

# Criteria

## For Judging Digital Photos

Jack Eyler



***“Learn the rules well, so you know  
how to break them properly”***

***Dalai Lama***

# The Basics of Judging Criteria

Technical  
Composition  
Subject Matter

# Technical Elements to Consider

Proper Exposure: Focus, Sharpness,  
Detail, ISO, Shutter Speed, Aperture,  
Depth of Field, Brightness & Contrast-  
Highlights-Shadow

Color - Cast - Saturation  
Usage of Light



**Looks okay viewing on your view screen**



Camera shake – too high ISO makes it grainy – blown out highlights  
Eyes should be in focus

# Composition

Rule of Thirds

Framing

Viewpoint

Balance

Where is the Eye Lead?





# Subject Matter

Informative

Emotion-Mood-Feeling

Symbolism

Creativity

Impact

# Do I Like the Image?

Photography is an art form and  
is therefore subjective

A big part of judging an image is subjective

Ones own tastes, likes, dislikes and the way  
we see the world will influence how one  
likes or dislikes an image







# Post Processing

A little tweaking to get to what your eyes saw is ok

A little sharpening, a little contrast adjustment, a little saturation

To much and the image looks fake

# Post Processing

**Minimal**



**Over Processed**



# Printing

Images entered for judging  
will be printed and mounted



# Scoring System

There are many different point systems  
used for photo competitions  
9 & 10 point usually for a local or club  
competition

100 point – advanced competition

# Break Down of 9 Point Scoring

**1. Disqualified:** This score is used to disqualify a photograph that is of copyrighted material, a blatant copy of another photo or other artwork, or does not meet the requirements of the competition category.

**2-3-4. Poor:** The photo has at least one major defect, such as bad focus, gross exposure error, or very poor composition. A photo with one major defect that is otherwise okay should score a 4. A photo with multiple defects should score a 3. A photo that lacks any redeeming features should score a 2.

**5. Okay:** This photo meets the minimum technical standards, with good focus and exposure. The photo lacks strong impact, center of interest, or composition. Usually these photos are described as snapshots.

**6. Good:** This photo meets the minimum technical standards, with good focus and exposure and also shows originality and good composition. The photo lacks impact, center of interest, or has multiple subjects distracting elements.

**7. Very Good:** The photo has no technical deficiencies and shows good composition, strong impact, and has a compelling subject and center of interest.

**8. Exceptional:** The photo is excellent technically and worthy of special recognition because of extraordinary impact, composition, or portrayal of subject matter. This score is awarded to the top photos in most competitions.

**9. Superior:** The photo is technically perfect and equal to the “best of the best.” It has all the attributes of the top photographs (i.e., strong impact, excellent composition) plus artistic merits (e.g., beauty, emotion) that make it worthy of public display. This score is rare in most competitions.



