

Crawley Camera Club Monthly Set Subject Challenge - Notes

Summary

- Each month members can submit up to three images for the challenge.
- The content of each image should be associated with something related to the set subject. Otherwise there are no restrictions. New images are preferred though at the moment archives can be used. This may change.
- Images may have a title of up to three words which help convey the meaning of the image – but the judging is based on image compliance to the set subject and quality – not the title itself. Eg for the letter M and an image of a purple door. A title “Main Entrance” would not be appropriate unless the word “main” appears in the image, as “main” is not a standalone word which describes anything, whereas “Mauve Entrance” would be ok as a key colour in the image (depending on shade of purple).
- Images are submitted to PhotoEntry by the publicised cut-off date/time and should be sRGB jpegs, max 1600px wide and max 1200px high. PhotoEntry rejects larger images, and warns you if images are smaller.
- Members can vote for the images on the PollUnit website over two rounds. A link is emailed for the rounds after images have been loaded. There are rules relating to how votes can be allocated. It is about the best image based on compliance to set subject and image quality/impact/storytelling etc.
- The results are announced at a review meeting where the compliance to subject are affirmed (or otherwise). The top three images are included in a grand final in June, and each month’s top image is publicised as the Facebook page header.

Background

This “set subject” challenge is a regular part of the Club programme. As well as a fun “competition” where members themselves vote for the best images of the month it has other important roles in Club activities:

- It sets a regular challenge (based on the set subject of the month) for members to find (old or new) images – providing motivation to take pictures or develop new skills to post-process older images.
- It provides a regular source of new images to share, discuss, provide feedback, learn new ideas, critique, etc.
- It provides an opportunity for members to test out images, techniques, skills in a “safe space” and get helpful feedback before submitting to a judged Club competition or maybe a SPA competition/exhibition.
- It provides time and opportunity to test out judging and feedback skills when voting for images. Why are some images better than others, etc? This helps develop members’ own photography experiences and skills - and might provide insights into some competition judges’ decisions.

Overview

Any member can submit up to three digital images (jpegs) for each competition and all Club members can then vote. The winners are announced at a Club meeting.

There is a Set Subject in each month based on a common theme through the year (July-June). In recent years this has been the letters of the alphabet (in various sequences to provide variety). This provides a lot of flexibility as to the content of the image – but bear in mind the higher scores should generally reflect image quality and impact and recognised match to the set subject.

The content might, for example, be related to the shape of the letter, or an object/scene/emotion/colour etc which starts with or is associated with the letter, or contains the letter as part of the image, or a scene of a generally recognisable place name, or a portrait with a link to or characteristic of a generally recognisable

person. Note – providing a person's name / place name when it might **not be clear** that it is the real name is not helpful for establishing a link to the set subject.

Each image has a title given by the photographer and the title can help 'set the scene' and show why/how the images address the set subject (if it is not obvious from the image content itself).

Titles are limited to THREE WORDS.

Club members give votes for images via a website.

Whilst "letters of the alphabet" provides a lot of flexibility for photographers to select images that interest them – it leaves a lot open to interpretation – and there has been much discussion as to what is, and is not, acceptable. Note that all images submitted to the competition are put into the poll – ie we do not disqualify entries at time of submission – it is up to the voters to decide whether an image is acceptable or just a great image being used with a tenuous title to try to fit the subject – and so should not get high marks.

To consolidate various guidance discussed previously – this document has a new annex at the end which tries to set some boundaries of what is acceptable.

The compliance to set subject will be checked at the results review meeting.

Submitting your entries

The set subject each month is included in the programme so you can prepare images early. Images can have been taken at any time but ideally have not previously been seen at the Club.

Up to three digital images (jpegs) are submitted by a set deadline.

Images are uploaded to the **PhotoEntry** website using your user-id. All the monthly competitions for a year are available on the website so entries can be submitted at any time. Entries can be changed up to the deadline. After the deadline (usually 6pm on a Monday) entries are downloaded for loading onto the polling website – so any later changes are not guaranteed to have been accepted (even if the competition still indicates open). The website validates certain technical criteria (eg size, colourspace) and rejects non-compliant images.

Images can be colour or monochrome.

Resize images to 1600 pixel wide max and/or 1200 pixel high max (1600x1200 max) ie landscape format.

Portrait format images must still be max 1200 pixels high but will have a shorter width.

Use sRGB colour space.

PhotoEntry automatically generates an image filename based on your image title (entered when you upload images) plus your name which is standard across all your PhotoEntry entries and is consistent for Club purposes.

After the deadline all the images for a competition are downloaded, anonymised and sorted randomly for the voting website.

Voting for the best photographs

Everyone will be sent an email containing a link to the competition poll.

If you don't get the email – check your spam/junk mail folders – sometimes your email service will put emails which contain links into these folders. The link is to a site called **pollunit.com** and will also contain a random set of characters which is the site reference for the specific competition.

When you click on the link it takes you to the website. It should work on desktop computers, laptops, tablets and even mobile phones (but these are NOT good for reviewing images properly). It should work using your preferred browser on those devices.

Each competition takes the same format. You have a set number of “dots” or “votes” to spread out across your favourite images – with a maximum number of dots you can give to any one image (usually four).

But the total number of dots you can use per competition is limited. You must use ALL your dots.

