

Dates + Deadlines

DATE	MILESTONE
08/01/26	Online submissions open
10/01/26	Online submissions close
12/01/26	Results and finalists personally notified
12/18/26	Private critiques available
12/18/26	Physical print entry submissions open (for finalists only)
01/30/27	Physical print entry submissions close (for finalists only)
02/12/27	Physical print entries delivery deadline
02/28/27 + 03/01/27	Live judging
03/02/27	Awards night ceremony

The gallery of winners from the online competition and the print of the year award winners will be live on iconawards.com as soon as possible after the awards night ceremony on March 2, 2027.

Public critiques will also be made available at this time.

Divisions + Categories

WEDDING DIVISION

Couple Together: Wedding Day
Bride or Groom Alone: Wedding Day
Wedding Party / Family and Friends
Photojournalism: Wedding

PRE-WEDDING DIVISION

Couple Together: Non-Wedding Day
Bride or Groom Alone: Non-Wedding Day
Models: Non-Wedding Day

IN-CAMERA ARTISTRY DIVISION

Wedding: In-Camera
Open: In-Camera

PORTRAIT DIVISION

Maternity
Newborn + Baby
Children
Teenager
Individual
Group + Families
Boudoir + Fine Art Nude – Commissioned
Boudoir + Fine Art Nude – Non Commissioned
Animals + Pets
Portrait Narrative

CREATIVE DIVISION

Wedding Creative
Pre-Wedding Creative
Portrait Creative Individual
Portrait Creative Group
Fashion + Beauty
Open Creative

Competition Pricing

Online Entries	Public Critique	Private Critique	Print Entry
Digital competition entry *\$50/each <u>*Early Bird Quantity Discount</u> (available until September 1) 2 for \$45 each (save \$10) 3 for \$40 each (save \$30) 4 or more for \$35 each (save \$60+)	A recorded video critique of your entry available on iconawards.com \$20/each	A recorded video critique of your entry for your eyes only \$25/each	16x20 print entries (<u>for finalists only</u>) \$50/each

General Rules

ENTERING

Past entries into the Icon Awards, WPPI competition or Portrait Masters Awards cannot be entered again regardless of the score.

There is no limit to the number of entries one can submit.

There are no time restrictions on when your photograph was captured.

Your top 4 scoring entries will contribute to your Honors of Excellence designation and accreditation points.

No entry shall resemble any other of your entries too closely and/or look similar to an entry in previous years. Each entry shall be unique to your other submissions. The only exception to this rule is for entries into the In-Camera Artistry division. Images in other divisions may also be entered in an In-Camera Artistry category.

CAPTURE

All entries in their entirety must have been captured/photographed by the entrant.

Historical photos or artistic elements not created by the artist that are visible in an entry are allowed if they are used only to provide context to a story or theme without misrepresenting them as the entrant's work.

No images taken at a workshop, seminar, or under the guidance of an instructor are eligible to be entered into the competition. Only photos created by the instructor may be entered in the appropriate category.

A shadow or part of a dress or suit on one's person constitutes a person. (e.g., An image of a groom with a shadow of a bride must be entered into the Couple Together: Wedding Day category. An image of a groom with part of a bride's veil must also be entered in the Couple Together: Wedding Day category (even if the bride is not completely visible.)

AI TECHNOLOGY

Images created or enhanced using AI tools are strictly prohibited when they misrepresent AI-generated content as the entrant's own work. AI must not be used to generate any image, person, scene, element, object, or backdrop (whether projected or printed) that did not physically exist or was not created by the entrant. AI tools that beautify, correct, and represent a finessed version of the original capture are allowed. All entries must be entirely photographed and captured by the entrant.

Entrants who enter an image created exclusively with AI technology and that break the above rule will be disqualified and may be banned from entering the Icon Awards indefinitely.

POSTPRODUCTION

All processing, manipulation, and printing or rendering must be done by the entrant or under the entrant's direct supervision and explicit instruction.

Each entry must be 100% photographic in origin and captured by the entrant, with few exceptions. Global texture screens are allowed on images except in the Wedding Photojournalism category. Non-photographic filters and actions produced by third parties that enhance characteristics of an image but do not add elements

or significantly change the intent or content of an image are permitted in all divisions except the Wedding Photojournalism category.

