

Piedmont Photo Club — New Member Guide

Welcome to Piedmont Photo Club. This guide introduces the club, its regular and periodic activities, the website and member procedures, and the contest program. You do not need to master everything immediately. Start with the Quick Start, attend meetings, and ask questions.

New Member Quick Start

1. Confirm that the club has your preferred name and current email address.
2. Use the newest password-reset message from **Piedmont Photo Club** (piedmontphotoclub@piedmontphotoclub.com) to create your private website password.
3. Sign in at <https://www.piedmontphotoclub.com/login/> and confirm that you can reach members-only pages.
4. Review **Club News** and the **Event Calendar** for upcoming meetings, programs, contests, and photo shoots.
5. Attend a meeting and introduce yourself. Members at every experience level are welcome.
6. Participate in the ways that interest you: programs, Share And Tell, contests, image discussions, and periodic photo shoots.

If a password-reset link fails, use only the newest reset message. Each new request can invalidate an earlier link. Contact the club if your email address is incorrect or you cannot reach members-only pages.

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About the Club

Piedmont Photo Club is a community for photographers who want to learn, share work, exchange ideas, and enjoy photography with others. Members bring different levels of experience, equipment, interests, and artistic approaches. Participation is intended to encourage growth rather than prescribe one style of photography.

You can benefit from the club without entering contests. Programs, informal image sharing, discussions, and photo shoots are equally valuable ways to participate. If you do enter contests, treat them as another learning opportunity: select work thoughtfully, study how other members approach a subject, and use the results to sharpen your own judgment.

Club Activities

Programs

Program meetings focus on photographic subjects, techniques, creative approaches, presentations, or guest speakers. Check the Event Calendar and club announcements for each program's topic and any advance preparation.

Share And Tell

Share And Tell gives members an informal way to show photographs for discussion and appreciation. These images are not contest entries and are not voted on. When an upload session is available, the administrator supplies the members-only Meeting Uploads link and closing time.

Contest Meetings

The club normally holds one regular contest in each quarter and a Year-End contest in the summer. Digital entries are reviewed and voted on through the website. Print entries are brought to the meeting and judged in person.

Photo Shoots

The club periodically organizes photo shoots. The subject, location, date, meeting point, access requirements, and weather plan vary by event. Use the Event Calendar and the latest club message as the authoritative details.

Other Image Discussions

An announced Meeting Upload session may also accept Creative (CRC) or Program (PGM) images. Like Share And Tell, these are temporary, non-competitive meeting images rather than contest submissions.

How the Club Communicates

Use the following sources together:

- **Club email** — time-sensitive announcements, member instructions, contest openings, voting notices, and schedule changes.
- **Club News** — website announcements and recent club activity.
- **Event Calendar** — meeting dates, programs, contests, and periodic outings.
- **Contests** — current contest status, information and procedures, current results, and the archive.
- **Members Only** — protected operational pages such as submissions, review, voting, and account functions.
- **Contact Us** — questions when you do not know which officer or administrator to contact.
- **Facebook** — an additional public club presence; confirm operational instructions through the website or club email.

Schedules and event details can change. For a specific event, follow the most recent club email and Event Calendar entry.

Using the Club Website

Area	What you will find
Home	General club introduction and current highlights
Club News	Announcements and recent posts
Contests	Status, information, procedures, results, and archive
Member Galleries	Public galleries of members' finalized contest work
Event Calendar	Upcoming meetings and activities
Contact Us	A way to reach the club

The **Members Only** area contains functions intended for approved current members. Contest submissions, anonymous review, voting, account details, and temporary Meeting Uploads may require you to sign in.

The Contest Archive and Member Galleries are public. You may share those links with family and friends.

Participating and Sharing Images

You decide how actively you want to participate. Good ways to begin include:

- Attend a program and note one technique or idea you want to try.
- Bring questions about cameras, editing, printing, presentation, or composition.
- Submit an image to Share And Tell when a session is announced.
- Join a photo shoot and compare how different photographers interpret the same location.
- Browse the Contest Archive and Member Galleries to become familiar with the club's work.
- Review contest images carefully, even if you did not enter that contest.
- Volunteer when the club requests help with an activity.