## Photo example

Poor 2-3

Out of focus

Bad composition



## Photo Example

OKAY 5

Meets minimal technical requirements

No other elements







## Photo Example

OKAY 5

Meets minimal technical standards

Snapshot



## Photo Example

Good 6

Meets technical standards  
Good composition

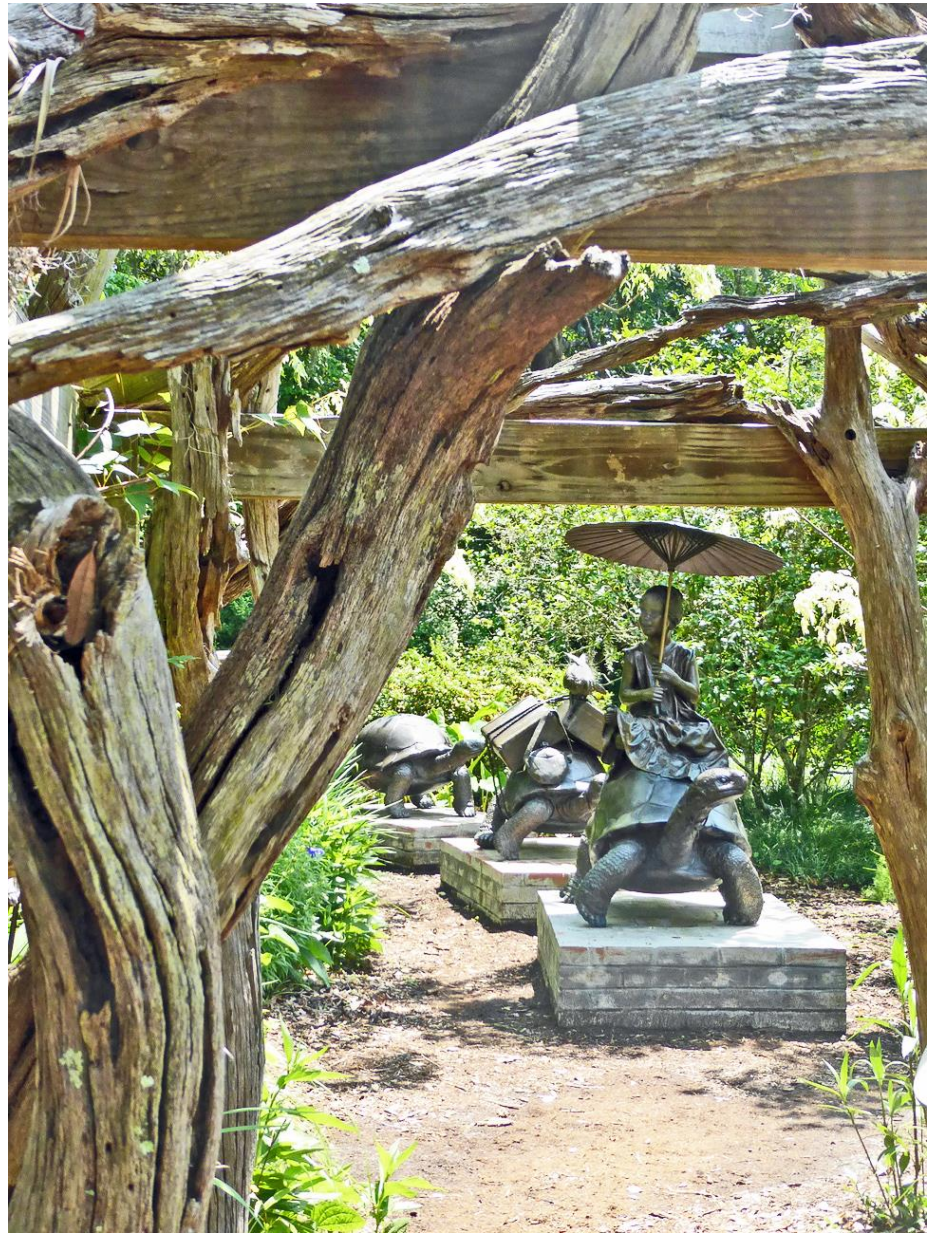
## Photo Example

Good 6

Meets technical standards

Interesting use of framing

Good composition





## Photo Example

Very Good – 7

No technical deficiencies, good composition, compelling subject

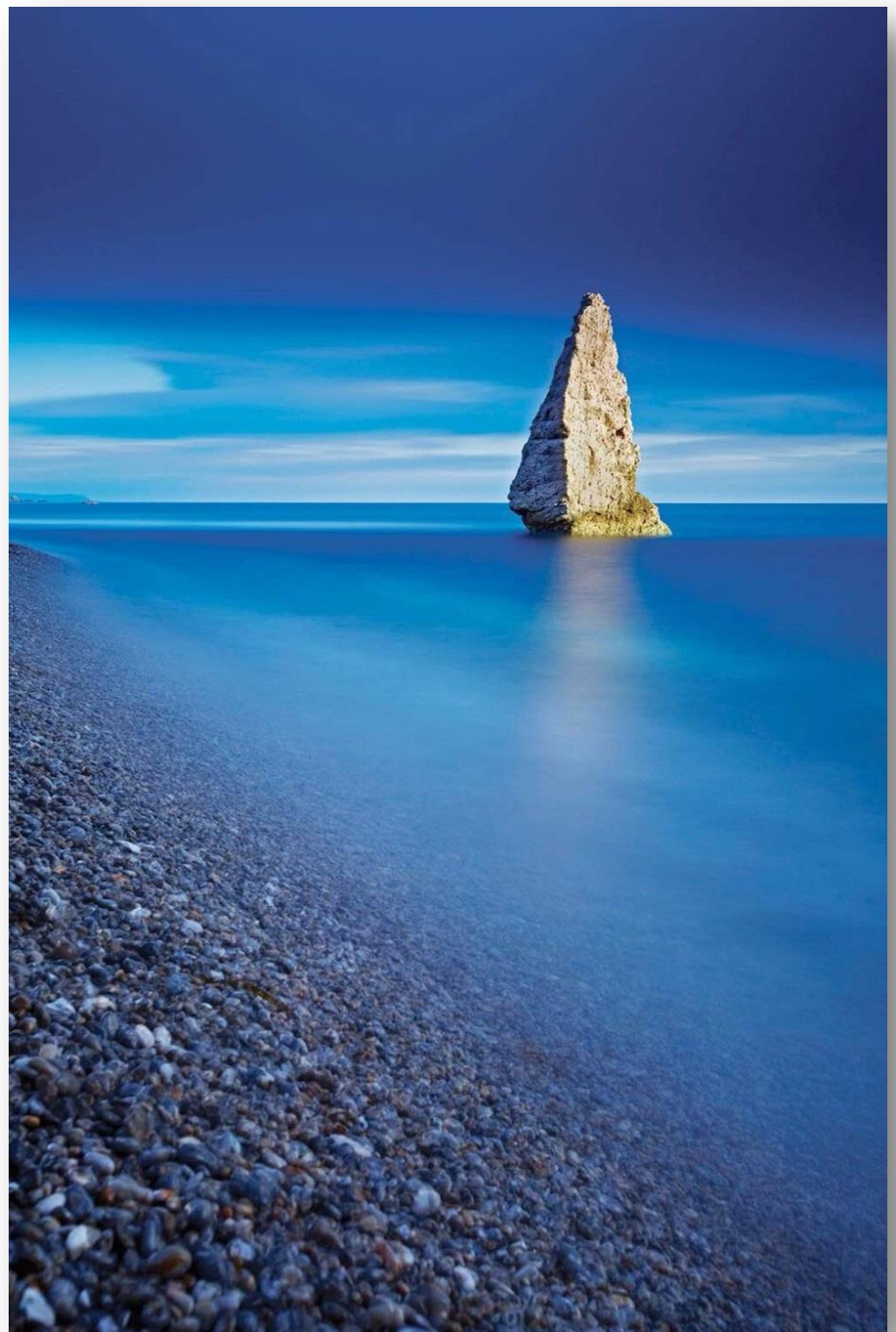
## Photo Example

Exceptional 8

Beautifully Exposed

Exceptional Composition –

Rule of thirds, balance, leads eye, level horizon, design triangles



Don't let the rules stop your creativity

