PHOTOGRAPHY JUDGING ORAL REASONS

Oral reasons have been very important to 4-H and FFA competitions for many years in livestock judging, consumer decision making, and more. Oral reasons include the opportunity to defend your placing of a class and present rationale for that decision in a clear, concise, and organized manner.

Presenting oral reasons after judging a class of photographs requires educated and in-depth thought processes and enhances independent decision making abilities and public speaking skills. It teaches 4-H members time management, responsibility, and instills competitive spirit. Presenting oral reasons sharpens the 4-H members' eye to better assist them in taking well-executed photos that evoke emotion, evaluating photos for 4-H and non-4-H photography contests, and assisting others in the photography project. This skill will increase confidence in the ability to understand what a high-quality photo should look like.
To present a quality set of reasons, the 4-H member will need:

- Knowledge of different types of photography
- Knowledge of proper photography lighting, exposure, composition, other technical aspects and overall aesthetics
- Knowledge of proper camera settings
- Knowledge of proper photography terminology
- Ability to write notes while judging a class
- Confidence in selections and ability to verbalize those selections
- An understanding of the best practices for organizing and presenting a set of competitive oral reasons

Photography judging classes consist of four photographs. The 4-H member must rank the photographs in order of "best photograph" to "worst" based on quality photography standards (as outlined in the Texas 4-H Photography judging pamphlet). A proven technique includes first analyzing the quality of the class. Next, analyze each photo individually, identifying positive and negative aspects of the photo. Finally, compare each photo to the other 3 within a given class.

Judging tips:

1. First impressions are usually right
2. See the photos as they are, not as you would like to see them
3. Base decisions on knowledge and selection criteria
4. Be unbiased in your evaluation (fluffy kitten vs. creepy spider photos)

An effective set of oral reasons begins by taking thorough notes while judging a class. This will help you remember and visualize the class when preparing and presenting your set of reasons. Please note, however, that you will not be allowed to read from your notes while giving oral reasons to the judges.

Note taking tips:

1. Class Name (official title) (Example: Plant)
2. Identify class placing (Example: 3-2-4-1)
3. Fill in IDs and general description of photos (can include positive/negative aspects). Example:
    - 1. Rose - red, ⅓ of frame, out of focus, edge merger
    - 2. Cactus - yellow flower, shadows
    - 3. Bluebonnet - macro with bee in flight, properly exposed
    - 4. Gerbera - orange, bullseye composition, digital noise
4. Organize your boxes to make them easy to read
5. Use broad terms first (the big picture)
6. Note the specific details next

Oral reasons are given to compare and contrast each photograph in the class, discussing them in the order in which they were placed. A class of four has three pairs: top, middle, and bottom. A "set" of oral reasons, or the reasons given over a particular class, should follow a general outline:

1. ***Introduction***
2. ***Class winner's overall description***
3. ***Top pair compare and contrast***
4. ***Middle pair compare and contrast***
5. ***Bottom pair compare and contrast***
6. ***Last place's overall description***
7. ***Summary sentenc***e

Introduction

For consistency, use the same introduction sentence for each set. For example, you would say for each set of oral reasons "I placed this class of portrait photographs 1-2-3-4." The introduction should remain the same, only interchanging the name of the class and final placing.

Class winner's description

This should briefly explain why that photo was selected and why it ultimately is the photo with the highest overall quality. For example, you might say,
"I started this class with 1 as that is the photograph with the best overall technical quality and emotional impact as compared to the other photos in the class."