When SAT, CRC, or PGM Meeting Uploads are open, use the specific members-only link supplied by the administrator. These temporary images are grouped for the meeting and removed during administrative cleanup; they are not added to your permanent contest gallery.

Why We Hold Contests

Photo contests at Piedmont Photo Club exist first and foremost to encourage growth. Entering a contest means committing to an image — deciding that this photograph is your best work in a given category and standing behind it in front of fellow photographers. That act alone sharpens your eye.

The competition structure also gives you:

- **Honest feedback through voting.** Members vote anonymously, so the results reflect the genuine response of your peers rather than social politeness.
- **A record of your progress.** Every finalized image becomes part of your permanent member gallery on the club website, building a visible history of your photographic journey.
- **A community experience.** Seeing how other members interpret the same theme or category broadens your own creative thinking.

You do not need to win anything to benefit from entering. Consistent participation is the most reliable path to improvement.

The Contest Calendar

The club holds **four regular contests** each year, plus a **Year-End contest** in the summer:

Contest	Approximate Month
Regular Contest 1	October
Regular Contest 2	January
Regular Contest 3	April
Regular Contest 4	July

Year-End Contest	August
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Note on the October contest: Because the Year-End contest draws from a full year of regular contests, October is treated as the start of a new contest year rather than the end of the previous one. So the October, January, April, and July contests form a single group whose winners all feed into the following August's Year-End contest.

Each regular contest runs for several weeks from the submission opening date through to results publication. The administrator will announce each phase by email and by posting on the club website.

Contest formats may include open contests where any subject is allowed, Theme contests where entries must fit the announced theme, special-topic contests such as Nature, print competition, and digital image competition. The annual schedule and any themes or special topics will be announced during the club year.

Competition Levels

Most contest categories are divided into two levels: **Intermediate** and **Advanced**. You compete only against entries submitted at the level you select, which keeps the contest fair and meaningful at every stage of a photographer's development. Depending on your experience and comfort level, you may compete at either level — it is your choice. Use the same level for all of your Intermediate/Advanced entries in a contest.

Intermediate

Intermediate is intended for members who are still developing their technical and compositional skills. New members may choose Intermediate, but they are not automatically assigned to it.

Intermediate photographers compete in categories prefixed **DI** (Digital Intermediate) and **PI** (Print Intermediate).

Advanced

Advanced is intended for photographers with greater technical experience and artistic confidence. Experienced new members may choose Advanced. Members who consistently succeed at the Intermediate level are encouraged — but not required — to move to Advanced.

Advanced photographers compete in categories prefixed **DA** (Digital Advanced) and **PA** (Print Advanced).

ART and THM

The **Altered Reality / Digital Art** (ART) and **Theme** (THM) categories are open to all members regardless of level — Intermediate and Advanced photographers compete together in these two categories.

Contest Categories Explained

Choose either the **Intermediate** or **Advanced** level for all of your Intermediate/Advanced entries in a contest.

Level-based categories

Intermediate	Advanced
DIC — Digital Intermediate Color Digital color photographs	DAC — Digital Advanced Color Digital color photographs
DIB — Digital Intermediate Black & White Digital monochrome photographs	DAB — Digital Advanced Black & White Digital monochrome photographs
PIC — Print Intermediate Color Physical color prints	PAC — Print Advanced Color Physical color prints
PIB — Print Intermediate Black & White Physical monochrome prints	PAB — Print Advanced Black & White Physical monochrome prints

Digital categories are displayed and voted on through the website. Print categories are brought to the meeting and judged in person. Prints should be matted, not framed, and meet the size and check-in requirements announced for that contest. Submit a corresponding JPEG through the website for each print entry so it can be identified and archived.

