



CAPA Judging Standards Policy

Implementation and Review

After review and approval by the Board of Directors, this policy takes effect on the date stated below and supersedes all previous judging performance standards policies.

The Director of the Judging Program will review the policy annually and update as needed.

Effective: September 16, 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Definitions	2
Performance Standards.....	3
Responsibilities	6
Consequences of non-compliance	6
Appendices.....	7
Appendix A - Photographic Genres.....	7
Appendix B – Judging Criteria	10



Introduction

CAPA is committed to maintaining high judging standards for all competitions judged by CAPA Certified (CC) judges or CAPA Trained (CT) judges. This policy outlines performance standards for CT and CC judges, providing guidelines both for judges and the Director of the Judging Program. The policy aims to promote a positive environment, support judges' growth, and contribute to consistent and satisfactory competition outcomes.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy:

- CAPA Certified (CC) Judge: Refers to an individual member of CAPA in good standing who has completed the CAPA Judge Certification Program and been granted the designation by the Director of the Judging Program.
- CAPA Trained (CT) Judge: Refers to an individual member of CAPA in good standing who has completed the CAPA Basic Training for New Judges (BTNJ) Course within the past two years and is enrolled in the CAPA Judge Certification Program.
- CAPA National Judges List: A list of active CAPA Trained and CAPA Certified Judges maintained by the Director of the Judging Program. It is used to select judges for CAPA sanctioned competitions and events. The list is also made available for the use of CAPA clubs selecting judges for their competitions and events.
- Certification Period: The CAPA Certified Judge designation is valid for a five-year period from the date of issue. To maintain certification, CAPA Certified Judges must complete re-certification training within the five-year period.
- Director of the Judging Program: Person on the Board of Directors who manages the training and certification of CAPA judges, monitors to ensure CAPA's judging standards are maintained and reviews the judging of CAPA competitions.



Performance Standards

Judges are expected to meet the following performance standards:

1. Compliance with Rules and Procedures:

- Be familiar with the rules and judging criteria for each competition prior to commencing judging.
- Remove themselves as a judge (this includes declining the request to judge) if the judge feels they lack the knowledge and/or skill to judge the genres of the competition in a fair and professional manner.
- Disclose to the competition organizer if the judge has images in a competition that they are scheduled to judge. Follow the direction of the competition organizer with respect to this.
- Conduct judging in accordance with the rules and judging criteria for the competition, seeking clarification when necessary.
- Advise the Director of the Judging Program if the judge observes other CAPA Trained or Certified Judges who appear not to be complying with CAPA policies and procedures.
- Ensure that the hardware, software and procedures used for on-line judging meet the technical viewing standards in accordance with the CAPA On-line Judges Viewing Requirements document, as published on the CAPA website.

2. Judging Knowledge and Quality:

- Demonstrate a high-quality of judging skill in accordance with CAPA standards.
- Identify the characteristics of a strong image.
- Demonstrate knowledge of competition genres and respective judging criteria for each, see summary in Appendix A.
- Demonstrate a balanced assessment considering first the Creative Intent factors, and then how well the Organizational and Technical factors support the Creative Intent.
- Adhere to the CAPA accepted judging and scoring criteria as outlined in Appendix B. Where an organization specifies a different scoring criteria, use that organization's criteria.
- On average, maintain a maximum scoring variation of +/- 2 points with other CC judges for at least 90% of the images in a competition.



3. Photographic Knowledge and Skill:

A judge must be familiar with and competent in the following skills and techniques:

- Making use of the Guiding Principles of composition (use of space, placement of elements within the frame, leading lines, patterns, textures and colour) to create a connection with the viewer by telling a story and/or creating an emotional response.
- Exposure metering systems with respect to metering area and limitations of in-camera metering systems.
- The Exposure Triangle and relationship between shutter speed, aperture, and ISO. Equivalent f-stop and shutter speed combinations, bracketing, exposing for highlights or shadows, freezing or blurring movement and controlling depth of field.
- Camera Metering Modes: Auto, Shutter Priority, Aperture Priority, Program, Manual.
- Colour space, colour gamut, colour temperature – the Kelvin scale
- Different lighting situations including direction, quality, and strength
- Effect of lens focal lengths – wide angle, telephoto, fisheye
- Filters – polarizing, neutral density, graduated neutral density.
- High-key and low-key
- Grey card, 18% reflectance
- Shooting in RAW versus JPG
- White balance
- High Dynamic Range (HDR) workup and processing
- Post-processing using at least one of the more popular software programs (e.g. Adobe Photography Plan products, On1Photo Raw, Capture One, Luminar Neo, PaintShop Pro, Affinity Photo), including the ability to recognize both the positive and negative impact post-processing can have on the final image.

4. Image Feedback:

- Frame comments in the context of helping to educate the maker and other photographers.
- Whether verbal or written, comments must be clear & concise.
- Feedback must be balanced regarding what works well and suggestions for improvement.
- Feedback must always start with something positive.
- Use appropriate photographic terms, defining acronyms the first time they are used.
- Do not overload the maker with a long list of trivial suggestions. Stick to the one or two suggestions that are likely to result in the greatest improvement if followed.