Minimal use of non-photographic elements like text, patterns and frames are permitted in all divisions except the Wedding Photojournalism category. Excessive use of these elements may need to be entered into the Creative division. Use of stock images or AI-generated imagery of any kind is prohibited. That includes skies, clouds, props, a tree, a building, illustrations, etc., or any element not created by the entrant.

Other elements such as overlays may be allowed in a non-creative division, provided they are used only in the background and do not alter the three-dimensional nature or environment of the subject. For example, these elements can be incorporated into a backdrop as if the subject were standing in front of a canvas or a virtual spotlight on a background but cannot be used to place the subject in a different or simulated environment.

If an entry consists of a series of images, each image must be digitally framed separately to be entered into one of the non-Creative divisions. If a series of images are framed separate, this will not be considered to be a composite and therefore can be entered into the Wedding, Pre-Wedding and Portrait Divisions. Composites must be entered into the Creative Division.

IMPORTANT: Please see the division rules below for specific postproduction requirements for categories in that division.

VETTING AND VERIFICATION

The vetting and verification process has been created to protect the entrants and maintain the integrity of the competition. This is why uploading the RAW file or unedited JPG with your entry is mandatory. You may be asked to explain your creative process or send us additional images taken before and/or after the image entered. Failure to promptly respond to all verification requests may result in re-categorization of the entry or disqualification.

ELIGIBILITY TO ENTER THE ICON INTERNATIONAL PRINT OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The top ten scoring entries of each category in the digital competition (with scores of 80+) will be invited to enter the Icon International Print of the Year Awards (a separate competition and process from this one), which will be held at the annual WPPI convention in March of 2027. Entry into the annual print awards is not mandatory and does not affect your Honors of Excellence designation.

DISQUALIFICATION

No name, logo, or watermark identifying the entrant may be visible anywhere on your entry.

If an entry does not meet the specific requirements for a category, Icon Awards will always do everything possible to move the entry to a different category instead of disqualifying that entry. Whenever possible, Icon Awards will inform the entrant of such a move.

Icon Awards reserves the right to disqualify any entry deemed inappropriate or does not conform to the competition's rules as stated herein. Violators will have their entry or entries removed from the competition. Repeated or severe ethics violations will result in entrants being removed from the competition, stripped of any prizes and awards, loss of points, titles, and/or banned from entering future competitions.

Entries may not include obscene, provocative, defamatory, sexually explicit, or otherwise objectionable or inappropriate content.

Reasons for an automatic disqualification include an entry that in any way identifies the creator, plagiarized entries, inappropriate content, violation of general, division, or category rules, or AI-generated imagery.

PLAGIARISM

Entries knowingly or subconsciously created that imitate or plagiarize another work of art will be disqualified. Emulating a popularized or established pose or style or the reinterpreting an existing concept will not be considered plagiarism. Copying a current or historical photograph, commercial, or advertisement utilizing all or the majority of the visual elements and content is potentially plagiarism unless the entry is represented with a different concept, execution, or technique.

Rules may be changed or modified without notice.

Although Icon Awards has made every effort to list and explain the rules, it would be impossible to include every possible scenario. If you have a question prior to submitting your entry, please contact info@iconawards.com

Division + Category Specific Rules

WEDDING DIVISION

The Wedding division is for commissioned photographs of real couples on their actual wedding day or union or vow renewal. We understand some multicultural weddings last several days, and images are also allowed from the events over those days. Second or associate photographers may enter images only if it was not directed, organized, or posed by the principal photographer.

Postproduction Rules for the Wedding Division

The following rules apply to all of the categories in the wedding division except the Wedding Photojournalism category. (Please see the category definition below for specific rules for Wedding Photojournalism.)

Entries into the Wedding Division may include post-production that complements the original intent of the capture. Tools that beautify, correct, and represent a refined version of the original capture are permitted.

Composites are not permitted in this division and must be entered into the Wedding Creative category within the Creative Division, except as outlined below.