Categories open to all levels

ART — Altered Reality / Digital Art	THM — Theme
Digital images significantly manipulated or composited beyond conventional photographic processing. Creative composites, painterly treatments, surrealism, and similar work belong here.	A digital image that clearly responds to the theme announced for that contest. Maximum one Theme image per member per contest.

Intermediate and Advanced members compete together in ART and THM. Ordinary tonal adjustments and light retouching do not by themselves make an image ART.

Non-Competitive Categories

Three categories are shown at club meetings for discussion and appreciation but are **not judged or voted on**. They use the separate temporary **Meeting Uploads** workflow rather than the contest submission form. Images in these categories do not count toward your five-image contest limit and cannot earn Honorable Mention or placement awards.

Code	Category	Description
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SAT	Share And Tell	Images members share for informal display, discussion, and appreciation at the meeting.
CRC	Creative	An open creative category for experimental or unconventional work.
PGM	Program	Images related to the subject of the month's program or guest speaker.

When one of these sessions is open, the administrator will provide the Meeting Uploads link and closing date. SAT, CRC, and PGM images do **not** enter contest processing, the anonymous review gallery, the voting ballot, contest results, or permanent member galleries. They are retained temporarily for the meeting and removed when the administrator completes cleanup.

Eligibility and Re-Entering Images

Every contest image must be your own work. The image must be conceived, composed, and photographed by you, and all editing must be completed by you or under your direct supervision. The original photograph must have been captured within the contest eligibility period — currently within the last **three years**.

Submit images without watermarks. Choose a descriptive title or caption that complements the image. You do not need to follow a special filename convention; the contest system names and organizes the image automatically.

By entering, you grant Piedmont Photo Club the right to display the image on the club website. You retain all other rights to your photograph.

The following re-entry rules apply to regular contests:

- An image judged meritorious may not be entered again in another regular club contest.
- A meritorious image becomes eligible for the annual Image of the Year or Best-of-the-Year competition, implemented on the website as the Year-End Contest.
- An image that is not judged meritorious may be entered one more time in a later regular contest.
- An image may be entered no more than **two times total** in regular competition.

Setting Up Your Website Login

The club creates website accounts for current members. Public self-registration is disabled, so do not look for or use a Register page.

Before you participate, the administrator verifies that your account has the correct email address, the **member** role, and approved/active status. You do not need to ask for a temporary password or request an additional setting in the WordPress user directory.

Establish your private password

1. Watch for an introductory message from the club and a separate password-reset message from the club website.
2. The verified production sender is **Piedmont Photo Club** using piedmontphotoclub@piedmontphotoclub.com.
3. Open the newest password-reset message and follow its link.
4. Create a strong password known only to you. The administrator should never ask you to send or reveal it.
5. Sign in at <https://www.piedmontphotoclub.com/login/>.
6. Confirm that you can open the Account page and the members-only contest pages.

Never use or request the placeholder password originally assigned when the account was created. The password-reset process replaces it with your private password.

If the message does not arrive, check Spam, Junk, Promotions, and any provider quarantine. If a reset link is invalid or expired, request help and use only the newest replacement message. Do not repeatedly request reset messages because each new request can invalidate an earlier link.

After changing your password, confirm that the new password works and that the reset link cannot be reused. Contact the club administrator if your email address is wrong, your account is inactive, or you still cannot reach members-only pages.

Submitting Your Images

Contest submission requires your approved member account. Log in through <https://www.piedmontphotoclub.com/login/> before opening the submission page. The system identifies the photographer from the signed-in account; do not submit through another member's login.

How many can you enter?

You may submit up to **five entries total** among the contest's available categories, using either the Intermediate or Advanced level where applicable. No more than **one** entry may be Theme (THM). Non-competitive category images (SAT, CRC, PGM) use Meeting Uploads and do not count toward the contest limit.