There are two Rounds of voting. In Round 1 you have a larger number of “dots” (votes) and the purpose is to identify the top 10 images (or more if tied on total votes) which go through to Round 2. In Round 2 these “top 10” images have a new vote to identify an overall 1,2,3 placed image. You have fewer “dots” to spread across the images.

This is a set subject competition (as well as sourcing images for discussion) so your assessment should take account of the relevance of the image content to the set subject (the title may help), the quality of the image (eg composition, appropriate sharpness and exposure etc), novelty/creativity and photographer input. Note – images that don't obviously match the set subject (even with the help of a title) should not get high marks - no matter how exceptional the image.

In Round 1 there is no set way of distributing the dots – it is up to you to decide. For example you could select your 10 favourite images and give them each 4 dots/votes - and others get 0. Or you could decide to give some 4's, some 3's, some 2's, some 1's until you have used all 40 dots. You choose – but be aware that 1's dilute your votes from your 3,2 scoring images. In Round 2 additional rules may apply to voting patterns

The results are anonymised so your individual votes are not published – **but think about how you might justify your voting pattern in any month to another member based on the images presented.**

Two simple “rules” that you need to follow in EACH Round (the website won't check for you at the time but sets of votes may be removed if they don't meet the criteria):

- Please use ALL your dots (there is a running total of what you have used just above the images)
- Please give at LEAST ONE IMAGE FROM ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPHER OTHER THAN YOURSELF a maximum 4 dots. In Round 1 don't evenly distribute your dots across all pictures. You can give as many more 4's as you like. In Round 2 adhere to any restrictions on allocating dots – but again you must give someone else's image one 4

You CAN vote for your OWN images (including awarding four dots) – **provided they are your legitimate high scorers in the competition** and at least one of your four dots is to another photographer.

Note – there is NO SUBMIT button – when you click on the dots then it will show “saved” and your votes for that image are recorded. You CAN change your mind and click on a different number of dots for that image – in which case the new votes are saved.

If you want to see the title of an image then click on the “I” in the corner of an image.

If you want to leave a comment about the images/poll/competition then you can in the space below the images. These are seen by all the participants during the competition.

Registration

When you make your first vote the website may ask you to enter a username/password or proceed as a guest or anonymously. Please do not use “anonymous”. It is useful to check that we have no duplication. If you use “guest” then please leave a name we will recognise as you.

If you register then enter your email address and a password of your choosing (just for this site). The next time you vote you can use the same values. This provides a better user experience as you can come back and change votes later if you want – or see previous competitions – but is not essential.

What happens next

There is a close date/time for each poll. After this deadline the votes are counted and the results checked and verified – and results announced shortly afterwards. The top three images go through to the annual final in June comprising winners from each month.

ANNEX – guidance on meeting set subject criteria

A reminder that just because an image is in the poll - it does not mean it meets the set subject criteria - it is up to the voters to decide and vote accordingly - ie does the image fulfil the criteria of being relevant to the letter (set subject). It is about the content of the image being relevant - the title can help - BUT just having the letter in the title does not necessarily mean it is compliant.

This additional guidance is for when selecting/titling images and for voters in deciding relevance - and avoid tenuous links in titling.

For the set subject LETTER - the content of the image should reflect a photographic interpretation of one or more of the following starting with this letter:

- a NOUN (name of something, including collective nouns, recognisable proper nouns such as London, Brighton, etc), or
- an ADJECTIVE (description of something, eg size, colour, shape, etc), or
- a VERB (an action in the image), or
- an ADVERB (a relevant property of the “doing” eg quickly, slowly, quietly, etc).

The image title could help to highlight the intention of the photographer in choosing this image.

Valid examples – using the letter I (i)

- Ice (noun) and any compound nouns such as iceberg, icehouse, ice-breaker, etc
- Icy, etc (adjective) - also i-shaped (i-shaped is an adjective), etc
- Ice-skating (noun or verb), de-Icing (verb), Icing (verb), etc
- Intimately (adverb) etc

In general the following parts of the title DO NOT qualify:

- articles and other determiners (the, these, this, those, a, an, etc)
- pronouns (I, me, you, it, your, my, their, etc)
- prepositions (on, in, at, of, to, as, etc)
- numbers (one, two, first, second, etc) unless part of a recognisable noun
- person name (unless **easily recognisable** eg as in Churchill-like, Picasso-esque, etc)
- place name (unless **easily recognisable** eg as in London-like, etc)

These are not meant to be a definitive list - for example “there” should also be avoided.

You can only use up to THREE WORDS. This is intended to help with compliance – and focus the discussion on the picture rather than a clever title.

ANNEX – judging guidance

Consider

- It is a set subject competition – so **the image has to relate to the stated subject**. The (short word) title can help – but does not override image content – usually means person/place names do not work unless well-known. A visiting judge in a Club competition might max-out at 16/20 for an excellent image which is not relevant to the subject.
- **Photographer** input – in your opinion did they make good choices around content, composition, creativity, time of day, lighting, depth of field, shutter speed, post-processing, presentation, etc
- **Photography** content – in your opinion does the image demonstrate appropriate in-camera and post-processing control eg appropriate exposure, sharpness/softness, colour, lighting, cropping, lack of noise, distractions, etc.
- **Photograph** content – in your opinion does the image have emotion, aesthetics, interest, impact, tell a story, is different.