

Taking competition photographs

Tips and tricks

Introduction

1. Make sure that you understand what the judges are looking for. It would be a shame if you took a brilliant photograph that was ruled out because you didn't understand what they wanted.
2. Taking a great photograph for a competition means that you know how to use a camera well. The tips below are a start and whilst this sheet is limited in what it can say there are web links that might help you if you wish to know more. Learn about your camera and what it can do.

Tips

3. *Composition* is very important as you need to show the judges exactly what you want them to see. Because human eyes follow patterns when they look at things there are several rules you can follow. Perhaps the easiest of these is "The Rule of Thirds". When you look through the viewfinder mentally divide the picture up with lines like those illustrated below :-



This will help you balance any elements of both colour and objects you want in the picture. This is only one way of making a well composed picture and you can find others here :-

<https://petapixel.com/photography-composition-techniques/> or here :-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20CpdyXxf-s>

4. *Depth of Field (DoF)* is the amount of the picture that is in focus. A shallow DoF will allow you to isolate part of the image and emphasise it such (i) below. A larger DoF lets you put more into a sharp focus whether it is near or far away (ii) below). If you use a large DoF then you can add an interesting foreground to the picture even when your main interest is far away. This definitely helps with composition too and how you are showing your subject to others. See here for a short video that will help make sense of that:- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXOHRkMHDC8>



(i)



(ii)

5. *Focus*. It is almost essential to make sure that what you are showing is well defined so that the judges can see what you are wanting them to see. If you watched the video on DoF then you will

already realise that focus is also important isolating a subject when using a narrow DoF. But the shutter speed you are using and whether the subject is moving or still all need consideration. You want to demonstrate you have skill in using a camera and have taken time to ensure the picture is as good as it can be. At the start of this I said “almost essential”. And we will come to that in a minute.... For more on focus see this :- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se1WzQLyldk>

6. *Colour or black and white.* The photographer Elliott Erwitt said that “Colour is descriptive but black and white is interpretive “. It is useful to remember that you have a choice and that you can change the way a picture looks by making this choice. Experiment with the photographs you take and see which makes the most sense to you. With digital photography it is easy to make comparisons. You can find out more about this choice here :- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suwsq79Tlso>
7. *Light.* The light which you take your pictures in is important. It can saturate colour if bright enough or make a more moody picture if it is misty. Early morning light is usually softer and, of course, sunsets are often dramatic. Shooting after dark can be fun, but experiment first. You’ll usually need a longer exposure and maybe a tripod or wall to keep your camera steady. The tow photos below show how dramatic shots can be in different light.



8. *Shape.* You’ll notice in the illustrations here that some pictures are cropped into different shapes. A “letterbox” shape Like the Black Mill above can improve landscape composition for instance while square pictures concentrate the focus on what you want people to see. Phone cameras are especially good at taking panoramas easily these days. Think about the best shape for your finished picture to make the most of it.
9. *Abstraction.* There are a few occasions where it can be useful to make your picture more challenging to understand so that people have to look harder or think about what you mean and why you made it look like that. It can mean using shapes, colours, movement and textures. It can mean talking a longer exposure and deliberately moving the camera as you press the shutter. These need some practice and the examples below show how you can bring something different to the picture. Here are two videos to illustrate how this might work for you :- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-nnDzB5lYE> for abstraction or :- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZsV6ynVc2o> for Intentional Camera Movement .



.... lastly make sure you have film in your camera or that the battery is charged in your camera and/or phone....remember to enjoy it and good luck.....