# SYRACUSE CAMERA CLUB COMPETITION RULES

Updated August 2025

**DEFINITIONS**

"Digital Image" is used to refer to photos that are projected digitally.

"Print" is used to refer to photos that are produced on photographic paper, i.e., a color print, or a black and white print.

"Image" refers to an entry in a Competition and can be either a print or a digital image.

"Class" refers to the level in which a photographer competes, i.e., entry, advanced, or master.

"Division" refers to the specific type of competition, currently either digital or print.

"Member in Good Standing" refers to Syracuse Camera Club members that have paid their yearly dues.

**1. GENERAL**

1.1 When operating in a virtual format, the monthly competitions will be for digital images only. When holding meetings in person, the monthly competitions will be for both digital and print images.

1.2 The copyright of a digital image uploaded to the Syracuse Camera Club (hereafter SCC) website, Facebook , or any other club social media presence remains with the creator of the image. A member's permission to upload a digital image to any of these forums grants the SCC no rights other than the right to display the image with appropriate credit given to the photographer.

**2. COMPETITION YEAR**

2.1 The competition year is comprised of ten monthly competitions, starting in September and ending in June.

2. 2 The third Wednesday of the month is Competition night, with the exception of June when the Competition night takes place on the first Wednesday of the month.

2.3 Participation in SCC competitions is limited to members in good standing. Dues must be paid in full prior to entering a competition.

**3. COMPETITION LEVELS AND DIVISIONS**

3.1 Competition Levels
Members may compete in one of the following three levels:

Entry Level: Any individual new to the Club, new to photography, or with limited experience and who is learning basic photographic principles and concepts. This level provides an opportunity for new members to find their comfort zone.

Advanced Level: Any individual who has mastered the basic photographic skills and wants to compete at a higher level. This provides a competitive level for consistent winners at the Entry Level. In addition, when a member in the Entry Level reaches the "150 point Photographer" milestone, the member will automatically be promoted to the Advanced Level the following competition year.

Master Level: Any individual who possesses a very high degree of photographic skill and experience and who consistently produces an exemplar quality of work. This provides a competitive level for consistent winners at the Advanced Level to compete under judging standards that are at the highest level, encompassing both artistic and technical merit.

Based on these guidelines, members choose the level in which to enter their images based on their ability and on their desire for a particular level of competition. Whichever level the member enters at the beginning of the year is where he/she will remain for the entire competition year. A member may, however, switch to a different level at the beginning of a new competition year.

3.2 There are two divisions: Digital Division and Print Division. Entries may be submitted in one or both of these divisions, subject to the maximum limit of two entries per competition.

**4. GENERAL COMPETITION RULES**

4.1 Competitions are open to all subject matter except for the number of competitions that have been designated to have a specific theme. The number of themed competitions may be changed based upon the recommendation of the Competition Committee and a vote of the Executive Board.

4.2 Prior to the end of the Club year, members will be asked to submit recommendations for the themed competitions in the following competition year. The themes receiving the most "votes" will be selected for the following year's themed competitions. No theme may be repeated over a 3-year period.

4.3 For themed competitions, images will be reviewed for compliance with the theme definition prior to providing the judge with access to the image galleries. Images that do not conform with the theme definition will be eliminated from the competition, and the maker will be notified.

4.4 Images that have placed first, second, third or honorable mention in any category may not be entered again in the current or future competition years. It is each member's responsibility to keep track of their images that have placed in any competition and to not re-enter such images.

4.5 Members may submit a maximum of two images in each monthly competition. Competition entries are not accepted after the designated cut-off time. The entry period for submitting images for monthly competitions opens by the beginning of each club year. The cut-off for image submissions is the Thursday prior to each competition. Any images submitted after 11:59pm on the Thursday before the competition are not eligible for consideration.

4.6 All entries must be the member's own work. Digital entries must be uploaded and submitted through the Syracuse Camera Club website. When print competitions are held, the relevant information and a digital image file must be submitted for print entries through the Syracuse Camera Club website.

**4.6 Image Integrity and AI Usage Policy**

Images may be taken on traditional film and scanned to an electronic file or taken electronically. Images may be edited through the use of photo editing programs; however, the image itself must be the maker's image. More specifically:

All competition entries must be original images captured by the photographer. To preserve the authenticity of submitted images, sky replacements and AI-generated content based on text prompts or unrelated source imagery are prohibited. Content-aware or generative fills are permitted only when they

do not introduce new elements that were not plausibly present in the scene. Any form of content generation guided by text prompts (e.g., "replace with a tree branch" or "add clouds") is not allowed. In addition, artwork or computer graphics may not be added to the image.

