

2026 PPSC Photographic Competition Rules

The Professional Photographers of South Carolina (PPSC) will hold its 2026 Annual Photographic Competition on Thursday, August 6, 2026, starting at Noon Eastern Time. The competition will be held online at www.printcompetition.com. The competition includes Photographic Open (Portrait, Illustrative, Reportage), Artist (Open and Restoration), and Wedding (all Wedding), with several subcategories in each. Albums will be judged along with other entries in a given category.

There is no limit to the number of entries, and we welcome non-members to submit their images. Register at www.printcompetition.com.

Deadline and Fees

- Competition date: Thursday, August 6, 2026, 12:00 PM ET (Noon)
- Registration Opens: Sunday, June 7, 2026
- Early deadline: Sunday, July 5, 2026, 11:00 PM ET
- Final deadline: Sunday, August 2, 2026, 11:00 PM ET
- Register online at www.printcompetition.com, then select the PPSC competition.
- Entry Fees:
 - PPSC Members and Non-Members:
 - Early Entry Fee: \$20 for per entry
 - Final Deadline Entry Fee: \$25 per entry
 - Critiques:
 - \$10 per image
 - Critiques will be delivered within three weeks of the competition.

Why Enter?

- Explore your creativity!
- Get feedback and scores on images you plan to enter in other events or competitions, e.g., Professional Photographers of America (PPA) events, such as Merit Image Review (MIR).
- Get image critiques from a trained judge to improve your photographic skills. • Compete for awards and recognition.
- PPSC members are also eligible to receive PPSC exhibition merits toward the PPSC Associate Fellow and Fellow Designation.

Available Categories

First Timers:

- Only for first-time entrants who have not entered a prior professional image competition. Entries may be of any type that would otherwise fit into the competition categories listed below.

In Photographic Open:

- Portrait:
 - Portraits of People
 - Portraits of Pets and Domestic Animals
- Illustrative:
 - Nature/Landscape/Wildlife/Zoo
 - Illustrative General - Images not included in the above category, including Commercial (architecture, real estate, product photography)
- Reportage:

- General Reportage & Sports

In Wedding:

- All Wedding, including albums

In Artist:

- Artist Open & Restoration

Judging and Scoring System

Images will be judged on the PPA 12-Elements of a Merit Print standard. **PPSC will utilize the numeric scoring system that PPA used historically.** There will be five PPA Jurors which includes a Moderator/Juror.

Image Feedback

Providing feedback on an entrant's images is one of the goals of the PPSC photographic events.

- Brief comments will be provided by jurors on all the images after the completion of the judging.
- Judges' challenges also will provide feedback during the judging of an image.
- The best way to get detailed feedback is to purchase a critique. This provides a recorded video with suggestions to improve your image. These are normally about 3 minutes in length but vary by judge.

AI Statement

The use of Artificial Intelligence may be used in accordance with PPA rules for Merit Image Review (MIR) as follows:

In Photographic Open, all photographic elements must be created by the maker; any elements not created by the maker must be shown in a thumbnail to let the jurors know what was added.

For Artist images, AI is considered the same as using a stock image. AI-generated elements are allowed, but as with a stock image, they must be shown in a thumbnail. No AI is allowed to combine the elements when creating the final image.

For Reportage images, no AI is allowed.

For Wedding images, no AI is allowed.

PPSC cautions that some competitions, included PPA's IPC, do not allow AI in any form and often require original RAW images to be submitted.

The Following Apply to All Categories:

- These rules pertain to images entered as digital files, or digital albums created by traditional photographic processes as well as those captured electronically with a digital camera or scanner.
- The entrant has obtained and has access to all necessary releases (model or property) and agrees to hold PPSC harmless against all claims and liabilities arising out of PPSC's display, publication, and promotion or other use of each image submitted to PPSC.
- The entrant's name, studio name, or other identifying marks shall not appear anywhere in or on the face of the entry.

