

PPA Competition Jargon

Print Competition seems to have its own language. Merit, Seal, Case... Hopefully this document will help you wade through the jargon being thrown around during competition season! The competition terms are defined below so scroll down if you read something you don't understand.

Print competitions occur at multiple levels. Your city or area could have its own (like PPNEO – Professional Photographers of North East Ohio). Then you could have one or more at a state level (PPO – Professional Photographers of Ohio). Then there's Districts. And after Districts, there's the International Photographic Competition (IPC). You do not have to participate in all or any of them. I personally find that the local and state level competitions are good for testing out images and weeding things out before proceeding to Districts and IPC. You can only earn merits at IPC.

Districts and IPC are the only PPA competitions. The local and State ones are called PPA Affiliated because the organizations putting them on are affiliated to PPA without actually *being* PPA. Images submitted to PPA competitions are uploaded to PPA.com.

You can even enter in competitions for state affiliates you don't belong to. Everybody is happy to take your money and judge your images but most affiliate competitions won't give awards to non-members. The draw for competing in other areas is that they might have several PPA-approved jurors which could give you a more accurate feel for how the images would do at Districts and/or IPC. PPA maintains a list of their approved jurors – you can reference it when you're looking at the judging line-ups: <https://www.ppa.com/events-members/ipc-overview-members>

You do not need to be a PPA member to compete in Districts or IPC. However, only members can earn merits.

READ THE RULES! Every competition can have different rules! Most try to stick close to District and IPC rules but they could deviate. Even District and IPC rules change from year to year so read through everything before entering.

Competition Terms

4/4 – If all four of your images have a score of 80 or above, you have a 4/4 and are eligible for a medal at IPC. Even some of the affiliate competitions that allow more than four images will give awards or recognition for 4 “merit worthy” images.

79 – Ahhh, the dreaded 79. Images that score less than 80 aren't eligible for anything. To be just one point off is sometimes the worst place to be. Especially if your image scored well and then was challenged down to a 79. And if there's no challenge and it goes right to the next image, you have no idea why they didn't like it. That's why you order “critiques” at Districts and IPC.

ASP – American Society of Photographers. Once you receive your first Master's and/or Craftsman Degree, you will be eligible to join ASP. New degree recipients currently get the first year of membership for free. Check out their website for more information on ASP. <https://asofp.com/>

Automatic Challenge – When a judge's score is two or more categories from the average score, the image is subject to an automatic challenge. e.g., final score is 84 (deserving of a merit) but one judge gave it a 90 (superior), that's an automatic challenge. If someone doesn't challenge the score, the Jury Chair will call out “Automatic Challenge” and someone will either volunteer to speak for or against the print or the Jury Chair will pick one of the judges. The judges will all give their feedback and then rescore.

Case – The set of images you submit for competition. District and IPC accept only four images per case. Case size varies per competition. The term is derived from the shipping container used to send physical prints to competition, before the age of digital entries. You can still enter physical prints and it's honestly really nice to see them displayed at the IPC Exhibit during Imaging USA. You'll need to purchase a case to hold all your physical prints and PPA has strict guidelines about what can be used to ship them. Cases are not cheap and are yet another added expense if you're considering entering physical prints in competition. You may hear the phrase, "I hate your case!". That's a good luck phrase in the vein of "Break a leg!"

Categories – Districts and IPC have categories to enter in their three competitions (Photographic Open, Master Artist, Wedding). Most states follow the same categories.