AI-assisted editing tools within programs such as Lightroom, Photoshop, Topaz, Capture One, etc., are permitted only if all elements within the image (e.g., sky, backgrounds, subjects) are the photographer's original work. The use of third party textures (e.g. overlays, blended layers, brush textures) is permitted provided the image is the member's own work and original capture and the maker applies them under his or her direct control. Textures or backgrounds generated by AI or not applied by the maker are prohibited.

Composite images are permitted. All elements of a composite image must originate from the photographer's own capture(s). Diptychs and triptychs are not allowed to be entered into competitions.

Unless a competition theme specifies accurate documentation as a goal of the images in that category, computer-based image manipulation as described above is acceptable. Specific themes from year to year may add further limitations regarding subject matter and permissible manipulation. Judges will be asked to judge the photographs for overall photographic quality and interest, not the amount of manipulation required to achieve the effect.

4.7 While there is no age restriction for the entries, photographers are encouraged to enter photographs that are indicative of their current work. The Competition Committee may establish special competitions for which an image age restriction is applied.

4.8 The purpose of competitions within the SCC is to improve the photographic skills of the members and allow members to display their creative work.

Members are required to remain silent during the competition to ensure that the judge is not influenced by a member's comments. This requirement is to be maintained even if the judge asks a direct or rhetorical question. The judge will be reminded that members are not to speak during the critique or the judging process. The judge's results and critique are final. We will not second guess or change the judge's results.

4.9 Images which won in monthly competitions during the year cannot be changed in any way for year-end judging.

4.10 In any given-competition, the number of awards to be granted is as follows.

| **Division Entry Total** | **Award(s)** |
|---|---|
| 4 to 5 | (1): 1st |
| 6 to 8 | (2): 1st and 2nd |
| 9 to 12 | (3): 1st, 2nd, and 3rd |
| 13 to 19 | (4): 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 1 HM |
| 20 to 23 | (5: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 2 HMs |
| 24 to 29 | (6): 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 3 HMs |
| 30 to 35 | (7): 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4 HMs |
| 36 to 39 | (8): 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5 HMs |

When the entry total in a division exceeds 39, additional HMs will be awarded relative to the total number of entries.

When there are fewer entries than the minimum, the member may either (a) move to the next higher-level class for that competition only or (b) withdraw his/her image and be given one point for entering. The points for the higher-level class will be awarded should the image win. However, an image that wins in the higher-class level must be entered in the year-end competition in the member's regular (lower) class.

4.11 Should a winning entry be found to be in violation of these regulations after competition has completed, that award will be vacated without affecting the remaining awards. The scoring chairperson will report the violation to the President and notify the member.

4.12 It is each member's responsibility to verify their scores after the competition is completed and scores are posted on the SCC website.

**5. DIGITAL SUBMISSION RULES**

5.1 The digital image file submission format is as follows:

- All digital images must be submitted as jpeg files with a file extension of .jpg.
- The maximum file size is 4mb, and the maximum dimension on the longest edge should be no more than 6000 pixels.
- Digital images must be submitted in the color space normally used in your image editor (i.e., Adobe RGB 1998, sRGB).
- The digital image file name should be the image title.
- Pictures CANNOT have watermarks and will be disqualified from competition.

**6. PRINT COMPETITION RULES (in effect when the Club has print competitions)**

6.1 Prints may be either color or monochromatic and, if the latter, they may be hand colored, tinted, or toned.

6.3 Prints must be securely mounted on matte board or foam core not smaller than 8 x 10 inches or larger than 16 x 20 inches. They may be any size up to 16 x 20 inches and not smaller than 5 x 7 inches. Prints may not be framed.

6.2 All prints must be mounted on a backing at least 1/16-inch-thick to ensure that the photograph is adequately supported and protected. Over mats may be used without color restrictions. Mounts and mats shall not exceed 20 inches along the longest side and be no less than 8 inches on the shortest side. The longest edge of the visible portion of the image must be between 6 and 16 inches. Prints may not be framed. No multiple print images in the same mat are allowed unless the competition theme specifically calls for such entries.

6.3 All print entries must bear the competition division, the title, and the maker's name clearly marked on the back of the print. An arrow or label on the back must be included to indicate the top of the image.

6.4 Print images are brought in the night of competition. The prints must be signed in before 7:15 p.m. to be eligible to compete. A sign-in form is provided for each type of print, and for each competition division.

