

EXHIBITOR TIPS BY PHOTO SUBJECTS

Following is a list of some Dept. 20 classes found in county fair books around Wisconsin. Included are definitions for each of these classes, and some tips that you, as a judge, can pass on to exhibitors as necessary.

Action – Photo that should show “movement” of the subject. Many photos entered in this category fail to show real action. You can usually suggest many improvements to exhibitors in this category. To freeze action shots, for example, exhibitors should use a shutter speed of 1/500 along with a higher ISO like 400 or 800. Electronic flash will also freeze the action. Exhibitors can also try to catch the action at its peak (e.g., jumping photos), when the motion stops for a split-second at the highest point. Panning is another technique to show action that could be used more often. Remind exhibitors to always position their moving subjects so that they seem to be heading into the picture, not out of it. In other words, leave more space in front of the subject than behind when panning.

Animals – Emphasis or main subject matter should be an animal or animals. Some categories specify birds or even insects. Encourage youth to take photos at the animal’s eye level. If you take a picture of a cat, that probably means getting on your knees and elbows.

Any other category – Catchall lot that usually calls for photos on the “same” subject or a “single” theme. But if the subject selected is “people,” for example, do all the photos have to be of the “same” person? Sometimes it’s not clear what is meant in the county that you are judging. Consult with the photo superintendent if it’s not clear.

Available or existing light – Strictly speaking, existing light covers all natural lighting from moonlight to sunshine. But for photographic purposes, existing light comprises the light that is already on the scene or subject and includes room lamps, florescent lamps, spotlights, neon signs, candles, daylight through windows, outdoor scenes at twilight or in moonlight, and scenes artificially illuminated after dark. There should be no flash pictures in this lot. If the flash on the camera cannot be turned off, they should choose subjects beyond the flash range.

Buildings (architecture) – Emphasis or main subject matter should be a building or buildings. Suggest youth shoot buildings at an angle so that the viewer can see more than one side of the building. This adds the dimension of depth to the photo and the subject. Encourage youth to take pictures of the same building at different times of the day and year, then compare results. Usually early morning and late evening shots are more dramatic.

Building, people, animal, landscape – Common lot where youth are asked to exhibit one picture of each subject.

Calendar – Photos representing all the months of the year. Commend exhibitors who show the initiative to attempt

photos throughout the year, not just the week before the fair.

Camera angles – Various positions of the camera (high, medium, or low; left, right or straight on) with respect to the subject, each giving a different viewpoint or effect. Beginning photographers tend to take all photos from their own eye level. When you see a different angle in a photo, comment on it. “You have a great angle here. Getting down on your stomach to get a worm’s eye view makes this photo exciting.”

Candid – Photos that are not posed, often taken without the subject’s knowledge. When you see photos that seem too posed, tell the exhibitor, “Next time, you might have the subject do something, like hug a cat, play a musical instrument or pick a flower.” Exhibitors can also engage the subject in conversation or tell the subject to ignore the camera to help reduce the posed look.

Close-up – Photo taken with the camera close to the subject. The close-up range for simple cameras is about four feet, so technically, a photo taken from four feet with that camera is a “close-up.” But what is meant in this category most of the time is an extreme close-up or a “macro” shot using the macro feature on a camera or one of the following accessories:

- Bellows: flexible, pleated, expansion device used to increase the distance between lens and film for close-up photography; fits between the lens and the camera body.
- Close-up lens: lens attachment placed in front of a camera lens to permit taking photos at a closer distance than the camera lens alone will allow. These are usually inexpensive glass lenses that screw onto the front of the camera lens to magnify the subject.
- Extension tube: solid tube used to increase the distance between lens and film; fits between the lens and the camera body.
- Macro lens: specially designed lens for close focusing. Potential problems with close-ups are camera movement and shallow depth of field. The depth of field decreases as you move closer to the subject. So when the subject is only inches away, the range of sharpness may be just an inch or two. Remind the exhibitor to use a tripod and to close down a stop or two (higher f/stop number) for more depth.