The *Photographic Open Competition* consists of images where all elements have been photographed by the maker (with the exception of Creative Open) and all artwork must have been done by the maker or under direction of the maker. The PO competition is broken down into multiple categories:

Portrait: Consists of portrait (both human and animal)

Illustrative: Consists of commercial/industrial images, scenics, pictorials, digital paintings and similar subject matter. Portraits and weddings are not appropriate for this category

Album: EVENT albums consist of time-sensitive social events, such as celebrations, bar mitzvahs, etc. (but NOT weddings) NON-EVENT albums consist of portrait and storytelling albums

Multi-maker album: Images in the album must be the work of the entrants (up to three), with a minimum of 20 images per entrant. Each entrant must individually enter the competition and pay appropriate entry fees. Multi-maker albums will be judged as one entry

Creative Open (new): Images that use purchased backdrops, either physical or digital, in the creation of the image or stock imagery for part of the portrait. A guide image must be included for any components that you did not photograph. The image is not judged for how well you incorporated the components (unlike in Master Artist) but as an image as a whole.

The *Master Artist Competition* has two categories – Creative and Restoration. If you have created an image using elements that you yourself have not photographed, it must be entered into the Master Artist. Guide images must be included showing all elements used in the creation of the image. You are being judged on your artwork, not your photography skills. But the final image is still being judged by the same 12 elements of a merit image with the additional of "technical difficulty".

There is a new *Wedding Competition*. I assume wedding albums will move here so we'll have Portrait, Wedding Album, and Multi-maker Wedding Album.

Challenge – After the final score is called out, a judge may choose to challenge the score. They'll say what they scored and then give the reasons why they disagreed with the final score. The remaining judges then chime in, one at a time, on why they scored as they did. Once every judge has given their feedback, the Jury chair will call for a rebuttal and then they will rescore. A "Challenge Up" is when the judge challenges because they want the final score to be higher, "Challenge Down" is when the challenge comes because they disagreed with a higher score. The worst (imo) is a Challenge Up that ends up with a lower final score! Images can have multiple challenges if one of the judges is adamant that the final score should be different.

Competition Lighting – Physical prints are viewed under a very specific lighting conditions. The lights are made to replicate even, bright daylight. Physical prints will need to have a high black density in their printing or they

will appear washed out under the bright lights. Several of the professional printing companies offer special printing options for “competition prints”. You can print with your normal printer and then view images outside in bright daylight to try to replicate the viewing conditions. Monitors for the digital prints are carefully calibrated before every competition.

Viewing conditions for images:

- Prints: LED lighting, 3000K, EV8 (ISO 100, f/16@ 1 sec.)
- Digital Files: Monitor Settings, D65, 120 cd/m², 2.20 gamma



Composite – An image that is made up of multiple source elements. In the Photographic Open Competition, all source elements must have been photographed by the maker except for the new Creative Open category. In the Artist Competition, the source files can be stock images but all source files must be listed as guide images on the print.

CPP or Certified – Certified Professional Photographer. These are PPA members who have passed the technical exam on photography and had a portfolio approved by a panel. Certification has nothing to do with print competition. None of the results from IPC impact certification.

Critique – In District and IPC competitions (and some affiliate competitions), you can order a critique of your images. After the competition is complete, a judge will sit down with your image and make a recording of them judging your image. This is a good way to find the weak points in your image so that you can improve in the next competition.