The following techniques are permitted in this division: HDR, where multiple exposures of the same subject matter are blended solely to extend dynamic range by combining exposure values; focus stacking; in-camera multiple exposures; and corrective head, face, or body swaps used only to correct minor issues, such as blinks, closed eyes, subjects looking away from the camera, or similar inadvertent imperfections. Such corrective swaps must not materially alter the authenticity, content, or intent of the original capture.

Composite lighting techniques, where multiple photographs are combined to build or alter the lighting of a scene (for example, lighting different members of a bridal party separately and compositing the exposures into a single image), are considered creative composites and must be entered into the Wedding Creative category.

Removing lights, stands, assistants, or other temporary photographic equipment used during the capture is permitted.

If an entry contains post-production that alters the reality of the original capture, it must be entered into the Wedding Creative category, even if it is not a composite. Examples include digital painting, unrealistic extensions of a veil, multiplying people or objects, unrealistic mirroring of part or all of an image, or extending a background beyond what is reasonably required to complete or correct the original scene.

WEDDING CATEGORIES

Couple Together: Wedding Day

Couples featured on their wedding day or during a vow renewal.

Bride or Groom Alone: Wedding Day

Photos featuring a bride or groom by themselves on their wedding day or during a vow renewal.

Wedding Party / Family and Friends

Wedding parties, families, and friends captured on the wedding day or during a vow renewal.

Photojournalism

Undirected candid wedding images with limited postproduction photographed on a wedding day or during a vow renewal.

ADDITIONAL RULES FOR THE WEDDING PHOTOJOURNALISM CATEGORY

In addition to what is covered under the Wedding Division rules above, the following is allowed in the Wedding Photojournalism category:

- Single capture
- Non-manipulative processing
- Cropping
- Conversion to black and white or sepia
- Removal of sensor spots
- Broad dodging, burning, vignettes

The following are not allowed in the Wedding Photojournalism division:

- A candid or spontaneous moment that unfolded during or after a direction or interference by the photographer (in the same scene), is not allowed in this category.
- Manipulation of pixels
- Liquify, cloning or healing tool (Sensor spot exception)
- Content aware
- Perspective control
- Lens correction
- Warping or skewing
- Split or excessive toning
- Localized sharpening, dodging or burning

PRE-WEDDING DIVISION

The Pre-Wedding Division is for wedding-styled photos taken before or after the wedding day, including but not limited to engagement sessions, destination wedding sessions, styled shoots, or any wedding-style images taken with models. Images in this category may be commissioned or self-commissioned.

Postproduction Rules for the Pre-Wedding Division

Entries into the Pre-Wedding Division may include post-production that complements the original intent of the capture. Tools that beautify, correct, and represent a refined version of the original capture are permitted.

Composites are not permitted in this division and must be entered into the Pre-Wedding Creative category within the Creative Division, except as outlined below.

The following techniques are permitted in this division: HDR, where multiple exposures of the same subject matter are blended solely to extend dynamic range by combining exposure values; focus stacking; in-camera multiple exposures; and corrective head, face, or body swaps used only to correct minor issues, such as blinks, closed eyes, subjects looking away from the camera, or similar inadvertent imperfections. Such corrective swaps must not materially alter the authenticity, content, or intent of the original capture.

Composite lighting techniques, where multiple photographs are combined to build or alter the lighting of a scene (for example, lighting different members of a bridal party separately and compositing the exposures into a single image), are considered creative composites and must be entered into the Wedding Creative category.

Removing lights, stands, assistants, or other temporary photographic equipment used during the capture is permitted.

If an entry contains post-production that alters the reality of the original capture, it must be entered into the Pre-Wedding Creative category, even if it is not a composite. Examples include digital painting, unrealistic extensions of a veil, multiplying people or objects, unrealistic mirroring of part or all of an image, or extending a background beyond what is reasonably required to complete or correct the original scene.

Couple Together: Non-Wedding Day

An engaged or married couple wearing wedding, formal, or casual attire captured before the wedding or within one month afterward.

Bride or Groom Alone: Non-Wedding Day

Bride or groom individually captured before the wedding or within one month afterward.

Models: Non-Wedding Day

Model (individual or couple) wearing wedding or evening wear during a fashion, editorial, or promotional photoshoot for wedding and pre-wedding photography

PORTRAIT DIVISION

The Portrait Division includes commissioned and self-commissioned traditional, corporate, travel, creative and interpretive portraiture.

