



Victoria Camera Club Competition Guidelines 2025-26

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Internal Club Competitions

Each year, the club holds six rounds of internal monthly competitions in September, October, November, January, February and March. The competitions have three skill levels: Novice, Intermediate and Advanced.

The annual year-end competition comprises the images that placed 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or Honourable Mention in the six monthly competitions. Awards are presented in May.

Competition Entry Eligibility

In order to compete, you must be an active paid-up member, have a unique email address listed on the VCC website and be set up as a competing member. Images must be entered before the closing date listed on the club calendar on the VCC website.

Competition Levels

The three competition levels are:

- **Novice** is recommended for those new to photography. Novice competitors are learning to use their cameras and working on getting off automatic settings.
- **Intermediate** is for those who are comfortable using their camera in manual or semi-manual modes and understand the basics of composition.
- **Advanced** is for those who consistently produce superior images and have a good understanding of the technical and artistic aspects of photography. Any member who is, or has been, a professional photographer must enter at this level.

If you are new or want to change your competition level, contact the Membership Manager (membership@victoriacameraclub.ca) or the Internal Competitions Committee Chair (competitions@victoriacameraclub.ca). If you are unsure about your level, contact the Internal Competitions Committee Chair and they will recommend a level. Members remain at a competition level for the September to March competition year.

Advancing to the Next Level

In May, after the end of the competition year, the Internal Competitions Committee will review the results and recommend which Novice and Intermediate members should move up to the next level for the next season starting in September.

Members are also welcome to self-assess their skill level and request to be moved up to the next level before the beginning of the competition year. Contact the Membership Manager (membership@victoriacameraclub.ca) or the Internal Competitions Committee Chair (competitions@victoriacameraclub.ca) prior to September to change your competition level.

Benefits of advancing to the next level include having one's work rated against more advanced photographers. This can help to improve participants' skills. As well, greater variety in competition categories is available at the more advanced levels.

Available Competition Categories by Level

There are different categories available based on the competition level.

Category	Level		
	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
DIGITAL Nature/Wildlife		✓	✓
Creative Imagery		✓	✓
People		✓	✓
Open	✓ (2 submissions allowed)	✓	✓
Theme	✓ (2 submissions allowed)	✓	✓
PRINT Nature/Wildlife			✓
Monochrome			✓
Open	✓* (2 submissions allowed)		✓

* The Novice and Intermediate levels are combined for Prints.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Please note that in **ALL categories**, images MUST have a photographic base of the photographer's own making. Images created electronically (with no photographic origin) are not eligible. Also ineligible are the use of AI renderings created through text prompts. Generative AI removals, expansions and/or fills are not permitted in any category.

VCC follows the CAPA guidelines regarding AI in photography and these are continually evolving as technology changes. At the time of publication, this is their most recent statement: [February 2025 CAPA Stance on AI in Photo Competitions](#) or <https://tinyurl.com/5n8f2us7>

Monthly & Annual Competition Categories and Definitions

Digital Nature/Wildlife

This category is open to Intermediate and Advanced members. Novice photographers are welcome to submit images of nature and wildlife into the Novice Open category (see page 2).

Nature photography depicts all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archeology, in such a fashion that a well-informed person will be able to identify the subject material and certify its honest presentation.

Eligible:

- Images entered in this category can have landscapes, geologic formations, weather phenomena, and extant organisms as the primary subject matter. This includes images taken in the wild or in controlled conditions such as zoos, game farms, enclosures where the subjects depend on man for food, or botanical gardens.
- Marine subjects and botanical subjects (including fungi and algae) are suitable nature/wildlife subjects, as are carcasses of extant species.
- Scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals are permissible.
- Techniques, including HDR, focus stacking, and dodging/burning, that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the nature story or the pictorial content, or without altering the content of the original scene, are permitted.
- Techniques that remove elements added by the camera, such as dust spots, digital noise, and film scratches, are allowed.
- Colour images may be converted to greyscale monochrome.
- All final images must look natural.

