

Judging Guidelines

SOME EXCERPTS FROM CACCA'S JUDGING HANDBOOK

- A judge provides feedback that is helpful
- A judge assesses an image on its own merit in an unbiased way
- A judge assesses skill, craft and artistry
- A judge strives to apply his/her assessment in a consistent manner

SCORES: In order to help promote consistency, CACCA believes that the following guidelines about applying specific numerical scores will be helpful to all members and especially to less experienced judges as they seek a foundation for developing their art of judging.

Even though CACCA makes the scores of 3 through 9 available to judges, it is hoped that all CACCA photographers would be astute enough in their own editing prior to submission into competitions to avoid scores less than 6. The scores of 4 and 3 do exist and may need to be used in only rare cases when warranted. They are made available primarily for club level competitions and should generally not be useful at the CACCA Interclub level. For example, some clubs hold special competitions where the makers do not have an opportunity to edit their work before it is judged (e.g. scavenger hunts) and such low scores may become necessary there.

SIX is often considered a "baseline" score, the one that separates the acceptable from the unacceptable. So it will begin this discussion.

SCORE OF THREE:

This is a an obvious non image, as for example, when a flash does not go off, or the shutter was released by mistake and only a blurry shot, without any real subject, results.

SCORE OF FOUR:

This image may have several significant flaws any one of which might be responsible for a score of 5. On the other hand, it may have one flaw but it is an extremely serious one, as for example, the exposure is very bad (more than a stop over or under exposed), or perhaps the whole image is not sharp (not only is the subject of the image not in focus but nothing is quite in focus), or perhaps the subject is not recognizable due to motion.

SCORE OF FIVE:

This is an image that would have been a 6 if it were not for a significant flaw. The flaw might be, for example, over or under exposure by one half to one stop, a subject that might be out of focus when it needed to be in focus, an

unintentionally blurred image because of subject or camera movement, that the composition is cluttered to the point of distraction, or distracting elements which are overwhelming. Additionally a dirty slide or spotty print should be considered to be a flaw if it appears that the maker was at fault. However, a judge should not penalize a maker for a presentation flaw which appears to be a result of mishandling while the image was not under the maker's control.

SCORE OF SIX:

A 6 would be awarded to an image that has no significant technical flaws, but which likewise has no significant strengths. Such an image is sometimes referred to as a record shot. It is acceptable, but does not generate any special interest or stir emotions. It is the quality of image that we would expect that most hobbyists should be able to take as a minimum standard. It has the technical proficiency that modern auto-exposure, auto-focus cameras allow. The maker has made a correct exposure in a non-difficult lighting situation and the subject of the image is sharp. However it lacks those elements towards which image-makers who are working at polishing their craft should be striving; for example, achieving technical excellence, showing a knowledge of the importance of choice of subject, of good lighting, of dramatic composition, of handling depth of field effectively, of eliciting emotional impact, or of exhibiting freshness and creativity.

A 6 also would be awarded to an image that did have one of the strengths just mentioned (which might have earned it a seven) but that strength has been neutralized by a flaw.

SCORE OF SEVEN:

This is a good solid image, an image towards which every CACCA member should be striving as a minimum. Such an image is technically correct and more. It exhibits AT LEAST ONE element towards which photographers who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (for example, showing a knowledge of the importance of choice of subject, of good lighting, of dramatic composition, of handling depth of field effectively, of eliciting emotional impact, or of exhibiting freshness and creativity). The elements of the image work together. If there are flaws, they are minor and compensated for by other elements in the image. For the most part, images that score a 7 do not break the "rules". If a rule is broken, it is broken with intention and works to enhance the image. A score of 7 is the first step above a technically correct but otherwise uninspiring image that would warrant a 6. It is the start on the path towards the high impact image.

SCORE OF EIGHT:

An image that scores an 8 is a very strong image. Such an image is technically correct and much more. The elements of the image must work together. If there are flaws, they are minor and hard to find. Obvious flaws must be compensated by other elements in the image. Images that score an 8 may break the "rules". When the rules are broken, they are broken for impact. Technical excellence, is expected to a high degree in an image scoring 8. Difficult exposures, effective use of selective focusing and depth of field, as well as other advanced photographic techniques are commonly found in such an image. The image exhibits SEVERAL elements towards which those who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (see "7" above). The difference between an image that scores an 8 versus one that scores a 7 is how strong the image is. An 8 is a really strong 7.

SCORE OF NINE:

An image that scores a 9 is an exceptionally strong image; i.e. true photographic excellence. It need not be a perfect image, just a very, very strong image. Such an image is technically correct and much, much more. The elements of the image must work together to form a whole that is far greater than the sum of the parts. There should not be any obvious flaws. Images that score a 9 may break the "rules". When the rules are broken, they are broken for impact. Technical excellence is expected in an image scoring 9. Difficult exposures, effective use of selective focusing and depth of field, as well as other advanced photographic techniques are very common in such an image. The image exhibits MANY elements towards which those who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (see "7" above).

While the score of a 9 should not be given out without very good reason since it implies true photographic excellence, if a judge feels that an image knocked him or her out of their chair and/or that they were awestruck and immediately fell in love with it they should give it a 9 with no apologies to anyone. Makers should not be made to feel that a 9 is impossible to achieve.

CACCA HOPES THAT JUDGES WILL:

- Strive to remove personal bias and not unduly favor or penalize images based upon their subject matter, the specific technique used, the difficulty of the shot, or a knowledge of the maker or the club from which the image comes.

- Apply scores consistently so that all images given a certain score can be expected to be of comparable quality no matter in which class they are, or what technique was used to produce the image.
- Use the entire scoring scale effectively to differentiate images. Be willing to reward both freshness and creativity along with technical excellence.
- Base the score on the merit of that particular image rather than those that surround it, those you have taken, or those you have seen before.