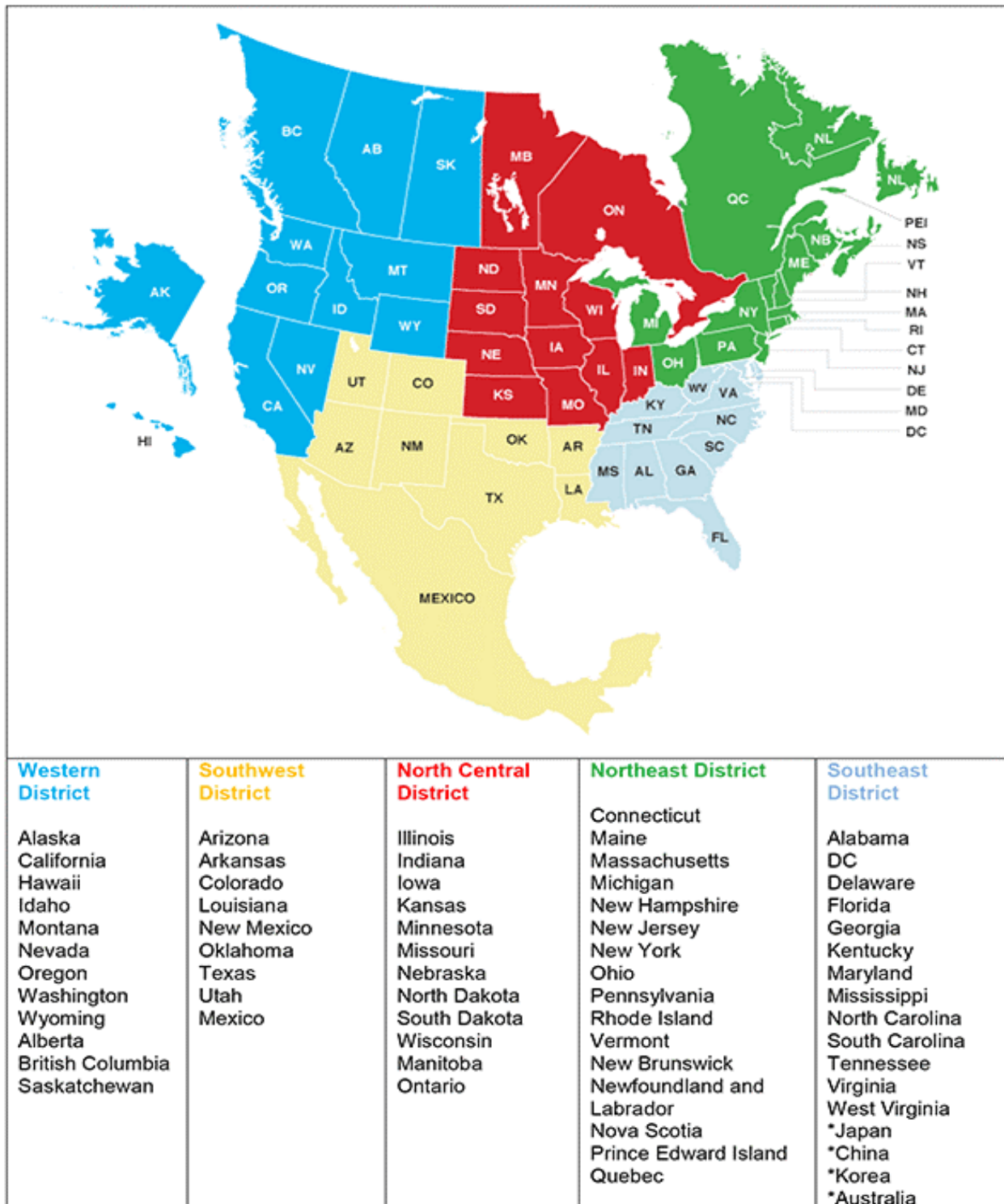
Degrees – PPA offers four Degrees: Master of Photography, Master Artist, Master of Wedding Photography (new), and Photographic Craftsman. The first three require 13 exhibition merits in their respective categories (13 Master Artist exhibition merits for Master Artist, 13 Photographic Open exhibition merits for Master of Photography, 13 Wedding exhibition merits for Master of Wedding Photography) plus 12 additional merits which can be exhibition, speaking, or continuing education merits. The Craftsman Degree is about teaching and giving back to the photographic community so the first 13 merits must be speaking or publishing ones, the remaining 12 can be anything you’d like. Members who have received a degree wear a lanyard and medallion that is color coded: Blue for Craftsman, Yellow for Photography, Red for Artist. The wedding one is new and I don’t think they’ve decided what color. There’s also white for “Master of Electronic Imaging” which is no longer given out as we’ve moved to all things digital. Things get colorful as you earn multiple degrees.



