

## PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE

The purpose of this article is to assist those with responsibility for defining rules by providing a simple framework for assessing current rules and proposed changes.

Before implementing a change, it is important to provide clear and unambiguous answers to the following set of questions. If you cannot articulate your answer in simple language or you cannot provide an answer or the answer highlights a problem, then perhaps the proposed changes need to be re-assessed.

It is critical to remember a) the tighter the rule - the larger the loophole and b) the clearer the dividing line, the more people will move right up to the line. This latter factor - moving right to the line - can make enforcement more problematic and acrimonious

## THE QUESTIONS

1. *What are you trying to achieve?*
2. *What are you trying to exclude?*
3. *Why do you want to exclude it?*
4. *Is the wording entirely consistent or is it self-contradictory?*
5. *How and by whom will the rule be enforced?*
6. *Will the judges and organizers have sufficient information by merely looking at the image to form an opinion on violation?*
7. *How prone will the rule be to an error of type 1 - failing to reject something that should have been rejected?*
8. *How prone will the rule be to an error of type 2 - rejecting something that should have been accepted?*
9. *What are the implications of the wording on the actions that organizers may have to take after the judging is completed?*
10. *How well will the rule translate into other languages?*

## THE NOTES

### 1. What are you trying to achieve?

Here we are looking for a simple statement of the purpose of having the rule. Is the rule there to restrict the images to

some concept or genre? Is the rule there to control how the image is presented? Is the rule there to restrict how the image is produced? Is the rule there to provide a place for images which would otherwise not compete in an *open* category? We must be careful here not to be pushing our own private agenda and biases.

### 2. What are you trying to exclude?

Nearly all rules aim to exclude something. Exactly what is this rule trying to exclude?

In devising the exclusion aspects, we must be very careful that the words of the rule do not inadvertently also exclude images which we did not intend to exclude.

Given the very large variety of methods for achieving a change to an image, we must be careful not to define our exclusions with reference to process or method - to do so defines the loopholes. Equally any exceptions to a blanket exclusion must not be worded with respect to process

### 3. Why do you want to exclude it?

This is much harder to answer than it looks. A simple "I don't think we should allow it" is not an acceptable answer.

Again, we must be careful not to be pushing our own private biases but rather we must look at the broader aspect taking into account that photography is a hobby - not a police state.

### 4. Is the wording entirely consistent or is it self-contradictory?

It is critical to examine the rule for inherent inconsistency or self-contradiction; for example attempting to exclude 'set-ups' while seeking that the image 'reflects' a culture or using the word 'ineligible' which logically means it cannot be 'disqualified' - it can be 'removed' but not 'disqualified'.

### 5. How and by whom will the rule be enforced?

In nearly all instances the rules are not made by the people who are charged with enforcing them and conversely,

those charged with enforcing the rules are seldom consulted during rule formation. Rule changes should not be implemented without extensive consultation with those involved with enforcing the rule - the salon organizers and judges.

It is far too easy to devise a good sounding rule that appears to achieve the objective but will be utterly impractical for those who have to enforce it.

6. Will the judges and organizers have sufficient information by merely looking at the image to form an opinion on violation?

As a first step, we must assume that the entrant has abided by the rule. It is utterly impractical to expect or require the organizers and judges to check and verify every image. If we require such action, the salons have indicated that they would drop the division rather than undertake the effort - and some salons have done just that.

If there will not be sufficient information in the image to form a judgement on violation, then the rule will be violated and we must then accept that only gross violations will be caught before or during judging. It also means that many entrants will have images accepted which violate the rule.

7. How prone will the rule be to an error of type 1 - failing to reject something that should have been rejected?

This question ties closely into the answer for the preceding question. Sometimes a judge may have personal knowledge allowing them to point out a violation but more often, in the rapid process of salon judging, violations will go unnoticed.

Violations are frequently discovered after the event in a very public and embarrassing way often with the removal of awards and acceptances. Each time this happens, it reflects badly not only on the salon and the judges but also on the drafters of the rules.

The application by one or more judges of *personal knowledge* which results in a disqualification is an unfair bias in favour of images taken under circumstances unfamiliar to the judges.

8. How prone will the rule be to an error of type 2 - rejecting something that should have been accepted?

The more aggressive the organizers and judges become in trying to enforce the rules, the more errors they will make of type 2 - rejecting a legitimate image. Where the judges have to make a subjective opinion on compliance, then type 2 errors will occur to the annoyance of the entrants.

For example, if an image has been taken and cropped appropriately, it will often be impossible to determine if the scene portrayed was 'stumbled upon' or 'set-up'.

9. What are the implications of the wording on the actions that organizers may have to take after the judging is completed?

One of the major sources of identification of potential disqualifications is information provided by the public when the results become public. Displaying a gallery can cause so much post event disruption and work for organizers that many salons will not produce a public on-line gallery.

Some salons have had so much post event disqualification activities that they have dropped or are seriously considering dropping the relevant division from their ensuing salons. That can be the effect of a poorly thought out or worded rule.

10. How well will the rule translate into other languages?

For a significant number if not a majority of entrants, english is not their first language and they rely on translations of the rules. Words which have subtle nuances or alternative interpretations can result in a translation which has a vastly different effect and meaning.