- No entry will be eligible if it has been made under the supervision of an instructor or as a class assignment. All images submitted must be self-directed. Images created in an educational environment under direct supervision from an instructor are ineligible.
- Any entry that has been created from an existing photograph, portrait, graphic, or any other artwork produced by another person is a violation of the rules. If an entry, in the good-faith opinion of PPSC, violates copyright, trademark, or any other applicable law, that entry shall not be displayed or published.
- Once an image has been awarded an exhibition merit in any category of PPSC image competition, it may not be entered again in any other category or PPSC competition, at any time, by any entrant. No image that receives a merit may be entered more than once under any condition, including any image from a merited album.
- Images submitted to the PPA Monthly Image Review (MIR) will be accepted even if they received a Merit or Imaging Excellence designation.
- PPA IPC images that attain a “finalist” status (top 32), or images that received an exhibition merit in a PPA IPC competition prior to 2023, are ineligible.
- Images not of acceptable PPSC exhibition content will be reviewed for Merit but may not be displayed. The decision of acceptable content will be at the discretion of PPSC.
- Entries of the same subject in multiple images will be allowed, if the images are of entirely different concepts.
- Painted images that are not appropriate for the artist category should be placed in their respective Photographic Open categories.
- **DIGITAL IMAGE/ALBUM ENTRIES**
 - Prior to uploading images in any category, files must be sized at 4000 pixels on the longest dimension, be saved at a JPEG maximum quality, in Lightroom with a quality setting of 100 or in Photoshop with quality setting of 10 and contain an embedded color profile of sRGB or Adobe RGB1998.
 - All entries must be registered at www.printcompetition.com.
 - Entrants may submit digital files, digital albums, or a combination for judging. Entrants are required to upload a digital file for each image entered.
 - No changes to entries are permitted once the entry deadline has passed.
- **DIGITAL ALBUM ENTRY**
 - Each page/spread file may contain as many images as you desire.
 - An entry shall contain a minimum of 5 page/spread files up to 36 page/spread files.
 - Files are to be numbered in viewing order using three digits, i.e. 001 jpg, 002 jpg, 003 jpg, etc.
 - All individual files must be compressed into a single ZIP file. ZIP file must be named: Album Title.zip (e.g. Summer Wedding.zip).
 - Studio identification, entrant's name, or other identifying marks cannot appear on any file within the album entry.
 - **MULTI-MAKER ALBUM**
 - Images in the album must be the work of two entrants, with a minimum of 20 images per entrant. Each entrant must individually enter the review and pay appropriate entry fees.
 - Multi-maker albums will be reviewed as one entry. Each entrant must use the same title when entering a multi-maker album.
 - Failure to comply with these rules may result in disqualification of entry. The decision of PPSC is final.

First Timers

First-time entrants who have not entered a prior professional image competition may choose to enter this category. Images within this category will be considered for place awards. Entries may be of any type that would fit into other competition categories listed on this page.

Photographic Open

The purpose of Photographic Open is to allow photographers to enter photographic digital files, and/or digital albums to be judged against a standard of excellence using the **12 Elements of a Merit Image**.

ELIGIBILITY

- Photographic Open is designed to illustrate the photographic knowledge and skill set of the maker. However, a maker can use supporting photographic elements that they did not create, provided those elements are referenced as guide images on the face of the entry. The original photographic capture by the entrant should be merit-worthy, independent of the work that was not their own. Elements created by the maker must not be part of the guide images. This includes images within an album entry.
- All processing, manipulation, or rendering must be done by the entrant.
- One of the following categories must be designated for each entry:
 - • **PORTRAITS-General Portraits**: Consists of portrait images of people of all ages, infants through adults. This category includes models and fashion portraits, in addition to tastefully artistic figure studies. Portraits of people with animals should be placed in the animal portrait category.
 - • **PORTRAITS-Pets and Domestic Animals**: Consists of portrait images of pets or domestic animals. It includes animal(s) portraits using structured lighting in a studio, or outdoor environment, where the owner or photographer controls the animal(s). Animal portraits may include people. Painted portraits are acceptable, provided that the original photograph was by the maker.
 - • **ILLUSTRATIVE-Nature/Landscape/Wildlife/Zoo**: This category includes landscapes, outdoor scenic, sunset/sunrises, animals in a natural or zoo environment, flowers, and insects.
 - • **ILLUSTRATIVE-Illustrative General**: Images not included in the above categories, including commercial images such as architecture, real estate, product photography, and painted illustrative images.
 - • **REPORTAGE**: Photographic images that illustrate an actual public or non-public event, life, an area of human interest, telling news that has meaning in the context or record of events, high impact, and/or lasting emotional response. Images that illustrate sporting events are included in this category.

Wedding

- The purpose of the Wedding Competition is to allow photographers to enter photographic digital files or digital albums to be judged against a standard of excellence using the **12 Elements of a Merit Image**.
- In addition to the twelve elements, for an image to be merit-worthy in the wedding review, an additional evaluation will be considered for the entries that illustrate the personality of the subject or subjects and the story of the wedding as well as the artistic and technical skills of the image-maker. Jurors will keep in mind that the maker has limited control over many aspects of a wedding. For example, subject matter, environment, and time of day. Ultimately, additional consideration will be given to the maker for technically and artistically executing at a merit level despite the challenges involved at a typical wedding.

