Competition Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

We hope you will find answers to all your questions about competitions here. If not, feel free to contact any Competition Committee member. Be sure to read the Competition Rules and Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines.

1. Where do I submit my images?

   If you are competing in the Electronic category, please send your images as email attachments to nbccmdEcomp@gmail.com

   If you are competing in the Print category, please send your images as email attachments to nbccmdPcomp@gmail.com

2. Why do I submit an image file if I'm competing in the print category???

   When the COVID-19 pandemic started, NBCC decided to adjust the print competition approach to allow print competitors to continue in "their category of choice".   All print entries are still required to be mounted and brought to any "in-person" competition. All images awarded 1st, 2nd or 3rd place are published and therefore image files are needed. Having all the files submitted ahead of time eliminates the need for the Competition Chair to track down the images one by one. Having image files submitted for print competitions also will allow us to hold meetings remotely in the event of a snow closing or similar event.

3. When do I submit my competition images?

   Your images must be received during a five-day period that begins on the Wednesday of the week before the competition meeting and ends at 7:30pm on the Sunday before the competition. Be aware that email with large attachments can be delayed, could cause your images to miss the deadline. Don't wait until the last minute.

4. I'll be traveling or unavailable during the submission period; can I submit early?

   Yes, but only after arranging this with the Coordinator (name is listed on the Competition Rules and Guidelines page on our website or contact the Competition Chairperson). You can contact them either at their personal email address or by phone (both are listed in the membership directory). Note that the competition mailboxes are not monitored except during the submission period, which is why you need to arrange for early submission. Alternatively, you can request a friend submit them on your behalf during the normal window.

5. How many images can I submit each month?

   You can submit a maximum of two competition images per month.

6. What are the levels of competition?

Electronic competitions accept Novice, Intermediate and Advanced. Print competitions accept Intermediate and Advanced. These are self-selecting levels, as described in the rules.

7. Is there something other than competition available?

   Yes, but not as part of the competition program. The Education Committee provides critique groups. Additionally, with an individual membership in Photographic Society of America (PSA) you can enter critique groups.

8. There are Competition Rules, plus there are Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines. Do I have to comply with both?

   Yes. The Competition Rules are posted on the website and can be downloaded as a pdf. They will remain unchanged throughout the competition year. The Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines deal with operational details and may evolve during the year in order to make improvements. Members will be notified by a GordieGram email and meeting announcements if there are significant updates to the Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines during the year.

9. How do I know my files were received?

   You will first receive an automated message indicating that your email arrived. If you do not receive the automated message within a couple of hours, you should follow up: did your submission email have some problem such as incorrect email address, or file size too large for the email system? Emails sometimes disappear or bounce back to the sender days or weeks later.

   Later you will receive a personal email from the Competition Coordinator confirming that your images are accepted (or rejected, if they do not comply with rules, guidelines, or assignment). Please allow up to two days to receive this confirmation email. **Then if you still haven't received the confirmation, it's up to you to follow up.** Entries that miss the deadline are not accepted, so savvy members submit theirs early.

10. Why must I send all my entries at one time?

    This saves work for the Competition Coordinator, who is tasked with receiving, storing, cataloging, visually and technically checking the entries, then responding to the originator with a confirmation email. Doing this more than once per member each month wastes time and effort. If your software will not attach all your entries to a single email, send them in separate emails no more than a few minutes apart and send a note in the first email explaining this.

11. Are the image filenames really that important?

    They are very important because the filenames are read by machine (software) for both the presentation to the judge and for crediting awards and points. Thus, if your filenames do not comply with the naming conventions given in the Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines, your entries could be omitted, or your winning points might not be credited to your account.

The Competition team is not obligated to correct filename errors, but the responsibility rests with the originator. The most common corrections are for: improper hyphen separators, reversed parts of the filename (title and photographer), and inconsistently spelled photographer name (important for recording points to your account). If submitting similar images, title each one uniquely (i.e., don't use "Rose #1, Rose#2). Consistently submitting incorrectly named files may result in rejection of your images.

12. What about long filenames - aren't they a problem?

The problem is more for the Newsletter Editor who has to fit your words into a short space. You may find your title reduced in length. A total of 70 characters is the limit.

Not for the vast majority of competitors. It is true that some email software, and some Macintosh systems, can corrupt filenames during transmission of the files. The corruption may be truncation of long names, or completely ignoring the name you have entered and using the original numbered file name given by the camera. Those who have experienced this problem in the past have usually solved it. One workaround is to include the text of the filenames in the body of the email, and add any descriptions needed to make sure we can figure out which image goes with which filename.