Common photo errors – Camera shake, improper exposure, failure to get close to the subject and busy backgrounds are errors you’ll commonly see represented in this lot. It’s a great place for exhibitors to bring their mistakes and get recognized for it!

Depth of field – Distance range between the nearest and farthest objects that appear in acceptably sharp focus in a photograph. The depth of field is determined by the lens opening, focal length of the lens, and distance from the lens

to the subject. In this lot the exhibitor will probably show a series of photos of the same subject with different depths of field. In a blue ribbon exhibit you should find one photo with the background very out of focus (e.g., shot at $f/2.8$), one with the background somewhat out of focus ($f/5.6$ or $f/8$) and one photo where everything is sharp ($f/16$).

Different lighting – Exhibitor normally has to note which kind of light was used for photos in this lot. An exhibit might include:

- **Back lighting:** light shining on the subject from the direction opposite the camera (light coming from behind the subject). The shadow should be at the front, so faces should be dark. You can remind exhibitors that if they ever want to correct this shadow they could use fill flash or a reflector. An effective reflector can be made with aluminum foil taped or glued to one side of a piece of cardboard and white paper to the other. The foil side will reflect more light than the paper side. Mirrors reflect 100% of the light.
- **Diffuse lighting:** light caused on cloudy days. Also called flat lighting. Shadows are fuzzy or nonexistent with this lighting. There is no direction to the light because it is coming from all over the cloudy sky. Exhibitors can also find diffuse lighting on a bright sunny day in the open shade. Remind exhibitors that this is a perfect light for portraits.
- **Front lighting:** light shining on the subject from the direction of the camera. The faces should be well lit. The shadow should be behind the subject.
- **Side lighting:** light striking the subject from the side relative to the position of the camera; produces shadows and highlights to create modeling on the subject. One side of the face should be darker. The shadow should fall to one side of the subject or the other.

Different exposures – You’ll probably find a sample of each of these: overexposure (print is too bright and has too much contrast), underexposure (print is too muddy, flat and dark) and proper exposure. Sometimes this lot says the subject must be the same in each photo.

Digital photo – Some counties now have classes for photos taken with a digital camera and/or printed from a computer. Some counties place computer-enhanced photos in a separate category or class. The state 4-H photo advisory committee recommends that digital photos be treated like photos taken by any kind of camera. But if a photo has been greatly enhanced or manipulated by a computer, the committee recommends that:

- The original photo be taken by the exhibitor, not downloaded from a clipart or stock photo file
- The enhanced photo be truly enhanced, i.e., made more interesting or colorful in some way
- The digitally “enhanced” photo be placed in a special effects class
- The original photo be attached to the exhibit to show the before and after versions
- The exhibitor describes what camera was used to take the original photo, as well as the program and computer used to make the enhancements.

Enlargement – Print larger than the normal print received from a commercial lab. Common sizes at a county fair are 5x7 and 8x10. A common problem with enlargements is that the prints are not very sharp – any movement of the camera is exaggerated when the photo is enlarged. Remind youth to hold the camera steady if they think they are going to enlarge the negative. Encourage them to use a tripod for that extra sharpness.

Double exposure – To get a double exposure, youth can take two photos on one frame or print two images on one piece of photographic paper in the darkroom or computer. For the former, photographers will need a camera that lets them take one picture on top of another. They should check their camera manual to see if the camera lets them make a double exposure.

Filters – Colored pieces of glass or other transparent materials used over the lens to emphasize, eliminate or change the color or density of the scene. Filters can also add patterns to a photo. Filters on lenses are being replaced by filters in photo editing programs, such as, Photoshop.

Flash – Brief, intense burst of light produced by an electronic flash unit, usually used where the lighting on the scene is inadequate for photo-taking. Potential problems are improper exposure and red eye. Bounce lighting is a flash bounced off the ceiling or walls to give the effect of natural or available light.