5. Adaptability and flexibility:

- Rules and criteria vary between organizations. Become familiar with and adapt to the rules and judging criteria of the competition being judged.
- For live judging, on arrival, take time to become familiar with the room setup and any judging tools used by the organization. Ask for assistance when needed.
- For online judging, take time to become familiar with the judging software and recording tools before commencing judging. Ask for assistance when needed.
- Be open to learning new photographic skills both in-camera and post-processing.
- Demonstrate willingness to adapt to changing trends and processes.
- Become knowledgeable with new technologies and tools that enhance the photographic process.

6. Professionalism and respect:

- Demonstrate professionalism and respect at all times.
- Treat the image makers with dignity and respect.
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion in sensitive matters.



Responsibilities

Judges are responsible for upholding the standards outlined in this policy. Failure to comply may result in corrective action, up to and including termination of Certified status.

CAPA Certified Judges and CAPA Trained Judges are responsible for:

- Complying with the CAPA Judging Standards Policy.
- Maintaining their CAPA membership in good standing.
- Successfully complete the recertification requirements within five years of their initial certification or recertification date (CC Judges).
- Successfully completing the Judge Certification Program within two years of entering the program (CT Judges).

The Director of the Judging Program is responsible for:

- Providing clear communication and training on this policy.
- Setting performance expectations and providing feedback.
- Maintaining a process for judges to offer suggestions or raise concerns.
- Conducting periodic evaluation of judges to ensure compliance and identify training needs.
- Addressing performance concerns and taking appropriate action.
- In cooperation with the Director of Education, provide training to judges including, but not limited to, a Basic Training Course for new judges, Refresher Training for CAPA Certified Judges and additional advanced training or reference material as required.

Consequences of non-compliance

Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, depending on the severity and frequency of the violation. Remedial actions may include:

1. The involved judge will receive a verbal and/or written warning outlining the concern(s) and the corrective action required.
2. A performance improvement plan may be implemented to address specific performance issues.
3. In extreme cases, following a formal assessment of their judging performance, or other investigation of issue(s) or concern(s) regarding the maintenance of CAPA's Judging Standards, the Director of the Judging Program, in consultation with the President of CAPA may suspend and/or revoke the CAPA Certified Judge designation or CAPA Trained Judge designation.



Appendices

Appendix A - Photographic Genres

There is no universally agreed upon list of photographic genres. CAPA has compiled a list of photographic genres that are commonly seen in photographic competitions. Judges need to be familiar with the characteristics of these genres and know the judging criteria typically associated with each one.

Organizations may each have their own genre definitions and judging criteria, judges must familiarize themselves with these before judging.

The list in this appendix is a general guideline only. More detailed definitions and judging criteria are outlined in the Judging Procedures Manual. [Note: this will be a replacement to the current Judges Training Manual]

Specific competition themes or topics are not listed but would typically fall under one or more of these genres. It is important to note that an image can fall under multiple genres.

1. People Photography

Portrait, Wedding, Event, Fashion, Candid

Portrait photography focuses on capturing the personality, expressions, and emotions of individuals, often in a controlled studio setting or natural environment. Whether it's formal portraits, candid snapshots, or conceptual compositions, the intent is to convey the essence and character of their subjects. From classic headshots to avant-garde fashion portraits, the genre offers endless opportunities for creative expression and storytelling.

2. Architectural Photography

Architectural photography is the capture by means of photography of the activity of designing and constructing buildings and other physical structures by a person or a machine.

3. Creative Photography

Creative Photography is difficult to define. It has no universally agreed description or precise dividing line that separates the genre from all others. Emphasis is on the creative expression of the maker. Sub-categories may include Abstract, Altered Reality, Fantasy or Composite.



4. Scape Photography

Scape photography is a genre that includes Landscape, Cityscape and Seascape. It is intended to show different spaces within the world, sometimes vast and unending, but other times microscopic. Natural Landscapes is a category often found in Nature themed competitions and normally does not allow human elements to be present.

5. Nature and Wildlife

Typically, Nature and Wildlife genres in competitions have strict rules for content and editing criteria. The description below summarizes some of the more common restrictions. Judges must be familiar with the rules and guidelines for the competition they are judging.

- Nature typically includes things such as living animals (including arthropods), birds and marine subjects – under the control and feeding of humans if not obvious – such as zoos, game farms, animal preserves or aquariums. No domestic or feral animals or birds are permitted. Human elements may be permitted provided they are deemed as an element of an “adaptive environment” (e.g. barn owl) and consists of a small portion of total image area.
- Wildlife typically only allows living and untamed wildlife mammals, birds and marine subjects that are living free without restraint or confinement. Nature parks are considered natural environments because animals are not in “controlled conditions. Scientific bands, tags or radio collars are permitted, but no tethers or harness attachment.
- Post-process editing is typically limited to cropping, high dynamic range technique, focus stacking, dodging/burning and removal of camera artifacts. It is common for the competition organizer to request the original un-retouched file of a potential winning image for the purpose of verifying compliance with the editing criteria.

