Analysing & Scoring Images – A Guide

Tring is different to other clubs in various ways. Our most significant difference is the way we score the entries to competitions. In other clubs an independent judge is invited to attend the competition and give feedback and a score out of 20 for each image.

At Tring, we believe that learning to analyse images is an important way of improving our own skills in photography. So we score each other's images and a Judge is invited to give constructive feedback on a selection of the images entered but no score.

This guide is designed to help members improve their photography by understanding how to analyse images ths:

- Members can spot how their images can be improved:
  - On Location
  - In Shooting
  - Post processing
  - Printing
- Members are able to give feedback on the quality of images to others and them to you….
- Members are able to be self critical of your own images
- Members have a process for accurately scoring images in competitions

FIRST & MOST important learning point: When giving feedback or scoring:
You are NOT being asked to consider how much you 'like' an image or not.

Indeed you have a duty to try to set this aside.

SECTION 1 – Analysis of an Image

There are two elements by which we objectively assess the quality of an image:

- Creative Quality
- Technical Quality

Creative Quality

Great Images evoke some kind of emotion. The Creative Quality of an image is determined by the degree to which it invokes a feeling / reaction. Some call this the 'Wow' factor

THE FIRST STEP IN ANALYSING AN IMAGE IS TO ANALYSE YOUR OWN FEELINGS / REACTION WHEN YOU SEE IT.

Step aside from your own bias and likes or dislikes – either may be a sign of your reactions and if strong in either direction, this could mean you are looking at a great image……

An image that you 'dislike' may represent a subject designed to give the feeling of shock or horror and this may be the intent of the artist – to create such an emotion for some reason – so this would make it an effective and a GOOD image.

Key measures of Creative Quality include:

- Is it clear what the photographer wanted to share with you?
- Does the picture tell a story?
- Is the image eye grabbing / creative?

THIS STAGE IS A CRUCIAL STAGE OF ANALYSIS – for scoring in a competition you'll need to analyse the image decide if the creative quality is: Strong, OK or Weak.

Technical Quality

Having analysed and assessed the Creative Quality the next phase is to analyse how well the author has supported this, or not, through camera, post processing and presentation skills

You are looking to see:

Does any technical error spoil the creative intent or reduce the enjoyment of the image?

There are 5 groups of technical quality

1. COMPOSITION

- Does it support the Creative Intent?
- Is the crop effective?
- Is there a clear point of focus?
- Are there distractions?
- Is the eye encouraged to explore the image?

2. LIGHT

- Does the image 'glow'?
- Is the light where it should be/ can it distract?
- Is the contrast well managed?
- Are there overblown highlights and does this matter?
- Are there black, blacks and if so does this matter?

3. Focus

- Is Point of Focus pin sharp?
- Is the overall focus setting effective?
- If used depth of field, does it work?
- If motion – is there motion blur and if so does it matter – or is that good?

4. Post Processing

- Should support the Creative Intent / Point of Focus
- Does Crop work?
- Is Colour Saturation effective and realistic (or effective if deliberately strong)
- Look out for:
  - Over sharpening / Ghosting
  - Grain / Noise – especially in sky
  - Spots that should have been removed

5. Presentation

a**. PRINT**

- i. Size of image and mount support the image
- ii. Thought has been given to choice of print paper – Gloss should only be used for higher contrast images, otherwise semi gloss or matt should be used.
- iii. Is the print quality even without artifacts or colour lines.

b. **DIGITAL**

- i. Has aspect and crop been used well for the image?
- ii. Has a border / stroke been used and does it work in terms of Colour / Thickness

Summary of Analysing Images

There are two broad measures of quality:

Creative Quality / Creative Intent:

- The greater the impact, the better the image

Technical Quality:

- Composition
- Light
- Focus
- Post Processing
- Presentation

The primary question is – does the technical quality help or undermine the creative intent?

SECTION 2 – Scoring

Having learnt how to analyse images we are now in a position to score.

At TDCC we are unique in that we score each other's images in our competitions

This places a responsibility on us all to do this well:

- Be fair
- Avoid personal taste or bias
- Be thoughtful
- Be consistent

It is NOT true that the quality of an image cannot be objectively assessed – but it takes thought and the ability to set aside personal bias – as far as possible. It has nothing to do with liking or disliking the image. The score should be based as far as possible on an objective analysis of the quality, compared to other images in the competition.

How we score – the rules!

- We will score out of 20 BUT we will assign scores of no less than 12 points
- This gives 9 points of differential – more than enough
- This minimum respects the effort made by any member in entering a competition
- We will assign scores based on the analysis of image quality, **in comparison to those other images within the competition that we are scoring**, ignoring whatever other images we may have seen elsewhere – this introduces consistency and rigour to the assigning of scores, relative to each other.
- 20 points MUST be assigned to the higher quality images
- **You must score AT LEAST ONE image as 20** – whatever the quality of the submissions your job is to identify the best on the day.

Suggested Scoring Process:

- Do a first pass review & identify
  - The few that appear to be the highest quality
  - The few that are the lowest quality
- Look at these in detail and decide which will get 20 or 19 points & which 12 - 14 points - (You don't have to assign a lowest score of 12 if you feel none are really low quality)
- Now review all the other images and score between 15 and 18 – use the following thought process BUT remember that this is not a mathematical equation!
  - If the creative quality is excellent – start with score 20
- Where the competition has a specific brief then also assess the fit to brief:
  - If it fits the brief – fine
  - If it slightly fits the brief deduct a point or two
  - If it does not fit the brief deduct up to say 3 points
- If it is a good image, but just doesn't fit the brief it should score no more than 17 and no less than 15 – we are more interested in rewarding good images than any specific brief.
- Assess the Technical Quality and deduct marks for issues, where they detract from the Creative Intent – probably 2 to 5 points deduction.
- Go back and compare – now review your scores with an open mind and compare those that you have given each score and ask yourself if that makes sense and adjust score if needed. In our digital competitions you can get a listing of all the images by each score – so this is a very helpful way of doing such comparison.

As a rough guide:

- A score of 15 and below is where there are significant technical issues and poor composition / light. They may not address the competition subject.
- A score of 16 or 17 is a ‘competent’ shot – where there are no significant technical issues and the composition is OK.
- A score of 18 is for a very good shot – but maybe not quite as good as those with 19 or 20.
- Images that score 19 or 20 should be technically excellent, have a great composition and use light well. They might create an emotional effect or tell a story.
- Those that score 20 should in some way, really impress you with their impact, story, fit to subject etc – they should stand out.

Score Range

Most images are ‘average’ by definition - So you might expect that across say 50 images:

Score	**Number**
12	2
13	3
14	5
15	8
16	10
17	10
18	6
19	4
20	2