a multi-maker album, all entrants must use the same album title.

Viewing Conditions for Image Review – Calibrate your monitor

- For optimal color management, refer to the video tutorial available at PPA.com/IPC_tutorials or on YouTube.
- The recommended monitor settings are D65, 120 cd/m², and a gamma of 2.20.
- Calibrate your monitor before you start to process your images.

Final Note

The WPPA Image Competition Committee reserves the right to reassign images to a different competition, category, or sub-category if deemed appropriate. All decisions made by the committee are final.

WPPA Competitions - Rules and Categories

Photographic Open Competition Rules

The Photographic Open Competition is designed to showcase the photographic skill and expertise of each entrant. While entrants may incorporate supporting photographic elements that they did not personally create, these elements must be clearly referenced as guide images on the face of the entry. This rule encompasses all supporting elements, including sky replacements. Importantly, the original photographic capture by the entrant should be of sufficient quality to merit recognition on its own, independent of any external elements used. Any elements created by the entrant must not be included as guide images. These rules also apply to images within an album entry.

This competition is intended for all images and albums in which the entrant is responsible for creating the images of the primary subject(s) in the final entry. For further details, consult the specific rules for categories such as the Wedding Competition Rules and Reportage.

All aspects of processing, manipulation, printing, or rendering must be completed by the entrant or under their direct supervision. Entrants are required to have obtained and maintain access to all necessary releases, whether model or property releases, and agree to hold WPPA harmless against any claims and liabilities resulting from WPPA's use, display, publication, or promotion of each submitted image.

Entrants are prohibited from including their name, initials, business logo, watermark, or any identifying features anywhere on the entry.

Entries are ineligible if created under the supervision of an instructor or as part of a class assignment. Only self-directed images are permitted. Images produced in an educational setting under direct instructor supervision are not allowed.

Any entry derived from an existing photograph, portrait, graphic, or artwork created by another individual is not permitted and will be disqualified from judging, acceptance, or display. Should an entry, in the good-faith opinion of the WPPA Image Competition Committee, violate copyright, trademark, or any applicable law, it will be disqualified, not displayed or published, and will not receive awards or points toward the WPPA Fellowship Degree.

Entries featuring the same subject in multiple images are acceptable if the images present entirely different concepts. If not, only one image will be accepted, with the other(s) disqualified.

The WPPA Image Competition Committee will strive to inform entrants of such duplicates prior to the registration deadline. If not identified before the deadline, the first listed image on printcompetition.com will be accepted, and others will be disqualified. Disqualifications post-scoring result in voided scores and ineligibility for awards or inclusion in WPPA materials.

The Folio Competition is an exception; refer to the Folio Competition Rules for clarification.

The WPPA Image Competition Chair retains the right to disqualify images under this provision.

Images not meeting WPPA exhibition content standards may be judged but not displayed. Acceptable content is determined based on the standards set by the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., at the discretion of the WPPA Image Competition Committee.

Photographic Open Categories & Sub-Categories

Each entry must be assigned to one of the following categories or sub-categories in the Photographic Open Competition:

Portrait

Portrait images utilize structured lighting in a studio or outdoor environment and should capture the character of one or more subjects from any walk of life.

- General Portrait: Includes families, groups, adults, couples, fashion, and boudoir.
- Children/Baby: Ages 0 to 16 years.
- Couple: Non-wedding couples.
- High School Senior: Actual client work.
- Animal: Animal portraits using structured lighting, with the owner or photographer controlling the animal and lighting.

Illustrative

This category includes pictorials, abstracts, composites, digital paintings, flowers, plants, trees, macro, zoo animals, and similar subjects.

- Composite
- Digital Painting
- Nature
- Illustrative Portrait: Images using creative styling, techniques, extensive makeup, or props. Postproduction is encouraged and may be essential to the final image.
- Illustrative Open: Composited landscapes, wildlife, astrophotography, or any image not fitting other sub-categories.
- Album: Non-wedding social event albums (e.g., bar mitzvahs) or storytelling portrait albums.

Landscape

This category is for images portraying natural scenes, including landscapes, cityscapes, seascapes, aerials, and astrophotography. Techniques such as image stitching, focus stacking, and image stacking are allowed.

- Drone/Aerial
- Astrophotography
- Landscapes

Wildlife

Wildlife images must depict animals in their natural habitats and cannot be composites.

