



EVALUATING PHOTOGRAPHS AT CLUB LEVEL

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(As approved by PSNZ for use by the PSNZ Selection Panel Members)

CHECKLIST when asked to evaluate prints or slides:

1. **ASK** what are the club rules on - Nature, Landscape, Abstract, etc
2. **ASK** the time you have for your comments.
3. **ASK** what the club marking system is - make sure you are totally conversant with it.
4. **ASK** for the club's definition of the Set Subject. Be liberal in your interpretation of it.

IF YOU ARE MAKING YOUR COMMENTS IN PERSON, check you have the necessary equipment to take with you.

For prints: L Plates, SHORT pointer **with padded end**, - **USE THEM**

For projected images: Light pointer, torch - **USE THEM**

START EARLY. As soon as you get the images from the Competition secretary, start looking through them. Note which have immediate impact and which, if any, are dismally dull, and **write down** these first impressions. Consider them again, several times over the next while, adding to your notes each time. Finally write out your comments in full, (you can then edit, abbreviate and highlight key points). **"People who think they know what they want to say and speak off the cuff, invariably exasperate audiences by waffling, repeating, mouthing trite phrases, and wasting time."** (quote from Napier CC - NZ Camera Dec 81)

Make sure your notes are **in the order of presentation** - there is nothing worse than a judge rattling through several pages trying to find the comments for the next image! Have the **results on your script** and make sure the competition secretary has a copy (**of the results**).

ON COMPETITION NIGHT - Arrive early

If you have previewed work give it to appropriate person, along **with their copy of the results**

Make sure all necessary equipment is to hand, including script or notes, **with results included**, and in order of presentation.

Announce titles loudly and clearly. A good title deserves to be heard. If you don't know how to pronounce it, **ASK** - and practice.

Communicate with the audience - project your voice to the back of the hall (if a mike is provided - **make sure you know how to use it and USE IT!**) - Speak **TO** the audience, **NOT** the image - make eye contact.

Modulate your voice with highs and lows - loud and soft - light and shade – use emphases and pauses.

Enunciate clearly (**DON'T MUMBLE!**).

SOME humour is acceptable, but it's not a stand-up comedy routine, so don't overdo it.

However embarrassing it may be, **YOU MUST** control mutterers and whisperers. A quiet, polite reference to the noise should be sufficient. This is different from the interaction between judge and audience, which is a definite plus.

BE PREPARED - BE ORGANIZED - and make sure you have rehearsed **OUT LOUD**, (this really **DOES** help with your presentation!). Saying it in your head does *not* produce good results aloud.

IF YOU ARE MAKING AN AUDIO RECORDING it is even **MORE IMPORTANT** to make preliminary notes (**with results included**), so your commentary will flow, without hesitant stops and starts and without great rustlings of paper.

IF YOU NEED TO STOP PART WAY THROUGH THE RECORDING - USE THE PAUSE BUTTON - NOT THE STOP BUTTON, THIS WILL ELIMINATE THOSE ANNOYING CLICKS.

WATCH FOR INCONSISTENT VOLUME LEVELS

Again, enunciate clearly and speak just a little slower than you would if attending in person.

ALMOST THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO WITH AN AUDIO RECORDING is LISTEN TO IT, TO ENSURE YOUR VOICE IS CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE TO A WIDER AUDIENCE.

Check the technical quality of the recording itself.

EVALUATION

Judging is not "just personal opinion". It should be the considered assessment of a photograph by an experienced photographer who enters competitions, reads photographic books and magazines and keeps up to date with current trends.

You must be able to make up your mind quickly - think on your feet, express your ideas clearly and concisely, and communicate those ideas to the audience.

Don't be hidebound by antiquated ideas. Maybe the author WANTS all that space to help get his/her ideas across. Be receptive to unusual/different mounting in prints or presentation of projected images. Also, don't dismiss a "traditional" photograph as merely imitative and non original – a fabulous landscape is still a fabulous landscape, even if 3 million people HAVE already taken it. But look for, and appreciate, the different treatment or the unusual viewpoint or the unexpected lighting used.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND. Be sure the "technical fault" you see is not a deliberate effect. If you are going to judge other's work, you **MUST** be able to appreciate all types of photographs and be free from prejudices against any subject. Even if you never want to photograph N/H you **MUST** know the basic rules which govern N/H images, so you can make an informed, valid assessment of them. If the photograph is **ALSO PICTORIAL**, then that is a bonus!

Keep your comments short and to the point. Be concise and constructive. Judging is not criticism, but **HELPFUL** evaluation. **Remember C-R-C - Commend - recommend - commend.** But, a word of caution - Never praise a photograph highly, then just "Accept" it. In other words, modulate your praise. If the photograph is poor, say so kindly but quickly, and explain **WHY**, then finish with all the good points.

BE CONSISTENT

How often has a Judge in your Club started the evening with, "Great work in C Grade, much better than A Grade," then has given only Acceptances and a few Merits in C, while still awarding Merits in A, as though they were all on the same level! Always encourage Beginners/C Grade, but remember the higher grades should already be competent with the mechanics of photography and should be showing extra creativity, originality and expertise.

If an experienced photographer submits work which is technically below standard, (sloping horizon, unintentionally fuzzy, dull, flat, etc), chuck 'em out! They should know better.

IMPACT is a major ingredient of a good photograph and you must be able to explain the reasons for that impact.

Impact - does it not only *catch* the attention, but also **HOLD** it? Impact may be multi faceted - simplicity - contrast - originality of treatment - composition/balance - colour harmony - arrangement - unusual angle - form - texture - graphic design - line - detail - pattern/rhythm - technique - special effects - lighting - exposure (not necessarily 'correct' exposure)

Has it been suitably/creatively cropped?

Communication - has the author got the message across?

Presentation - mounting, spotting, cleanliness, titling.

In your commentary - I like/don't like is not good enough. You must give valid reasons and substantiate them. Avoid weak words like 'nice', 'pleasant'. "This is a pleasant picture," is a very wishy washy statement - BE POSITIVE. NEVER SAY - "A good record shot, a potboiler, good tourist shot, a nice snap", - this shows you have dismissed it as unimportant.

Every photograph submitted is important to the **author**.

Comment on the image **as presented**. Never presume you know how it was taken (wide-angle, telephoto, polarizer, fancy filter, worked on in Photoshop). Look at the **finished image** - it is immaterial HOW it got there. Also never presume you know exactly WHAT the subject matter is - (if it is an abstract, does it MATTER what the original subject was?). Don't suggest change for change sake - remember, maybe the author has achieved EXACTLY WHAT S/HE SET OUT TO ACHIEVE! Try to understand the maker's point of view, without imposing your own.

When discussing prints, remember unless the colour of a matt totally destroys the photograph, that colour is the personal choice of the entrant. **There are no hard and fast 'rules' for matt colours**. Black, white or coloured matts are *all* equally valid. If the entrant chooses to put a monochrome print in a coloured mount, that also is their choice. However, if it totally revolts you, mention it by all means, but try not to mark it down just for that reason.

Smaller prints are quite acceptable. 16x20 bleed mounted images should not overwhelm and impress you with their size. You are commenting on the *content* of the photograph, not its dimensions.

Never say I'll have to let this one go. (Go where?)

Never say This is not my kind of shot. (You're not talking about one of YOUR shots!)

Much better to be honest and simply say, "I have not accepted this."

Finally - think, THINK, **THINK**, and then - think again!

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