13. Photoshop keeps changing my files names!

The "Export" or "Save for Web and Devices" function in Photoshop does have a quirky behavior by default in some versions, but you can fix it. Specifically, it adds new hyphens to the filename, and truncates it to a short name. If you use this method of saving JPEGs for competition instead of the File, Save As method, try the following. From the Save for Web & Devices panel, click the options button. It looks like a tiny black triangle in a circle, under the Done button. Select "Edit Output Settings." From the Output Settings dialog, choose Saving Files from the second drop-down box. Uncheck the boxes for filename compatibility with Mac OS 9 and Unix. Click OK.

14. Can I submit a replacement image?

Generally, no. Please (please!) be sure your image selections are final before submitting any of them. Further refinement of your image is not a valid reason to submit a replacement. In cases where an unavoidable mistake is made, you can request authorization to submit a new image file to replace an earlier one. Please do not submit additional copies without first clearing this with the Competition team (see Image Preparation and Submission Guidelines for contact information). Remember, by Rule 5 all your entries may be disqualified if you exceed the allowable number.

15. My images don't look the same on the projector - why?

There are three likely possibilities: (1) your own monitor is incorrect, (2) you forgot to convert to sRGB color profile, or (3) you're seeing limitations of the projector system. If your own monitor is not calibrated, or you're using an inferior monitor such as a laptop LCD screen, there is a strong possibility that your images will look different when projected. Although not required,

our recommendation is that your images be converted to sRGB color space during image preparation

16. What about these projector limitations?

    Our current projector is the Canon WUX4000. It is highly rated for photography but has limitations - in particular the low dynamic range and steep gamma curve. Subtle colors in bright areas tend to be washed out toward gray-white, though the highlights never appear clipped ("blown out"). Numerous people have said that certain projected images look overexposed relative to their monitors, and we agree that there are such cases. For example, the shadow detail may be brighter than you expect but then deep shadows are suddenly clipped to pure black. But generally, those with calibrated (profiled) monitors find the projected images appear comparable to their computer screen image. Our projection system (computer and projector) has been profiled using a sophisticated photo spectrometer. We connect our projector using digital video (HDMI or DVI) rather than analog (VGA) to eliminate analog unrepeatability and continuous drift.

17. Will email degrade my images?

    No. The image is completely unaltered by Internet transmission, assuming no data errors (which are very rare).

18. Should I crop to projector's aspect ratio in order to completely fill the screen?

    Probably not. You do have this option, but we'd suggest you use your own artistic judgment to decide where to crop, rather than trying to use every available pixel. Our projector has a 16:10 aspect ratio: that is, the full image area is significantly wider than it is high. A horizontal 35mm frame (with 3:2 aspect ratio) will fill the height of the image area but not the width; it will be displayed in the horizontal middle, with thin blank (black) areas left and right. A vertical 35mm frame will be smaller, with large blank areas left and right, and as such there will be less total detail displayed. A wide panoramic shot will fill the width of the image area, typically leaving blank areas on the top and bottom.

19. What are the limits for pixel dimensions?

    Submit images having pixel dimensions as follows: width equal to or less than 1920 pixels, and height equal to or less than 1200 pixels.

    This is the native pixel resolution of our Canon WUX4000 digital projector - far below the resolution of most cameras and monitors. You will almost certainly need to downsize (resample) your image to reach these dimensional limits, unless you already cropped down to a small section of your original photo (not a good practice, in general). A common mistake is to reverse the numbers, setting horizontal size to 1200 pixels - definitely not optimum.

    Images with pixel dimensions which exceed these mandatory limits may be rejected.

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Images with too few pixels will suffer from reduced detail and may look fuzzy when enlarged to fit the screen. Judges sometimes comment that low-resolution images seem to have focus issues or camera movement during exposure, and then they eliminate the image as technically inadequate.

20. What about DPI (dots per inch) settings?

    This is surprisingly confusing! Dots per inch (dpi) is mainly a printing term, and certainly has no meaning for an image projected on a screen. For example, if we zoom the projector and change the size on the screen, the pixels per inch on screen does change - yet we haven't changed the image file or "resolution" at all. So, the dpi setting in your image file means nothing, right?

    Almost, but not quite. Our competition software is based on Microsoft PowerPoint software. PowerPoint (still rooted in the printing world) tries to interpret each image based on printed page size, so it does try to obey the dpi number embedded in your image file. With extreme numbers (such as 4000 dpi from a film scanner), PowerPoint may have difficulty scaling your image to fit the screen, apparently caused by round-off errors. The result would be a slight shift in aspect ratio. To avoid that, please use a dpi number in the "normal" range, say 72dpi or 96 dpi. In this range, the exact number will have zero effect on your image display or quality.

21. Why was there a thin white line at the edge of my image?

    The likely explanation is that your image processing software added a band of extra (white) pixels to your image during cropping, moving, or rotating. Be sure to check your images against a field of black before submission, and you'll catch any white edges that were accidentally added. In Photoshop this can be done by pressing the " f " key one or more times to cycle through the full screen modes.

    The coordinator cannot interfere in the contest by repairing your image. And they are under no obligation to call such errors to your attention ... but the judge likely will.