6.5 Members submitting prints in a competition must also upload a digital copy of the image to the SCC competition website. This digital copy will be stored on the website and used for record keeping purposes. These digital images will not typically be used for judging purposes; however, they allow the judge to review the images in advance of the competition to better provide comments. The digital copy, which can be an original digital file or a scanned file, must be uploaded by 11:59 pm on the Friday preceding the competition; which is the same for digital image submissions.

6.6 SCC encourages each photographer to make the best quality image possible, including the production of the highest quality prints to be entered into competition. The print quality will not be a separate item of judging; however, it may be considered as part of the overall impact of the photograph.

**7. YEAR-END PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS**

7.1 In an effort to encourage and honor consistent photographic excellence, the Syracuse Camera Club has established the following awards for the best digital and print images of the year.

7.2 Digital images and prints that have received an award in the monthly competitions will be judged by a panel of three judges. Individuals who served as judges for the monthly competitions during the club year are not allowed to serve on the end-of- year judging panel. In addition, current club members are not eligible to serve on the end-of-year judging panel.

7.3 Year-End Awards. All entries which have placed first, second, third, or honorable mention in each of the monthly competitions during the competition year will be entered in the end-of-year competition with the consent of the makers.

7.3.1 The first three places in each class of each division will receive awards for first, second, and third place. Runners-up, of competitions in each class and each division, will receive an honorable mention recognition; the number of which will be determined based upon the equivalent of 10% of the entries in a given class (e.g., 25 entries will round up to three honorable mention awards). The year-end awards will be presented at the June banquet.

7.3.2 Digital Image and Print of the Year: The first-place winning digital images in the Entry Class, Advanced Class and Master Class will each receive an award for Digital Image of the Year. The first-place winning prints in the Entry Class, Advanced Class and Master Class will each receive an award for Print of the Year. Each of the winners will receive an engraved rotating trophy which he or she may retain for one year. The rotating trophy becomes the permanent possession of any member who wins it three times (over any time period), and a new rotating trophy will be purchased.

7.3.3 **The Ron Olcott Award** was established to recognize excellence in the Print Division and to honor a long-time member and master printer of images. At the Year-End competition, the three first place prints from Entry, Advanced and Master Classes will be judged together and the winning print will be awarded the Ron Olcott Award. A rotating trophy will be engraved with the recipient's name.

**8. YEAR-END MERIT AND MILESTONE AWARDS**

8.1 In an effort to encourage and honor consistent photographic excellence over time, the Syracuse Camera Club has established Merit awards for points accumulated during each competition year, and Milestone awards for points accumulated over more than one year.

8.2 Merit Award Point System
Merit points will be credited to club members for their participation and winning in Syracuse Camera Club monthly digital file and print competitions, according to the chart below (section 9).

8.3 Year End Merit Awards
The member with the highest number of points in each class of each division will receive a year-end Merit award at the annual June banquet.

8.4 Year End Milestone Awards
Merit points accumulated in Digital and Print competitions, in whatever class they were received (e.g., Entry, Advanced and Master) will be accumulated from one year to another and form the basis for the Milestone awards. These Milestone awards will be presented in June to members who have accumulated a specific number of points (see section 10). The awards will consist of appropriately engraved plaques or certificates.

8.5 The Peter Congel Award
The Peter Congel Award was established to encourage diversity of photographic effort, and to perpetuate the memory of one of the Camera Club's most honored members. This award is given to the member who has accumulated the most points through the competition year from among all members who have competed in both the print and digital divisions. The Award is an annually rotated trophy engraved with the name of each year's winner. Any member winning the trophy three times will keep the trophy. If no one succeeds in winning the trophy, it will be retired to club ownership.

8.6 President's Award
A desk paperweight trophy will be awarded to each president at the end of his or her term. If a president serves for more than one year in a row the trophy will be awarded when a new president is elected.

**9. MERIT POINT SCHEDULE**
Points will be awarded for images entered into competition as follows:

| | **Master Class** | **Advanced Class** | **Entry Class** |
|---|---|---|---|
| First Place | 16 | 13 | 10 |
| Second Place | 12 | 10 | 8 |
| Third Place | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| HM (each) | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| Non-placing entry | 1 | 1 | 1 |

**10. MILESTONE POINT SCHEDULE**
Upon reaching the following points in either the digital and/or print divisions, the member receives the associated designation:

| **Designation** | **Number of Points** |
|---|---|
| Photographer | 150 |
| Advanced Photographer | 300 |
| Master Photographer | 500 |
| Associate photographer | 1000 |
| Camera Club Fellow | 1500 |
| Loyal Fellow | 3000 |