Not Eligible:

- Human elements shall not be present, except where those human elements are integral to the nature story (for example, nature subjects like barn owls or storks can be adapted to an environment modified by humans) or where those human elements occur in situations depicting natural forces like hurricanes or tidal waves.
- Photographs of human-created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, domestic animals, feral animals, or mounted specimens are ineligible, as is any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement.
- Techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements except by cropping are not permitted.
- Stitched images, including panoramas, are not permitted.
- Infrared images, either direct-captures or derivations, are not permitted.

The story telling value of a photograph must be weighed more than the pictorial quality while maintaining high technical quality.

Creative Imagery

This category is open to Intermediate and Advanced members.

The primary criteria for Creative Imagery is that the maker intends (and the viewer easily recognizes) that the image is **not** a representation of reality. The image must have a photographic base of the maker's own creation. Manipulation of the basic image (or images, in the case of a composite) can be done in camera and/or in post-processing. The makers of creative imagery are free to use a wide range of tools and resources, limited only by imagination. All **non-AI** post-processing techniques are permitted.

A fulsome explanation of the objectives of Creative Imagery is set out in Appendix 1.

People

This category is open to Intermediate and Advanced members. Novice photographers are welcome to submit images of people into the Novice Open category (see page 2).

The People category includes, but is not limited to portraits, street photography and photojournalism. All non-AI post-processing techniques are permitted.

There are no restrictions on subject matter, providing the image meets the criteria of acceptable sensitive content (see Appendix 2). Photographers may be asked to provide model release forms if deemed necessary.

Digital Open

Images of any subject are acceptable in Open, providing they meet the criteria of acceptable sensitive content (see Appendix 2).

All **non-AI** post-processing techniques are permitted.

Themes

Images submitted to this category are an interpretation of the stated theme for the current month. The themes for 2025/26 are:

September 2025	Monochrome Simplicity	January 2026	Night Photography
October 2025	Action	February 2026	Architectural Detail
November 2025	Landscape	March 2026	Macro Photography

Look for a brief description of each theme in the Internal Competitions drop-down menu (under the Competitions tab) on the VCC website. More detailed information about each theme will be provided on the Close-Up Digital Blog a month or so before the relevant competition deadline. All **non-AI** post-processing techniques are permitted.

Print – Nature/Wildlife

Same as Digital Nature/Wildlife

Print – Monochrome

Black and white work composed of the various shades of grey, from the very dark grey (black) to the very clear grey (white), is a Monochrome work. An image toned entirely in a single colour is also considered a monochrome work and can be included in this category.

On the other hand, a black and white work modified by a partial toning or by the addition of one colour remains a colour work (polychrome) and is not eligible for entry in the Monochrome category. Split toning is also not permitted in this category.

All **non-AI** post-processing techniques are permitted.

Print – Open

Same as Digital Open

Entering Monthly Competitions

Dates for monthly competitions are set out on the calendar on the VCC website.

As set out in the chart on page 2:

- Novice members may enter up to two (2) images in each of the Digital Open and Theme categories and the Print Open category.
- Intermediate members may enter one (1) image in the Digital categories and up to two (2) printed images in the Print Open category.
- Advanced members may enter one (1) image in any of the Digital or Print competition categories.

Please Note: Images must not have been entered in a previous VCC internal competition. Once submitted, the “same” image may not be re-submitted in another format or category. “Same” means identical, or virtually identical (e.g., edited differently by cropping, digital editing, or print manipulation, etc.). Same or similar images may be entered in EXTERNAL competitions.

Digital Image Requirements

All submitted digital images shall be:

- In JPG format
- To a maximum 1400 pixels wide (landscape format) or 1050 pixels tall (portrait format)
- Without maker’s name, either in a watermark or in the image’s title

How to Enter Digital Images

All digital images are entered through the club's website. Members must be logged onto the website to upload images into a competition.

Click on "Competitions" on the menu on the main page of the website. When the dropdown menu appears, click on "Submit Images to a Competition".

If you need assistance, there is a video available showing how to upload an image for competition. Click on the button "Video: How to Submit Images to a Competition".

Members then select the competition to enter. All open competitions are shown, so ensure you are entering the correct one.