Portrait entries must originate from the photograph of a living human or animal. Images that merely imply the presence of a human or animal, without one having been photographed, are not eligible in this division.

Postproduction Rules for the Portrait Division

Entries into the Portrait Division may include post-production that complements the original intent of the capture. Tools that beautify, correct, and represent a refined version of the original capture are permitted.

Composites are not permitted in this division and must be entered into the appropriate category in the Creative Division except as outlined below.

The following techniques are permitted in this division: HDR, where multiple exposures of the same subject matter are blended solely to extend dynamic range by combining exposure values; focus stacking; in-camera multiple exposures; and corrective head, face, or body swaps used only to correct minor issues, such as blinks, closed eyes, subjects looking away from the camera, or similar inadvertent imperfections. Such corrective swaps must not materially alter the authenticity, content, or intent of the original capture.

Composite lighting techniques, where multiple photographs are combined to build or alter the lighting of a scene (for example, lighting different subjects separately and compositing the exposures into a single image), are considered creative composites and must be entered into the appropriate category in the Creative Division.

Removing lights, stands, assistants, or other temporary photographic equipment used during the capture is permitted.

If an entry contains post-production that alters the reality of the original capture, it must be entered into the Creative Division, even if it is not a composite. Examples include digital painting, multiplying people or objects, unrealistic mirroring of part or all of an image, or extending a background beyond what is reasonably required to complete or correct the original scene.

Maternity

Celebrating pregnancy, including women individually or with a group.

Newborn + Baby

Portraits of infants under 1 years old individually or with a group.

Children

Featuring children from 1 to 12 years old, including group shots with multiple children that are 12 years old or younger.

Teenager

Featuring teenagers from 13 to 19 years old, including group shots with multiple teens that are 13 to 19 years old or younger.

Individual

A single subject at least 20 years old.

Group + Families

Honoring relationships between 2 or more people where at least one of the subjects is at least 20 years old.

Boudoir + Fine Art Nude – Commissioned (real paying clients)

This category may include nudes of individuals and couples from all genders, including semi-nudes, implied nudes, stylized nudes, and subjects in lingerie that are consistent with the boudoir genre. Maternity style boudoir must be entered in the Maternity category.

Boudoir + Fine Art Nude – Non-Commissioned (unpaid and/or self-commissioned)

This category may include nudes of individuals and couples from all genders, including semi-nudes, implied nudes, stylized nudes, and subjects in lingerie that are consistent with the boudoir genre. Maternity style boudoir must be entered in the Maternity category.

Animals + Pets

Features all animals, mammals, and insects with or without a human subject.

Portrait Narrative

Featuring story-driven images of people of a photojournalistic or editorial nature, which may include birth, sports, travel, street photography, concerts, and non-wedding events.

CREATIVE DIVISION

The Creative division provides license to illustrate subjects, objects, and ideas for personal or commissioned work. Images may be representative, impressionistic, or abstract, with few limitations in postproduction.

Please note that this is the only division where you may use composites to **change the reality of an image**.

This division may include the use of non-photographic elements like text, patterns, and frames. No stock imagery of any kind is allowed. That includes skies, clouds, props, a tree, a building, illustrations, etc., or any element not created by the entrant.

Images created or enhanced using AI tools are strictly prohibited when they misrepresent AI-generated content as the entrant's own work. AI must not be used to generate any image, person, scene, element, object, or backdrop (whether projected or printed) that did not physically exist or was not created by the entrant.

Wedding Creative

Wedding images on the wedding day.

Pre-Wedding Creative

Pre-wedding images or wedding-styled photos taken before the wedding day or within one month afterward.

Portrait Creative Individual

Portrait images of one subject of any kind, including people or animals.

Portrait Creative Group

Portrait images of two or more subjects of any kind, including people or animals.

Fashion + Beauty

Images where the focus is on the face and/or clothes and/or hair and/or makeup and/or accessories. This category is more about the aesthetic than who people are.