Here's the full list of lanyard colors and awards. <https://www.ppa.com/benefits/education/degrees/gallery-degrees-ribbons-medallions>

Districts – PPA has broken down their membership into different Districts for a District Level Competition prior to IPC. You don't have to enter Districts first in order to enter IPC but there is a significant price break on IPC if you did. You can also Seal images at your District competition so that they can skip the first set of judging at IPC.

International Photographic Competition District Map



*Asia Pacific District (not pictured): Japan, China, Korea and Australia. Those in the Asia Pacific District should enter the Southeast District Competition.

DQ – If a judge recognizes the maker of an image, they are to recuse themselves or disqualify themselves – DQ will appear on the list of scores. The judge has to absolutely know who created that image – maybe they've critiqued it or helped work on it. They should not DQ just because the style is similar and they THINK they know the maker. The jury chair will sit in for that judge and provide their own score. If more than one judge disqualifies themselves, the image will move to a different judging panel. For affiliate competitions where there may be a smaller number of judges and no other judging panels, they will score with whomever is left.

Elite and Elite Plus Member – You automatically qualify for Elite status when you meet the following requirements by 12/31 of each year:

- You're a Certified Professional Photographer
- You've already earned a Master of Photography or Master Artist degree
- You scored 4/4 on images from a single case from the most recent IPC (bronze, silver, gold, platinum, or diamond)
- You earned 2 non-photographic merits that year
- And you're a PPA member in good standing

Benefits of being a PPA Elite Member

- Elite PPA Membership Certificate
- FREE registration to pre-convention programming at Imaging USA!
- NO renewal fee for your CPP if your CPP renewal is that year
- Elite Member ribbon at Imaging USA
- The prized Elite PPA membership Silver card
- A special Elite lanyard for your badge at Imaging USA

You automatically qualify for Elite Plus status when you meet the following requirements by 12/31 of each year:

- You're a Certified Professional Photographer
- You've already earned a Master of Photography or Master Artist degree
- You also have your Photographic Craftsman degree
- You have scored 4 for 4 on images from a single case from previous year's IPC (bronze, silver, gold, platinum, or diamond)
- You have gotten 2 or more Loan Collection images from the same case from the most recent IPC (gold, platinum, or diamond)
- You earned two non-photographic merits that year
- And you're a PPA member in good standing

Benefits of being a PPA Elite Plus member:

- The prized Elite Plus PPA membership Gold card
- Your Elite Plus PPA Membership Certificate
- FREE registration to pre-convention programming at Imaging USA!
- FREE registration to Imaging USA!
- NO renewal fee for your CPP if your CPP renewal is that year
- Elite Plus Member ribbon at Imaging USA
- A special Elite Plus lanyard for your badge at Imaging USA

Full Bleed – An image that extends to the very edge of the page. An image with no mat.

General Collection – Images that score above 80 and do not make it into the Loan Collection are part of the PPA General Collection for that year.

GIA – Grand Imaging Awards. Both Districts and IPC have awards that are given to the three best images in GIA categories. To make things more confusing, the GIA categories are not the same as the competition categories. When you upload your images on PPA.com, it will ask you which GIA category you want to enter. The categories are:

- Animal Portrait
- Children's Portrait
- General Portrait
- Landscape and Nature
- Illustrative and Commercial
- Creative Open
- High-School Senior Portrait
- Wedding
- Non-Event Album
- Event Album
- Artist
- Restoration

The judging rules for GIAs have changed several times. At the moment, the top 10 highest scoring images in a category are put before a panel of jurors and they pick the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place favorites in that category. It has also been judged entirely by score in the past, with jurors breaking ties.

Golden Corners – Images that score 80 or above at IPC will receive a golden corner. PPA will send you individual files of your high-scoring images, their title, your name, and a golden corner that says whether it's part of the General or the Loan Collection.

PPA 126th Annual Exhibition
Nashville, TN 2018

LOAN COLLECTION
Professional Photographers of America

Danica Barreau
My Fairy Dogmother



Guide Image – if you are submitting an image in the Master Artist competition, you must show the elements used to compose your image. If you are submitting an image into the Creative Open category, you must show the purchased photographed element (backdrop, floordrop, prop) that was used in your image.