Flowers – Emphasis or main subject matter should be a flower or flowers. In other words, a scenic with a few flowers barely visible in the distance doesn’t qualify. Remind youth to take pictures of big flowers (like sunflowers or dahlias) with their “little” or simple cameras, or shoot a pot or garden full of smaller flowers. To take close-ups of individual flowers they should avoid windy days and use a tripod to help hold the camera steady. They can also use a card or plastic bag as a wind break to keep the wind from blurring the subject. Clip the wind breaker to surrounding branches with clothes pins. A portable background (any dark piece of cloth) helps to make the colors stand out. Suggest they use a spray bottle to moisten flowers to simulate the dew and create highlights.

Framing technique – Compositional technique in which the main subject is framed with an element in the foreground. A common “frame” is a tree branch in the foreground, framing a large subject like a barn or lake. Carry a photo of another framed subject (e.g., a baby framed by crib bars) to show exhibitors that frames are everywhere. They just need to look for them.

Horizontal/vertical – Good time to point out that we should shoot vertical subjects (person standing) vertically, and horizontal subjects (person sleeping) horizontally.

Human interest – Occasional catchall category that is never very clearly defined. Usually you’ll find photos of cute babies or animals. Just about anything goes here.

Landscape – Photo representing a view of natural inland scenery. Also defined as a portion of territory that the eye can comprehend in a single view. A landscape photo is often called a “scenic.” Some lots specify “local” or “seasonal” landscapes. Suggest to exhibitors who are showing landscape photos to buy a tripod to get that extra sharpness, in case they want to enlarge their photos to 11x14 or 16x20. Suggest that they have a strong foreground object to help balance the photo and sometimes to frame the subject.

Leading line – Compositional technique in which a line in the foreground of the photo leads your eye to the main subject. A common leading line that you’ll find in this lot is a driveway leading to a building. Again, this is a good opportunity to point out that leading lines are everywhere. They just need to look for them and use them in their photos.

Member-made print – Either color or black-and-white. Sometimes the category requests that the exhibitor show one or more of the following darkroom techniques in their prints:

- **Burning-in/printing-in:** giving additional exposure to part of the image projected on an enlarger easel to make that area of the print darker. This is accomplished after the basic exposure by extending the exposure time to allow additional image-forming light to strike the areas in the print you want to darken while holding back the image-forming light from the rest of the image. Look for a smooth blending of tones so the burning in is not obvious.
- **Cropping:** printing only part of the image that is in the negative.
- **Contrast control:** contrast is the density range (range from light to dark) of a negative or print. The print should show a range of tones, otherwise it will look flat or muddy.
- **Dodging:** holding back the image-forming light from a part of the image projected on an enlarger easel during part of the basic exposure time to make that area of the print lighter. Look for a smooth blending of tones so the dodging is not obvious.

My best photo(s) – Another catchall category that often has some of the best photos of the day. Don’t be surprised if several merit awards come out of this one lot. Some exhibitors don’t understand what this category means. They think it means my “favorite” photo, which means you may get a photo with poor composition but with an exhibitor’s favorite pet or friend. When you ask an exhibitor for reasons, expect some insightful answers about composition rules or story telling abilities. If you get, “It’s my kitten and it’s cute,” you may have some teaching to do about composition.

Nature – Photos that depict natural scenes, animals, plants, etc., without showing any evidence of man. Domestic animals or other signs of man, such as fences and telephone poles, should not be in a “Nature” photo.

Panning – Moving the camera so that the image of a moving object remains in the same relative position in the viewfinder as you take a photo. Panning works well with fast-moving subjects. It results in a photo with a blurred background and a relatively sharp subject. It is a unique way for exhibitors to show “action” in a photo. It will probably be the only time you praise exhibitors for not holding their camera steady!

Panorama – Wide view of a scene. Special cameras take panoramic pictures with wide angle lenses. Youth can also make a paste-up panorama with any camera by taking several shots and making prints. If these paste-ups don’t match up very well, remind exhibitors to keep the camera level (a tripod works best) and slightly overlap each frame so the finished prints can be overlapped. They should have at least three photos for a panoramic paste-up. Exhibitors can also use computer photo editing programs to stitch together individual shots into a panorama.

Photogram – Shadow-like photograph made by placing objects between light-sensitive paper and a light source. A photogram is usually created in a darkroom. It’s a great way for youth to see photos made and processed before their eyes.