File requirements

Item	Guidance
Format	JPEG only (required)
Color space	sRGB recommended for predictable website display

Dimensions	At least 2880 pixels on the longest side recommended
JPEG quality	About 80–85% recommended

The upload validator requires a real JPEG file. It does not reject an otherwise valid JPEG solely because its color profile, pixel dimensions, or saved quality differs from these recommendations. The system automatically creates the additional versions needed for the review gallery, voting ballot, and final results gallery; smaller originals are not enlarged.

Captions

You will be asked to give each image a title (caption). Take this seriously — a good title adds context and can enhance how viewers engage with your image. The title is embedded permanently in your image's metadata and appears in the results gallery alongside your name.

What happens after you submit?

You receive a confirmation email immediately listing the contest, category, caption, and filename. Behind the scenes, the system saves your original file and logs your submission. No further action is needed from you until voting opens.

Submit every entry by the announced deadline. Late, incomplete, or noncompliant entries may be disqualified when necessary to keep the contest on schedule.

The Anonymous Review Gallery

Before or alongside voting, the club opens an **anonymous review gallery** on the website. This gallery shows all submitted images identified only by a sequence number and category — no photographer names are shown.

The purpose of anonymity is to remove social bias from the review process. You can study every image on its own merits without knowing whether it was taken by a new member, a long-time member, or yourself.

How images are ordered: Within each category, the sequence numbers are assigned in a randomised order — no two images by the same photographer appear side by side. This means the order you see in the gallery is neither alphabetical by name nor chronological by submission time.

You can visit the review gallery as many times as you like and on any device while it is open. It remains accessible throughout the voting period.

Voting and Judging

Regular contests are usually judged by club members. Certain contests may instead use a guest judge or a panel of judges, who may use their own methods and criteria unless the announced contest format specifies otherwise.

Online voting (digital categories)

Voting takes place through the club website. You will receive an email with a link to the voting page when voting opens.

How many votes do you have per category?

The number of votes available in each category is proportional to the number of entries:

- **Digital categories** (ART, DAB, DAC, DIB, DIC, THM): approximately **25% of the images entered** in that category, minimum 1 vote
- The ballot enforces the limit automatically — you cannot over-vote

If 12 images were entered in DIB, you would have approximately 3 votes for that category.

Once submitted, your ballot is final. The system records your ballot as irrevocable the moment you click Submit. Take the time to look through the review gallery before committing your choices.

In-person voting (print categories)

Print categories are judged at the club meeting, where members can see and handle the physical prints. Online ballot voting does not apply to print categories.

Winning Criteria — Regular Contests

Honorable Mention

In regular contests, the award is **Honorable Mention (HM)**. There are no 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place designations in regular contests — all winners receive equal recognition as Honorable Mentions.

The number of Honorable Mentions awarded per category is determined by the vote totals and the club's winner percentage guidelines:

- Approximately the **top 25%** of digital entries by vote count receive HM
- Approximately the **top 50%** of print entries (by in-person judging) receive HM

The administrator reviews the vote tallies after voting closes and designates the final Honorable Mentions. The percentages are guidelines; the number selected may vary with the number of entries and the actual vote distribution.

What makes an image an Honorable Mention?

Because voting is conducted by members rather than a single external judge, Honorable Mention reflects the **collective response of your peers** — the images that resonated most broadly across the membership. Members generally respond to images that demonstrate:

- **Technical quality** — sharp focus where intended, appropriate exposure, clean processing

- **Compositional strength** — effective use of framing, leading lines, balance, and visual flow
- **Impact** — an immediate emotional or aesthetic response; the image holds your attention
- **Subject clarity** — a clear primary subject that commands the frame
- **Creativity** — a fresh perspective, unexpected angle, or distinctive interpretation

No single criterion guarantees a win. A technically perfect but ordinary image may receive fewer votes than a slightly imperfect but emotionally striking one. The goal is to make photographs that move people.

Does winning an HM in a regular contest carry forward?

