

* 7 Tips for Photography Contests *

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1. Read the fine print.

Pay attention to all that itty, bitty writing. Sadly, many photography contests are not much more than image grabs. In some contests you give up all rights to your image merely by entering. Often the organization behind the contest can use or sell your image without compensating or even crediting you. Don't let it happen to you.

2. Check out past winners.

Some contests have evolved a style. Look at the past winners and try to judge your own images unemotionally. Do your images work with the contest's style? Maybe your images would work better in a different contest.

3. Do your homework on the judges.

Most contests state who the judges are going to be. We all bring our own biases to the table, including the judges. If you can find out some background on them it can help you cater your entries to the types of images the judges will favor.

4. Read the rules...carefully.

Most contests will state how they want the images delivered and specify technical details. The rules may state no captive animals, no cropping or other no-no's. No sense in having your image disqualified because you didn't read and understand the rules. If something seems unclear ask for clarification.

5. Don't overprocess.

It can be easy to get carried away in Lightroom or Photoshop. If a little saturation is good, some more won't hurt right? Wrong! Unless you are entering a Digital Art or Creative type of category go easy with those sliders. A garish, oversharpened image is not likely to do well.

6. Be honest.

Most of the reputable contests are going to want your RAW image to compare against the image you entered. This goes back to reading the rules. If you replaced the sky, cloned out an offending branch or otherwise went beyond the rules there is a good chance you will get caught.

7. Be fearless.

Don't be afraid to enter! Just because your image did not do well in your camera club competition does not mean it's not a worthy entry. This goes back to the judges biases. If you have some images that you feel are ready for primetime, go for it!

**Award-winning nature & wildlife photographer, Jeff Parker,
leads photo tours & workshops for the naturally curious™
throughout North, Central & South America—and now India,
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