- Images and all elements of an image must be created in connection with an actual wedding. The entrant or entrants must have captured all elements of the final submission from that wedding. Images in the Wedding should reflect the personality or personalities of the subject(s) or the story of the wedding as well as the personality, artistic and technical skills of the image-maker. Images should include some kind of visual wedding reference(s). The originally captured image (in RAW or jpg) must be available if requested by PPSC.

ELIGIBILITY

- Entrant must have captured and created the original exposure or exposures during the time constraints of the wedding.
- All processing, manipulation or rendering must be done by the entrant.

WEDDING COMPETITION CATEGORIES

You must designate one of the following categories for each entry; however, for the purpose of awards, all Wedding images will be considered together.

- Wedding Open
- Single-Maker Wedding Album
- Multi-Maker Wedding Album

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

- **WEDDING OPEN:** Images can portray a subject or subjects from all aspects of a wedding including traditional portraits, candids, or detail work. Wedding albums should be entered as albums but will be judged as part of the overall wedding category.
- **SINGLE MAKER WEDDING ALBUM:** Multiple images combined into a digital album collection exclusively showcasing a specific wedding.
- **MULTI-MAKER WEDDING ALBUM:** Images in the album must be the work of the two entrants, with a minimum of 20 images per entrant. Each entrant must individually enter the competition and pay appropriate entry fees. Multi-maker Wedding albums will be judged as one entry.

Artist

The purpose of the Artist Competition is to allow the entrant to demonstrate their art skills and expertise. Entries will be reviewed for digital, artistic, and technical proficiency.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Photographs may be used in this category in creating an entry, but it is not a requirement.
2. Entries may include freehand drawing or painting in digital applications. Entries can include stock photography, photographs, or artwork from another artist(s) with written consent to use those sources. Documentation may be requested by PPSC before, during, or after the competition.
3. All processing, manipulation, artwork, or rendering must be done by the entrant.
4. Guide images used in the creation of the final product must be included on the face of the entry.
5. Entries of the same subject in multiple images will be allowed if the images are entirely different concepts.

ARTIST COMPETITION CATEGORIES:

You must designate one of the following categories for each entry; however, for the purpose of awards, Artist Open and Artist Restoration images will be considered together.

- **ARTIST OPEN:** Submissions must include guide images.
- **ARTIST RESTORATION:** Submissions must include guide images.

Awards

Awards are given to PPSC members for merited images (score of 80 or higher), with the exception of the Judge's Choice Awards, which may be awarded to members or non-members, and the Non-Member Award Certificate. Awards for the 2026 PPSC Photographic Competition will be as follow:

Category Awards (Any ties will be broken by the jury panel):

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards will be given for each category listed below, for images meriting with a score of 80 or higher, based on score.
- 1st place images will receive a **trophy or plaque**.
- 2nd and 3rd place images and non-member images will receive a **ribbon or certificate**.

Award Categories for Photographic Open, Wedding, and Artist

- **First Timer** - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
- **Photographic Open**
 - *All General Portraits* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
 - *Pets and Domestic Animal Portraits* (including those with people) - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
 - *Illustrative Nature (Nature/Landscape/Wildlife/Zoo Animals)* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
 - *Illustrative General (images not included in the above categories, including the commercial categories of architecture, real estate, product photography)* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
 - *Reportage (General Reportage & Sports)* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
- **Wedding**
 - *All Wedding* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd
- **Artist**
 - *Artist (including Artist Restoration)* - 1st, 2nd and 3rd

Albums are entered into their respective categories and will be judged as equal entries to single images within the category.

Individual Awards (Any ties will be broken by the jury panel):

- *Photographer of the Year* (determined by the highest-scoring cases of four or more entries in Photographic Open, with head-to-head judging of multiple qualified cases).
- *Artist of the Year* (determined by head-to-head judging of the highest-scoring cases of four or more entries in Artist, with head-to-head judging of multiple qualified cases).
- *Best of Show* (highest scoring image in the entire competition)
- *CPP Award* (highest scoring image in the entire competition made by a CPP)
- *ASP Elite Award* (highest scoring image made by a member of ASP)
- *Judge's Choice Awards* (awarded to different images, chosen by the individual judges from among all judged images, including nonmembers)
- *Certificate of Merit* (for all PPSC members who did not qualify for an award, but who achieved at least one merited image in the competition)
- *Non-Member Award Certificate* (for the highest-scoring merited image by a non-member)