- Birds
- Animals
- Reptiles
- Insects

Commercial

Commercial images are intended for clients to promote or brand products or companies. This includes advertising, fashion, beauty, still life, food, architecture, and corporate photography. Both composite and non-composite images, as well as light-painted and heavily manipulated images, are allowed.

- Food
- Fashion/Beauty
- Architecture
- Commercial Open

Reportage

Reportage images document actual events—public or private, news stories, or human-interest features—with significant impact or emotional response. Sports events are included. Only basic adjustments (color, brightness, cropping, dodging, burning) are allowed; only single-capture images are accepted. Composites and multiple exposures are not permitted. The committee may request the original RAW or JPEG file.

- Reportage Open

Wedding

The Wedding Category is for images and albums captured during the actual wedding event. Jurors recognize the constraints of weddings, such as limited control over subjects, environment, and timing. Images must include clear wedding references, and all elements must be created during the event. Engagement or bridal portraits are not permitted in this category.

- Wedding Day Open: Images created during the actual wedding event.
- Wedding Day Album: All album images must be captured during the event. Entries may be single or multi-maker (at least two photographers, minimum twenty images each from the same wedding). Non-compliance may result in disqualification.

Artist Competition Rules

The Artist Competition provides entrants with the opportunity to demonstrate their artistic skills and expertise in creating images from one or more sources. Entrants are not required to have photographed any source images themselves. Entries in this competition are judged on digital, artistic, and technical proficiency.

Entries can be created using various artistic mediums. Use of photographs is optional, and artwork may feature freehand drawing or painting in traditional or digital formats. Stock photographs, images, or artwork from other artists may be included with written consent from those sources. WPPA may request documentation of permissions before, during, or after the competition.

Guide images must be included on the face of the entry. For restorations, it is recommended to include the guide image for the restored photograph as well as two progress images.

All processing, manipulation, artwork, or rendering must be performed by the entrant. Entrant identifying information (name, initials, logo, watermark) must not appear anywhere on the entry.

Entries produced under instructor supervision or as class assignments are not eligible. All images must be self-directed and not created in an educational environment under direct instructor supervision.

Multiple entries of the same subject are allowed only if each entry represents an entirely different concept; otherwise, only one will be accepted, and the rest disqualified.

The committee will attempt to inform makers of duplicate entries before the deadline; if not, the first listed image on printcompetition.com will be accepted. Disqualified entries after scoring will have their scores voided and be ineligible for awards or publication.

If, in the committee's opinion, an entry violates copyright, trademark, or any applicable law and cannot be proven otherwise, it will not be displayed or published, will be disqualified from awards, and will not receive points toward the WPPA Fellowship Degree.

The WPPA Image Competition Chair may disqualify images under this rule.

Artist Competition Categories

- Creative Open (Artist)
- Restoration

Senior Folio Competition Rules

- A Senior Folio must be composed of **at least eight portraits** of a high school senior.
- The digital file must be cropped to a 10x20 format,
- Longest dimension of 4000 dpi.

Folios are judged as a cohesive body of work. Judges consider standard criteria as well as salability, variety, posing, creativity, and consistency across all poses. The Senior Folio Competition is intended to highlight the maker's photographic knowledge and skill.

All images must come from actual senior customer or client work. Images used in the High School Senior Sub-Category of the WPPA Photographic Open Competition may also be entered, as the Folio is judged differently.

All aspects of processing, manipulation, printing, or rendering must be performed by the entrant. Entrants must have all necessary model or property releases and agree to hold WPPA harmless from any claims or liabilities arising from WPPA's use of the images.

No identifying marks (name, initials, logo, watermark) are allowed on any entry.

Entries made under instructor supervision or as class assignments are ineligible. All submitted images must be self-directed and not created in an educational setting under direct instructor supervision.

Any entry originating from an existing photograph, portrait, graphic, or artwork produced by another individual will be disqualified.

If, in the committee's good-faith opinion, an entry violates copyright, trademark, or any applicable law, it will not be displayed or published and will not be eligible for awards or points toward the WPPA Fellowship Degree.

Multiple entries of the same subject in different folios are not allowed. If duplicate folios are identified, the first listed folio on printcompetition.com will be accepted, and the others will be disqualified. Disqualifications after scoring result in voided scores and ineligibility for awards or publication. The WPPA Image Competition Chair is authorized to disqualify entries under this provision.

Senior Folio Competition Categories

- Senior Boy
- Senior Girl