Example Artist submissions showing the guide images:



IPC – International Photographic Competition.

IPC Medals – Competitors who score 80 and above on all four of their images at IPC are eligible for a medal (well, it's actually a pin that attaches to a lanyard).

- Bronze – 4 images in the General Collection

- Silver – 3 images in the General Collection and 1 in the Loan Collection
- Gold – 2 images in the General Collection and 2 in the Loan Collection
- Platinum – 1 image in the General Collection and 3 in the Loan Collection
- Diamond – 4 images in the Loan Collection



It's Been Said – A common phrase heard on the judging panel during a challenge. The judge is saying that another judge has already made their point(s) and they don't feel the need to say it again.

Judging Panel – A judging panel for PPA Districts and IPC consists of five PPA-Approved Jurors and a Jury Chair. There are multiple panels judging simultaneously in different rooms. Images that have multiple DQs will move to be judged by a different panel. Local and State competitions must have a minimum of three jurors, preferably with at least one PPA-Approved Juror and some JITs. There is no requirement as to the type of jurors but participation numbers are higher if the folks entering are confident that the scores they're getting reflect experienced judges. Local and State competitions have a single judging panel.

Judging School - Where people go to learn techniques and practice judging, not a place to learn what the judges in IPC are looking for.

Juror or Judge or Affiliate Judge – A PPA-Approved Juror is a Master Photographer who has completed the required training set out by the Juror Review Committee, including attending the Judges Workshop Class, judging at 4 PPA-approved judging sites and receiving reviews from other PPA Approved Jurors at those events. Once they have completed the judging and review process, a Juror in Training will submit an application along with a portfolio of their work to be reviewed by the committee. In addition to the application and images, they must submit 4 video critiques of images preselected by the committee. If all of these requirements meet the level of excellence set by the Juror Review Committee, an applicant may be approved. All PPA jurors, once on the list, are reviewed by the committee on a regular basis. There are 3 types of jurors on the list: Photographic Open, Wedding Specialist and Artist Specialist. PPA maintains a list of approved jurors on their website: <https://www.ppa.com/events-members/ipc-overview-members>

Juror or Judge In Training or JIT – This is a Master Photographer who is working towards his PPA Approved Juror designation. They've done the workshop class and are doing live training at affiliate events.

Jury Chair or JC – During competition judging, there is a Jury Chair assigned. They will read the image titles as they come up, read out the final score, and manage any discussion or challenges as well as reminding the judges of various rules and managing time.

Loan Judging or Collection – Images that seal with scores of 85 or above at Districts or that earn 85 or above at IPC, will be eligible for a second round of judging at IPC to see if they'll join IPC's Loan Collection. The second round of judging is in or out. The image either joins the collection or stays in the General Collection. Images that score 95 or above do not go through Loan Judging – they automatically join the Loan Collection. Loan images will also be printed in the Loan Collection Book printed by Marathon Press.

----- Images scoring 95 or above are automatic "Loan" images

94 - 90: Superior
 89 - 85: Excellent

----- An image scoring 85 or above is eligible for Loan judging

84 - 80: Deserving of a Merit

----- A "Merit" image scores 80 or above

79 - 75: Above Average
 74 - 70: Average
 69 - 65: Below Exhibition Standards

MA – Master Artist Competition

Majority Challenge - When the majority of judges vote for the merit and 1 or 2 judges are holding it back, OR the majority of jurors voted against the merit and 1 or 2 judges are keeping it in the merit category, the image will be an automatic Majority Challenge. In both cases the jurors will discuss the image and then rescore.

Maker – The person who creates an image is referred to as "The Maker" during judging.

Mat – All images should have a border that resembles a physical mat. This is not required but it is highly encouraged and should only be ignored if the Maker is adamant that the image is improved by not having any matting.