Yes — in two important ways:

1. Your Honorable Mention is embedded permanently in your image's metadata and displayed with a badge in your results gallery and your personal member gallery.
2. Your HM image is automatically entered into the **Year-End Contest** (see below).

The Year-End Contest

What is it?

Each August the club holds its annual Image of the Year or Best-of-the-Year competition, implemented on the website as the **Year-End Contest**. It uses the Honorable Mention winners from all four regular contests held that year. This is the club's most prestigious competition — the best images from the year going head to head for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place in each category.

Do I need to do anything to enter?

No. If you earned an Honorable Mention in any regular contest during the contest year, your winning image is automatically entered into the Year-End contest on your behalf. You do not submit anything.

Who is eligible?

Any member who earned an Honorable Mention in a regular contest during the contest year is automatically entered. This applies to both Intermediate and Advanced levels and to all categories including ART and THM.

Year-End voting — ranked ballots

Year-End voting is different from regular contest voting. Instead of selecting a set of images, you **rank three images per category**:

- Your **1st choice** — the image you consider the best in that category
- Your **2nd choice** — your second favourite
- Your **3rd choice** — your third favourite

You must rank all three positions in every category before your ballot can be submitted (or rank all images in any category that has fewer than three entries). You can adjust your rankings freely until you click Submit.**Scoring:**

Rank	Points
1st choice	3 points
2nd choice	2 points
3rd choice	1 point

Each image accumulates points from all member ballots. The administrator reviews the final scores and designates the winners.

Winning Criteria — Year-End Contest

Awards

In the Year-End contest, three placement awards are given per category:

Award	Description
 First Place	The image with the highest weighted score in the category
 Second Place	The image with the second-highest weighted score
 Third Place	The image with the third-highest weighted score

All three winners receive equal public recognition in the results gallery and in their member gallery, with the placement badge permanently displayed on the image.

At the annual awards event, winning images are announced and viewed, and awards for First, Second, and Third Place in each category are presented. Ties are resolved by awarding additional trophies.

What makes a Year-End winner?

Year-End images have already proven themselves — each one earned Honorable Mention in a regular contest, so they have already demonstrated quality in the eyes of the membership. In the Year-End vote you are being asked to make finer distinctions: among all the images that were good enough to win this year, which are the very best?

Members tend to rank images that:

- **Stand out in memory** — after seeing all the entries in a category, which images stay with you?
- **Show mastery** — images where every technical and artistic decision feels intentional

- **Have a distinctive voice** — a personal perspective or signature quality that sets them apart
- **Reward repeated viewing** — images that reveal more the longer you look at them

Because Year-End contestants have already won once, the bar is higher. An image that won HM comfortably in October may face very strong competition in August from images that won HM in January, April, and July.

Can the same member win multiple places?

Yes. If a member entered multiple regular contests and earned multiple HM awards during the year, they could have more than one image in the Year-End contest — and potentially win multiple placement awards in different categories or even in the same category.

Your Member Gallery

One of the most rewarding features of the club's contest system is the **personal member gallery** on the club website. Every image you submit that is finalized in a contest becomes part of your permanent gallery, building over time into a record of your photographic work with the club.

What does the gallery show?

Your member gallery displays your finalized contest images from the active **rolling multi-year gallery window** (three years by default), grouped and browsable through a full image gallery. Each image shows:

- Your full caption (title)
- The contest and category it was entered in
- A **winner badge** if the image earned an award:
 - *Honorable Mention* — for regular contest winners
 - *1st Place / 2nd Place / 3rd Place* — for Year-End contest winners

How does it get built?

You do not have to do anything. When the administrator finalizes each contest, the system:

1. Writes your name, caption, category, and any winner designation directly into each image file as embedded metadata (both IPTC and XMP standards)
2. Registers your images in the club's WordPress Media Library with full tagging
3. Either creates your personal gallery page (if this is your first contest) or updates it automatically with your new images

Your gallery page is nested under the **Member Galleries** section of the website and is accessible by any website visitor. The URL is based on your name (for example, piedmontphotoclub.com/member-galleries/your-name/).