Open Creative

Think of this category of things that don't have a heartbeat. These entries can include interpretations of outdoor and indoor spaces (land, sea, or sky - natural or manmade), modes of transport including planes, trains, automobiles, objects, and wedding/non-wedding details and décor that are realistic, impressionistic, pictorial or abstract. To be in this category, the human form must be a subordinate visual element of the entry. If a human's expression is apparent in an entry, it must be entered into one of the other categories in this division.

IN-CAMERA ARTISTRY DIVISION

This category promotes in-camera artistry with images straight out of the camera with no raw adjustments, retouching, and postproduction. Postproduction and adjustments of any kind to the file, in or out of the camera, is not permitted. Entrants may only enter a RAW file with an accompanying non-manipulated jpg from the RAW file. Images entered in other divisions may also be entered in an In-Camera Artistry category. There is no limit on the number of entries that can be entered into both the In-Camera Artistry categories and other divisions.

Wedding: In-Camera

Wedding, pre-wedding, wedding details or wedding-styled photos.

Open: In-Camera

Images created of any non-wedding subject matter.

Image File Specification

DIGITAL FILE SPECIFICATIONS FOR YOUR PRINT ENTRY

Format: You must upload two files:

- (1) A final retouched edited JPG at 3000px on the longest length at 300ppi
- (2) the RAW file or unedited JPG (No DNG files are permitted)

NOTE: If you do not have the RAW file or unedited JPG for your entry, you cannot enter it into the competition.

Multiple RAW files: When entering categories within the Creative Division where multiple images are used, you can upload multiple raw/unedited files for verification purposes in addition to your final edited jpeg.

File Naming: Irrelevant. You can name it anything you'd like. This will not be visible during the judging.

Image Titles: You may add a title to your image during the upload process, though it's not required. Titles can provide context, cultural significance, or artistic insight, and must be no more than just a few words long. However, titles must not intentionally mislead the judges unless the image is clearly fictional or interpretive in nature.

In-Camera Artistry: When entering the In-Camera Artistry categories, RAW files must be entered with an accompanying unedited exported jpeg from the RAW file.

Color Mode: RGB color mode (even for black-and-white images)

Color Profile: sRGB (Untagged space for color profiles is also acceptable.)

ADDITIONAL TIPS ON PREPARING YOUR FILES:

Ensuring accurate color representation across various devices and monitors when producing web content can be challenging due to differences in hardware, settings, and environmental conditions. While it's difficult to guarantee absolute accuracy on all devices, you can take several steps to improve the likelihood that the colors you see on your monitor closely match what the judges will see:

1. Use a Standard Color Profile:

Work within the sRGB color space, which is widely supported by web browsers and devices. Designing with sRGB in mind helps minimize color variations across different displays.

2. Calibrate Your Monitor:

Calibrating your monitor using hardware or software tools will provide a baseline for accurate color representation. This ensures that your monitor displays colors as close to real life as possible. Adjust the color temperature to a neutral setting (usually around 6500K or "D65"). This helps ensure that your screen displays colors similar to natural daylight.

Remember that while these steps can help minimize color variations, it's impossible to control every aspect of how your images are viewed. However, by following these practices and maintaining a focus on standard color spaces, you can significantly improve the chances of accurate color representation across various devices.

Terms + Conditions

1. CONTEST DESCRIPTION:

The Icon Awards is a photography competition based on skill. Entrants must purchase an entry and submit their work in the form requested. The winner or winners will be selected by a panel of photography experts in a specific genre, as outlined below.

2. CONTEST PERIOD:

The Icon Awards is a yearly competition. The dates are subject to change and will be announced on the Icon Awards website at www.iconawards.com. Entrants may begin submitting entries into the competition on August 1, 2026. The deadline for submitting entries is October 1, 2026, at 11:59pm PT. No entries will be permitted after this deadline.

3. ELIGIBILITY:

Open to persons who are 18 years old or older (or the age of majority in their jurisdictions of residence). Owners and employees of the Icon Awards, and of any sponsoring organization, are ineligible to enter the competition or receive awards. The competition is void where prohibited or restricted by law. If you are prohibited from entering contests in your jurisdiction of residence, you may not enter Icon Awards. Subject to all federal, state, local, and municipal laws and regulations.