Photojournalism – News photos intended to be used in a newsletter, newspaper or magazine.

Photomontage – Composite photo made by combining several separate photos.

Photo story – Typically three to six photos. Classes include those titled “sequence of,” “how-to-do-it” and “chronological series.” Exhibits should have clear beginning, middle and ending photos to be a true photo “story.”

Pin-hole camera – Camera you make yourself in which the lens is actually a tiny pin hole.

People – Emphasis or main subject matter should be a person or persons. Sometimes this lot specifies that babies or children must be in the photo. It might also specify candid, action or close-up photos (see definitions for each of these).

Portrait – Pictorial representation of a person or a pet, usually showing the subject’s face. Remind exhibitors that a good time to take portraits is on overcast days, which eliminate the harsh shadows on the face. If the day is sunny, they can take subjects into the shade for softer lighting.

Rule of thirds – Compositional technique in which the photographer mentally divides a scene into thirds both horizontally and vertically (like placing a tic-tack-toe grid over the scene) then placing the main subject at one of the points where the lines intersect. This rule can also be used to demonstrate the importance of placing the horizon in the upper or lower third of a photo instead of dividing the photo in half. Photos that follow the rule of thirds are

generally more dynamic than photos in which the subject sits dead center.

Seascapes – Literally, a photo that includes the sea or ocean. For county fair lots in Wisconsin, a lake, pond or river will do for a subject.

Self-portrait – Photo taken of yourself by using the self-timer feature on the camera.

Sequences – Series of at least three shots (or scenes) that relate to each other. Technically, two photos do not constitute a series or a sequence. If you judge a lot that calls for a “sequence of two photos,” ask the photo superintendent to rename it to “before and after photos” for next year’s fair book.

Silhouette – Photo that shows the subject as a shadow, outlined against a lighter background. The subject is backlit in a silhouette. Silhouettes work best by placing a subject against the sun and sky at sunrise or sunset, when there is less reflected light.

Slide show or PowerPoint presentation – Number of “slides” allowed in a show varies from five to over 20. A true slide is really a “transparency,” which is a positive photographic image on film, viewed or projected by transmitted light (light shining through film). When the transparency is mounted (in plastic or cardboard mounts) for projection, it is called a slide. Slides aren’t used much any more. You’ll probably be looking at a PowerPoint or similar presentation program, instead.

Special effects – Any technique used to make photos look different from normal, including zooming, double exposure, painting with light, digitally enhanced photos and multiple flash. Though filters are a common way to create a special effect, some county fairs do not accept photos taken with filters in this category. They would go into a “filter” lot.

Special occasion – Another catchall category that includes celebrations, weddings, parades, vacations, holidays and birthdays. Not too many counties have this lot, but celebration-type photos turn up in county fairs in other lots. Pets, family members and friends are other popular subjects in county fair photos.

State 4-H Dog/Horse Show – Occasionally you’ll find a lot for photos that can be entered in statewide 4-H events that have photo classes. The state 4-H dog and horse shows take place in late summer.

Statuettes – Small statue made from a print. The print is glued to a stiff board, then cut out around the subject in the photo. To make the statuette stand up, exhibitors attach the cut out print to a block of wood or cardboard stand.

Still life – Photo of 3-5 inanimate objects arranged by the photographer.

Texture – Surface characteristics and appearance of the subject, from smooth to rough, from sharp to dull. To enhance texture in a photo, remind youth to side light the subject (it creates shadows in all the valleys); to de-emphasize texture, use front or top lighting (it fills in the shadows).

Trick photography – Photos meant to “trick the eye,” such as, pulling a friend out of a bottle or setting him on your hand. You’ll find that special effect photos may be entered in this category. It’s good to spell out the difference between trick and special effects photos.

Wisconsin – Usually the exhibitor will be required to note where the photo was taken in this lot number. If not, ask the photographer. This is a good time to encourage exhibitors to continue taking photos of their state, as well as their county and community. They don’t have to wait until they’re on vacation in Colorado next summer. Good photo opportunities can be found anywhere, anytime.

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