Three-year rolling window

The gallery uses a rolling contest-year window of approximately three years. Because the contest year starts in October while stored image tags use calendar years, the gallery may query an additional boundary calendar-year tag so October-through-December images are not omitted. Older images remain stored in the system even when they fall outside the active gallery view.

Remember: the contest year begins in October, so the displayed calendar-year span may not match three January-to-December calendar years exactly.

Why does embedded metadata matter?

The metadata written into your image files means your authorship and award information is permanently recorded inside the file itself — not just in a database. If you download an image from the club's Media Library, that file carries your name, caption, category, contest date, and any winner designation wherever it goes. This is standard professional practice (IPTC and XMP are the same metadata standards used by news agencies and stock photo libraries).

Viewing your gallery

1. Go to **Member Galleries** and find your name in the list
2. Select your gallery card, or go directly to your personal gallery page

No login is required to view member galleries. You can share your gallery URL with family, friends, or anyone you would like to show your work to.

Quick Reference

Your First Few Weeks

Task	Where or how
Establish your login	Use the newest website password-reset message
Check upcoming activities	Event Calendar and the latest club email
Read announcements	Club News
Learn about contests	Contests menu and this guide
See members' work	Member Galleries and Contest Archive
Share a discussion image	Use the announced Meeting Uploads link
Ask for help	Ask at a meeting or use Contact Us

Regular Contest at a Glance

Stage	What happens	Action required from you
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Account Setup	Club creates and approves your member account	Use the emailed password-reset link to create your private password, then log in
Submissions Open	Email and post on website	Submit up to five entries total, with no more than one Theme entry, via the website
Submissions Close	Admin closes the form	None
Images Processed	Admin runs image processing	None
Review Gallery Open	Anonymous gallery live on website	Browse entries (optional but recommended)
Voting Open	Email and post on website	Log in and cast your ballot
Voting Closes	Admin closes the ballot	None
Results Published	Email and post on website	View results gallery; your gallery updates automatically

Year-End Contest at a Glance

Stage	What happens	Action required from you
Entries Seeded	Your HM images auto-entered	None — no submission needed
Voting Open	Email and post on website	Log in and cast your ranked ballot (1st / 2nd / 3rd per category)
Results Published	Email and post on website	View results; placement badges added to your member gallery

Categories at a Glance

Code	Full Name	Level	Medium	Competitive
DIC	Digital Intermediate Color	Intermediate	Digital	Yes
DIB	Digital Intermediate Black & White	Intermediate	Digital	Yes
DAC	Digital Advanced Color	Advanced	Digital	Yes
DAB	Digital Advanced Black & White	Advanced	Digital	Yes
ART	Altered Reality / Digital Art	All levels	Digital	Yes

THM	Theme	All levels	Digital	Yes (max 1/contest)
PIC	Print Intermediate Color	Intermediate	Print	Yes (in-person)
PIB	Print Intermediate Black & White	Intermediate	Print	Yes (in-person)
PAC	Print Advanced Color	Advanced	Print	Yes (in-person)
PAB	Print Advanced Black & White	Advanced	Print	Yes (in-person)
SAT	Share And Tell	All levels	Digital	No
CRC	Creative	All levels	Digital	No
PGM	Program	All levels	Digital	No

Award Summary

Contest type	Award	How determined
Regular (digital)	Honorable Mention	Top ~25% by member vote
Regular (print)	Honorable Mention	Top ~50% by in-person judging
Year-End	1st, 2nd, 3rd Place per category	Weighted ranked vote (1st=3pts, 2nd=2pts, 3rd=1pt)

Questions?

Ask questions at a meeting or use the website's **Contact Us** page when you are unsure where to begin. For login problems, identify the email address associated with your membership, but never send anyone your password. For a contest question, include the contest date, category, and the exact message shown on the website.

Welcome to Piedmont Photo Club. We look forward to seeing what you create and to having you participate in the club.