6. Editorial

Photojournalism, Street Photography, Sports & Documentary

Photojournalism is distinguished from other close branches of photography by the qualities of Timeliness, Objectivity, and Narrative. Sports photography often falls under this category. Street Photography is about telling a story of the human experience, caught in the moment, unrehearsed & spontaneous. In other words, candidly photographing life and human nature. Documentary tells a story of a particular subject, most often using photographs of people. The photos usually depict a certain perspective of the photographer and can be thought of as a social investigation.



7. Fine Art & Still Life

Sometimes called "photographic art", "visual art photography" or "artistic photography" the term "fine art photography" has no universal definition, but most definitions embrace the idea of visual work created in accordance with a photographer's creative vision.

A still life is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, commonplace objects which may be either natural (food, flowers, plants, rocks, or shells) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewelry, coins, pipes, and so on) in an artificial setting.

8. Digital AV Presentations

The term Audio-Visual (AV) refers to a multimedia presentation composed of photography, video, time lapse, graphics, music and narration, text or a combination thereof.

The emphasis of AV presentations is the blending of these components into a cohesive storyline. The transition between images should flow harmoniously with the appropriate colour or tone complementing the selected theme and images. Note that in order to tell a complete story, in addition to their own work, some makers use additional royalty free images and graphics.

9. Monochrome

More a style or visual approach, many people consider this a genre in itself.

Monochrome can be a black and white work ranging from the very dark grey (black) to the very light grey (white) with varying shades (darker) and tints (lighter) of the grayscale. Or, it can be a work toned entirely in a single colour hue ranging from the very dark to the very light with varying shades (darker) and tints (lighter) of the single hue. (Example: Sepia toned for a retro look or Blue toned winter scenes).

10. Prints

It's a 'presentation style' rather than a separate genre and encompasses all subjects. Today, CAPA and many clubs do not run a distinct print competition. Although far less common than projected image competitions, it is still relevant, and judges need to be familiar with the criteria for judging prints.



Appendix B – Judging Criteria

The judges will assign scores primarily based on the Creative Intent components of the image, considering the impact generated by creativity, storytelling and emotional response. Secondary emphasis will be placed on Organizational and Technical aspects.

Organizational and Technical factors will be considered solely to the degree to which they support the creative intent:

- Organizational factors include use of space, composition, light, colour and distracting elements.
- Technical factors include exposure, sharpness and focus, as well as the use of in-camera and post-processing techniques.

Images will not be penalized in scoring for so-called technical rule infractions, such as focus, if that is immaterial to the creative intent.

An Image's title may be used by the judges in evaluating a submission, so entrants should take care in selecting a title that complements or contributes to the vision or message being presented in the image.

Scoring Scale

CAPA competitions have a minimum of three judges. Competitions with a large number of entries may have teams of judges. The scores of all three judges are added together to deliver a total score. Only the total score is announced.

For CAPA Regular Competitions, judges score using a 10-point system, in ½ point increments. The lowest possible score is 4. For CAPA Salons, a 9-point system is used.



CAPA's Competition Scoring Chart

Points	Based on These Considerations
4	Extremely poor - with very serious faults
5	Fair - possibly with major faults
6	Good - displays average technical qualities and average impact
7 – 8	Excellent - above average in technical qualities and impact
9	Exceptionally good, technically / story – wow factor
10	Demonstrates a 'wow' factor - outstanding impact and technical aspects

CAPA's Salon Scoring Chart

Points	Based on These Considerations
1	Entry is inappropriate to the category or has serious flaws in its quality.
2 – 3	While a good entry, there are aspects that are less than high quality.
4 – 5	Here the entry is strong and is of high quality, but not only has some of the aspects described for higher scoring entries.
6 – 7	The entry is worthy of gaining an award, again with a strong impact, storytelling, compositional value and technically with little fault.
8 – 9	The Entry is worthy of winning the competition. This entry should have stand-out features, excellent storytelling, compositional value and technically without fault.



Scoring Methods

Although CAPA encourages the Subtractive method, judges may use any of these scoring methods provided the judge is able to deliver fair and consistent scoring with their chosen method.

Subtractive – CAPA's recommended method

- Start with 10 points. Subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 point if little to no WOW, $\frac{1}{2}$ point for minor faults, 1 point for major faults and 2-3 points for complete failure of an element/factor.
- Tends to produce fairer scores that are more easily justified.

Additive

- Starts with 0 and adds points based on how effectively the maker has executed the Creative Intent, Organizational and Technical elements.
- If not managed well, can have a tendency for lower scores

Mid-Point

- Choose a number as an "average" image score
- Add points for excellence, subtract for weak elements
- If not managed well, can be harder to justify final score.

Each of these methods is based on using this Points Guideline:

- Creative Intent 0 – 4 points
(includes WOW factor)
- Organizational 0 – 3 points
- Technical 0 – 3 points