4. GENERAL RULES:

The step-by-step guide to submitting an entry into the contest is outlined at www.iconawards.com. Entries not submitted directly via this website and following the proper channels will be disqualified.

Each submitted entry, in its entirety, must be a single work of original material taken by the entrant.

By entering the competition, the entrant represents, acknowledges, and warrants that they have full power and authority to enter the photograph. The entrant also represents that they have obtained all appropriate releases from the subject or subjects, sculptures, statues, works of art, and for any elements appearing in the entry. Entrant acknowledges that the entry does not infringe copyright or violate other intellectual property rights.

Entrant acknowledges that no entry or part of an entry includes stock images or elements that belong to someone else.

The entrant agrees to indemnify Icon Awards from any and all third-party claims arising from using the photograph in the competition.

Entries may not reference any commercial or corporate advertising, including corporate logos, brand names, etc.

Icon Awards reserves the right to move an entry to a different category if necessary, according to the category rules and to protect the integrity of the competition.

Icon Awards reserves the right to disqualify any entry deemed inappropriate or does not conform to the competition's rules as stated herein. This includes any entries that contain obscene, provocative, defamatory, sexually explicit, promote bigotry, discrimination, racism, hatred, harm against any individual or group, or otherwise objectionable or inappropriate content. Nor should entries contain hateful, disparaging or libelous remarks about Icon Awards or its sponsors. Such entries will be disqualified.

Entrants that are in violation of these rules will have their entry or entries removed from the competition.

Repeated or severe ethics violations will result in entrants being removed from the competition, stripped of any prizes and awards, loss of points, titles, and/or banned from entering future competitions. Entries that are disqualified will not be eligible for a refund.

All decisions of the judges and Icon Awards are final and not subject to appeal. Each entrant understands that they retain their copyright for their entry. By submitting an entry, the entrant also grants Icon Awards and its sponsors, designees, licensees, and affiliates a non-exclusive, worldwide license in perpetuity to reproduce, distribute, display, and post the entries online. In addition, each winner grants Icon Awards, its sponsors, designees, licensees, and affiliates a license for the use of their entry to promote the competition in any media, including but not limited to print or digital publication showcasing the winners and promotions related to the competition. Icon Awards will not be required to pay any additional consideration or seek further approval regarding such use. Any prizes awarded will be listed explicitly on the Icon Awards website. All prizes must be received by the winning entrant and is non-transferable. No substitutions of prizes or considerations will be allowed unless a sponsor determines they must substitute a prize of comparable value if the prize listed is unavailable for any reason.

Icon Awards and its sponsors shall not be obligated to use any entry on its website or to promote future competitions. Entrants shall not be entitled to any damages or other relief by reason thereof. Icon Awards and its sponsors are not responsible for any technical, hardware, or software malfunctions or failures of any kind resulting in an entrant's inability to submit their work before the deadline. Icon Awards will always take the utmost care in handling all entries. However, Icon Awards is not responsible for any lost, late, stolen, misdirected, or damaged entries.

Rules may be changed or modified without notice.

5. WINNER NOTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION:

Potential winners will be contacted via phone or email that was provided at the time of Entry. The entrant may be required to confirm the veracity of their images by providing releases or confirmation of their eligibility based on the rules herein. Entrants may also be required to complete a declaration of eligibility before their awards are announced. If Icon Awards does not receive a response from the entrant and does not receive any requested items, then the award or prize may be forfeited, and an alternate winner may be determined.

6. DATA COLLECTION/PRIVACY:

Icon Awards and its sponsors respect the entrants' personal identity and information by promoting the use of fair information practices. Icon Awards collects only the information necessary to successfully administer the competition, provide feedback on your work, and announce winners.

7. GOVERNING LAW/JURISDICTION:

All issues and questions concerning the validity, interpretation, and enforceability of these official rules or the rights and obligations of entrants in connection with the competition shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the United States of America and the internal laws of the State of Nevada. Any disputes not resolved between the entrant and Icon Awards shall be resolved exclusively before a court located in the State of Nevada without resorting to any form of class action. Entrant agrees to waive all rights to punitive, incidental, or consequential damages and waives all rights to have damages multiplied or increased.