After the image has been uploaded, click on "Save Images & Proceed to Edit Page". The default title is the filename, but that should be changed to a proper title for the image. The maximum length for a title is 100 characters. The title must not have the maker's name in it because the judges will see the title of the image.

The purpose of a title is to guide the viewer to see the photo in a particular way and supply some context. When in doubt, keep titles simple and neutral. Titles become a part of your art. Make sure your title contributes to effectively communicating what you want to say with your image.

Make sure you click on "save" or "update" to save your changes.

Print Requirements

Prints can be printed by the member with a home printer or by a professional printer.

To make handling of the prints manageable and to keep the prints safe, please comply with the following requirements.

- Print plus mat must not exceed 16" x 20".
- Minimum print size is 5" x 7".
- Please use conventional 4-ply mat board or foam core up to 3/16" as backing and attach the print firmly to the backing. Canvas wrapped images and thicker foam core are not allowed as the prints become unwieldy to handle for our judges.
- Please use only a single window mat board to "frame" the print.
- Mat board may be any colour.
- No makers name or title may appear on the front of the mat or image.

How to Enter Printed Images

Advanced Members may enter one print into each of the three advanced print categories (Nature, Open, Monochrome). Novice and Intermediate members may enter up to two prints into the Novice/Intermediate Open Print category. Members must bring their print to the 1st Thursday night meeting of the month (competition deadline), where labeled print cases are set out to collect the print entries for the month.

A digital version of each print must be uploaded into the competition gallery, following the requirements for digital images. This is so a print can be tracked and its associated score and comments can be displayed. If there is no uploaded digital version of the image in the monthly competition gallery, the print cannot be judged.

A label can be printed from the website when uploading the digital version of your print. OR, alternatively, a hand-made label can be prepared and affixed on the back of the print in the top right corner. It should contain the following information:

- Category
- Competition Date
- Image Title
- Photographer's name
- Print orientation (indicate with an arrow)

We cannot guarantee your cellophane sleeve will be returned to you after judging unless you have your name and/or the title of the image on the sleeve.

Please **do not use tape or any sticky substance** to close an envelope or cellophane sleeve for a print. Prints are easily damaged if they come in contact with the glue.

Monthly Competition Judging

Images are scored using a 20-point system by certified photographic judges and/or professional photographers who are not members of the club. Whenever possible, experienced nature photographers are used to judge the Nature/Wildlife categories.

Images are judged on technique, content, clearly defined subjects, good use of colour, tone or hue, lighting, layering, creativity, photographic vision, subject impact (wow factor), etc. Judges provide constructive critiques on each image to help the photographer improve.

Results are announced at the following month's Competition Night meeting. Please refer to the calendar on the VCC website for dates. The following day, all images, scores and critiques are available for members to view (see "Competition Results" under the "Competitions" tab on the VCC website).

Annual Competition Awards

The Victoria Camera Club holds a year-end competition and announces the winners on Year End Awards Night (usually held in May).

Two sets of awards are presented:

- 'Year End "Best of" Competition Awards' is a competition between all the placed images over the competition season (September – March). Awards are presented at each competition level for each competition category.
- 'Distinguished Photographer Awards' are awarded for outstanding achievement in the competition year based on a point system (4 points for 1st, 3 points for 2nd, 2 points for 3rd, 1 point for an HM, and 1 point for having an image selected for entry into an External Competition). Distinguished Photographer Awards are presented at each competition level.

External Competitions

The Victoria Camera Club enters many national and international competitions during the year. Please see the External Competitions tab on the VCC website for more information regarding external competitions and check the club calendar for entry dates.

Appendix 1. Creative Imagery

Description provided by Kathryn Delany, in consultation with the Creative Special Interest Group

This category invites imaginative, artistic, and conceptual photography that goes beyond capturing reality as seen through the lens. The focus is on creative expression and manipulation, encouraging participants to explore unique ideas, storytelling, and innovative techniques. This category encourages photographers to push boundaries, explore new techniques, and challenge conventional perceptions of photography. A creative image, like any image, should evoke emotion, tell a story, or captivate the viewer.