Medallions or Bars – Medallions or Bars are given to PPA members who have gone above and beyond after earning their degrees.

- Imaging Excellence Medallion – Awarded to members who hold a Master of Photography, Master Artist, or Master of Wedding Photography degree and who have a minimum of 13 images accepted into the PPA Loan Collection.
- Imaging Excellence Bar – Awarded to those who already have an Imaging Excellence Award and go on to earn an additional 13 Loan Collection images. Members will continue to earn bars for every additional 13 Loans.
- Plus 25 Bar – Members earn one Plus 25 merit bar for every additional 25 merits earned beyond those required for any one degree.
- IPC 50 Bar – This one is for members who earn a total of 50 exhibition/artist merits including those needed for the degree.
- 1000 Merits Bar – Members who earn a total of 1000 merits including those needed for a degree.
- Education 100 Bar – Members who earn 100 merits for speaking/teaching including those needed for a degree.



Merit – PPA gives credits or merits for images that score well in their IPC competition. These merits are used towards earning PPA’s four degrees. Images that score 80 or above earn one merit. Images that score 85 and

above are judged a second time at IPC for the Loan Collection. If they make it, they will earn a second merit. You can only earn a merit at IPC. **If you seal an image at Districts, you still have to submit it to IPC to get the merit(s).**

Merit Image – an image that scores 80 or above at IPC. This term is often used in the affiliate state competitions and PPA Districts but technically, only images entered at IPC can earn a merit. That's why you often hear the term "worthy of a merit" rather than "merit image".

Mounting – Physical prints must be mounted for viewing. Mounting options are:

- double weight mat board
- gator board
- ¼" foam
- Sintra

Recommended mounting thickness is 1/8" to 3/8". "Float" mounting is accepted at entrant's risk for damage. Images on metal and mounted to another standard material must have rounded corners and smooth edges. No mount that could potentially damage other entries or pose a danger to print handlers will be accepted. Masonite, glass, stretcher frames or conventional frames will not be accepted.

Physical Print with Digital Reference – District and IPC images that are submitted as physical prints must also have a digital reference image. If you put a physical mat on your image, you must replicate it digitally. Physical prints that have reference images that don't match the prints being judged will be disqualified. You will upload your reference image to PPA.com and be provided with label information for the back of your print when you ship it to Georgia.

PO – Photographic Open Competition

Presentation – The color, stroke size, and stroke color on mats, the type of paper for physical prints – all of these are part of the presentation for an image. That mat should enhance the image. An image can be submitted without a mat but majority of images benefit from a mat.

Rebuttal – Once all the judges have provided their feedback after a challenge, the Jury Chair will go back to the original challenger for a Rebuttal so that he can address all the points his fellow judges have brought up during the challenge. They will then rescore the image.

Rotate – Every 30 minutes the Jury Chair will have the judges rotate to different seats so that they can stretch and get a different viewpoint of the screen or print.

Seal of Approval or Sealed Image – images that score 80 or above in **your** District are sealed with that score. You can then submit them to IPC and they will not be re-judged – they will keep that same score and earn merit(s). You can choose to break the seal and have the image re-judged at IPC and hope for a higher score. Statistics show that 1/3 of images score higher, 1/3 stay the same, and 1/3 drop in score. Breaking a seal is not done lightly. It is generally recommended that you don't break a seal until you have your Master's degree. Even after that, it should only be done after serious consideration.

Showcase Collection – A certain percentage of the highest scoring images in the General Collection will move to the Showcase Collection. Results come out after IPC judging is complete. Showcase images will be printed in the Showcase Collection Book by Marathon Press.

Turd Polishing – Last but not least... this fun term refers to someone try to make improvements to an image that just isn't going to go far. The maker has to know when to move on to a different image.

Any edits or requests for additional terms should go to Danica Barreau (info@pouka.com or FB PM) of Pouka Art & Photography.