

# Judging a Photograph

What do judges look for?

Technical Merit  
Composition  
Impact

# Technical Merit:

Exposure

Sharpness/Focus

Shutter Speed/Aperture/ISO

White Balance

Brightness/Contrast/Light

Post Processing

Composition:

Framing/Cropping

Balance

Rule of Thirds (know when to break it!)

Distractions

Where does eye lead

Impact:

Emotion/Mood/Feeling

Creativity

Story Telling/Convey Your Intent

Subject doesn't really matter

How you see your subject  
and

How you present your subject are  
the important things

You Need to Create a

**WOW!**



Let's Do Some Judging!

















Making a Good Photo  
into a  
More Interesting One



















How to Take  
a Boring Picture  
and Score Low Points  
with Judges

Center Your Subject

Avoid Interesting Placement

Don't Include  
a Main Subject at All

Take Picture at Random

Ask Your Subject  
to Say "Cheese"

Avoid Natural and Genuine  
Expressions

Schedule Photo Shoots  
for the Middle of the Day

Avoid Beautiful Light  
of Evening Morning  
and Late Afternoon

Use Auto Exposure at all Times

Don't Take Control of your  
Exposure so that you can  
Avoid Creating Drama

Evenly Light Everything

Avoid Creating a Sense of Depth  
with Shadows and Highlights

Keep it Dull



Keep Your Distance

Keep Viewers Feeling Detached by  
Staying far away from your  
Subject

Include Distracting Elements

Always Stand and Shoot  
From Your Own Eye Level

Never Kneel or Climb to get  
Different Perspective and help  
Engage the Viewer

Use Your Camera's Build-In Flash

Don't Flatter your Subject with  
Side Lighting or Bouncing Flash

Follow the Rules of Composition  
to a "T"

Never Ever Stray from the Rules

Keep Things Lifeless rather than  
Creative

Final Thoughts

It's the Photographer who makes  
the picture, NOT the camera!

If you want something to look interesting, don't light all of it.

- John Leonard  
Picture Editor at Life

Don't just  
TAKE the  
shot, MAKE  
the shot!