A creative image is a photograph that transcends realism through manipulation or abstract techniques. This can include:

- A significant transformation of one or more images, either in-camera or through post-processing, to create fictional or imaginative scenes, going beyond straightforward techniques like Infrared, Monochrome, HDR or fisheye effects. Has unconventional perspectives, has an experimental approach, an artistic or conceptual vision;
- An image that expresses ideas or emotions, or is thought-provoking, by distorting or transforming image elements, such as through double exposures or intentional camera movement, without aiming for realism;
- An image that enhances visuals with unique props or effects, like bokeh, light painting, or macro techniques, showcasing phenomena beyond ordinary perception; and
- Images that incorporate significant post-processing, digital manipulation, or composite work. Combines multiple images, adds or removes elements, or applies artistic effects to create a surreal or imaginative scene. Use of software tools and editing platforms are encouraged.

The final image can diverge significantly from the original photograph(s), showcasing creativity and skill in image editing.

All elements of the final image must be the original work of the photographer. All non-AI post-processing techniques are permitted.

Entries will be judged based on originality, creativity, technical execution, and overall impact.

Appendix 2. Sensitive Content & Figure Photography

The Victoria Camera Club supports the goal of its members to pursue fine art photography, but also recognizes that we are a club of diverse members, some of whom are children. We expect that all images and discussion for use on the club's website (including competitions, galleries and Close-Up Digital) will be in good taste.

Definition of Sensitive Content

Sensitive content includes subjects such as fully or partially nude figure photography and bloody nature kills.

Figure Photography

The galleries and forums having to do with figure photography will be limited to members only – the public will not be able to view these galleries or forums. The Victoria Camera Club reserves the right to review all images submitted and will decide if an image can be entered into a club competition or for display on the website or on the Close-Up blog.

Fine Art Nude Photography

Fine art nude/figure photography is one genre of fine-art photography that depicts the human body with an emphasis on form, composition and other aesthetic qualities. Lighting of the model is of critical importance in fine art photography.

Glamour Photography

Glamour photographs emphasize the subject, usually female, in a romantic and attractive, sexually alluring manner. The subject may be fully clothed or semi-nude, but glamour photography stops short of intentionally sexually arousing the viewer and being pornographic. For some people, the difference between fine art and glamour is in the gaze of the model; with glamour models looking into the camera, while art models do not.

Content Not Acceptable

Images containing the following will not be accepted for competition or display in club galleries and on the Close-Up blog:

- abuse or violence
- sexually explicit images; visually explicit genitalia
- racially or religiously offensive images
- defamatory content
- unclothed children

The Internal Competitions Committee reviews all images to ensure they meet the category guidelines and meet the club's definition of acceptable content, including this policy on Sensitive Content and Figure Photography. Images submitted to club galleries or forums, and for publication in Close-Up are bound by the same guidelines and policies as competitions. Club members should report images that may not meet the guidelines and policies to the Webmaster.

Model Releases

Any model release form that may be required by jurisdictional law is the responsibility of the photographer. A model release may be needed for a photo in which a person is recognizable, depending on the situation:

- A model release is required for nude models or any image displaying a person in a compromising position.
- In general, "Street photography" images do not require a model release unless they include the situations noted above but be mindful and respectful when on public property. Note: just because a property is open to the public does not necessarily make it public property.
- Images of Minors: Images of minors do not need a model release if the subject in the image is the maker's own dependent(s). In most other cases, it is the responsibility of the photographer to obtain permission with a model release from the parent or guardian of the minor in the image in order to submit the image to competition or display the image on the Victoria Camera Club website or on the Close-Up blog. Parent/Guardian of minor's permission is NOT required if the image was taken in a public place or at a public event. However, it is recommended that permission be sought out if at all possible. As noted above, not all property that is open to the public is actually public property.

Other People's Work

Images depicting other people's work (such as sculptures, statues, paintings, and other copyrightable works) may need to obtain a release from the rights holder. When photographing the work of others, it must be as an object in its environment and not a full frame close-up of another person's creation.