



Tips for Creating Award Winning Images

There is no requirement to be a professional photographer when entering the 2020 Air Force Photo Contest; however Air Force Arts and Crafts strives to help photographers improve their skills. While your image will be judged on Impact, Creativity and Technical Excellence you should consider the following tips for creating superior photographs. This list was compiled by the Professional Photographers of America's International Photographic Competitions Committee. After reviewing the list we feel confident you'll begin your image capture process with more thought, thus making you a better image creator.

While every image will have traces of some of these elements, only the best have them all.

- **Impact:** Viewing an image for the first time always evokes a feeling. Sometimes images make us sad, happy or angry. Sometimes they force us to look inward at ourselves. That's called impact, and the more powerful the image, the more powerful the emotional response of the viewer.
- **Creativity:** Your point of view is exactly that— yours. And it's unlike anyone else's. This element speaks directly to that perspective. It shows your imagination and how you used the medium to convey an idea, a message or a thought to the viewer. This is how you differentiate yourself from others.
- **Technical Excellence:** This is the print quality of the actual image itself as it's presented for viewing. There are a lot of aspects that speak to the qualities of the physical print.

These can include:

- Retouching
 - Manipulation
 - Sharpness
 - Exposure
 - Printing
 - Mounting
 - Color correction
- **Style:** There are many ways to apply this element to your work. Perhaps you use light in a specific way, or you make a technical decision for the express purpose of creating impact.
 - When subject matter and style come together, the effects on an image can be spectacular. But remember, when subject matter and style don't work together, the results can be less than spectacular.
 - **Composition:** When the visual elements of an image come together to express intent, compositional magic happens. Good composition captures a viewer's attention and directs it where the artist, wants it to be. Depending on the intent, you can make something that pleases the viewer or disturbs them.



Tips for Creating Award Winning Images

- **Presentation:** How you showcase an image is just as important as how you compose it. Everything in the presentation should work to enhance your image and not distract from it. Keep this in mind when choosing mats, borders and everything in between.
- **Color Balance:** Proper color balance can bring a sense of harmony to an image. When the tones all work together to support an image, the emotional appeal is that much greater. Color balance doesn't have to be used to bring harmony to an image. Color balance can be used to evoke any number of feelings from a viewer. The choice in how to take advantage is entirely up to you, but no matter what, be sure your choice enhances rather than distracts.
- **Center of Interest:** This is where an image's creator wants a viewer's attention focused. Sometimes there can be a primary and a secondary center of interest. Sometimes everything in an image will work together to create that center of interest.
- **Lighting:** The use and control of light has an effect on every aspect of an image. It informs dimensions and shape, it sets tone and mood, and, like every other technique, proper lighting can be used to enhance your image while improper lighting can detract from it.
- **Subject Matter:** Even though it lacks words, your image is still telling a story, and your subject matter is central to that. So make sure that your subject matter is right for the story that you're trying to tell.
- **Technique:** How you choose to execute your image is key. It's also a holistic decision. Technique informs everything in the creation of your image. From lighting and posing to printing and presentation, it all works to show off the techniques that you've mastered and applied to your craft.
- **Story Telling:** What *does* your image evoke in a viewer's imagination? What *do you want* your image to evoke in a viewer's imagination?

Keep in mind: You are creating art. And while the act of creating is a personal thing, so too is the act of viewing. Your image is a story, and the one it tells your viewer may be one you never knew you were telling.