Top, middle, and bottom pairs/sections

Each section should be organized in the same manner on every set. Each section should include two sentences that discuss the two photographs in the pair. First, introduce the pair by saying "in the top pair, I placed 1 over 2 because…" After introducing the pair, explain why they are placed that way, referring to the biggest benefit of one photograph over the other. The second sentence of the section should refer to other factors that lead one photograph over the other. For example, one way to phrase the set may be: "In the top pair, I placed 1 over 2 because 1 has the best lighting and the entire image is in focus. Furthermore, 1 has the better subject placement, allowing for a more creative image." Feel free to add as many other comparisons that are applicable, but remember there are still two more sections to discuss. The next statement would be considered a "grant sentence," allowing for positive acknowledgement of the lower placing photograph. It is important to include grant sentences, especially in closely contested pairs, in case you have switched the pair according to the judge's official placing. The words "granted, I admit, and I realize," are appropriate grant words. For example, the sentence might say, "granted, 2 does offer a brighter pop of color, really drawing in the viewer to the story that the photo is telling." Following that grant sentence, though, needs to be a criticism sentence, emphasizing the lesser qualities of the lower placing photograph. Link the criticism sentence back to the reasoning for the top placing photograph. For example, on the class we have been discussing, you might say, "However, the 2 photograph is not in focus and has the image placed in the center of the frame, making it less intriguing." The following sections will follow the same pattern, exchanging "top pair" for "middle pair" and "bottom pair."

Last place description

Always end with the criticism statement of the last placed photograph. For example, "I admit 4 was a photograph with an interesting subject, however, it still casts shadows on the subject's face and therefore doesn't allow for the viewer to see the focal point of the image, making it the overall lowest quality photograph in the class."

Summary sentence

The summary sentence will be grouped in with the last place description. Always end the set of reasons with the words "in the class" or "so it is last" when closing a set of reasons.

Note Taking

The key to presenting accurate, polished oral reasons is note taking. You will not be able to see the

Rules to Follow in Oral Reasons

A 2 minute time limit for reasons will be enforced. You do not want to lose points for going over the time limit.

1. Do not use notes when presenting reasons to the judge. Learn to use the notes to prepare your reasons and visualize the class.
2. Speak in a slightly louder tone of voice, but do not shout or yell. The goal is to be assertive, enthusiastic, and confident.
3. The judge will be sitting down. You will stand approximately 6 feet from the judge. Don't get too close that they feel overwhelmed, but don't stand so far back that they can't hear you or you seem unconfident. Remember to have good posture/stance.
4. Speak clearly, enunciate, and use correct vocabulary, English and grammar.
5. Always start by giving the placing. "I placed this class of portrait photography 1-2-3-4."
6. Maintain direct eye contact
7. Be concise and definite, don't search for things to say just to fill time.
8. Telling the truth about how you saw the class is the most important factor. Remember, the judge has seen the same study guides as you and placed the class before you. A set of oral reasons that is honest and accurate about an incorrect placing will always score higher than a set that uses incorrect reasoning to justify a correct placing. If you believe something… be confident!
9. Dress should be business professional.
    - Avoid jeans and T-Shirts
    - Khakis are a good option
    - Solid colored, button-up dress shirt recommended for males, blouse or button-up shirt for females
    - Tie
    - Sports coat/blazer recommended
    - Avoid tennis shoes

Delivering oral reasons well takes patience, determination, and lots of practice. Do not be discouraged if it does not feel "natural" the first time you give a set of reasons. Try to study and expand your photography terminology knowledge in preparation leading up to the contest. One of the key things to remember in oral reasons is to tell the truth and honestly explain why you chose those selections for the class.

In the following pages are an Oral Reasons Outline and a Notes Form to use in preparation and judging. ***For the first year of the contest, youth are allowed to print and bring the notes form as well as the reasons outline to the contest, if they so choose.***

With any questions, please reach out to callie.cline@ag.tamu.edu.

PHOTOGRAPHY JUDGING ORAL REASONS TERMS

A

Aberration: Unwanted defect in an image, typically caused by the camera lens.
Ambient light: Existing light in a scene, such as daylight.
Analogous Color: Color theory that uses three colors that sit together on the color wheel. Example: A red flower with orange and yellow center.
Angle of view: The amount of a scene imaged by the camera. Usually given as a diagonal measurement.
Aperture: A variable opening in the lens that allows light to pass through to the sensor. The main control over depth of field.
Aperture Priority: A semi-automated exposure mode: the photographer sets the aperture (and ISO), and the camera selects a shutter speed that will give the optimal exposure.
Artifact: An unwanted defect in a digital image, such as sharpening halos or noise.
Asymmetry: Concept of composition involving equal unequal weight and importance within the photo.
Auto(exposure): Exposure mode in which the camera sets the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO, in addition to the white balance, and most other camera settings.
Autofocus: A system that uses sensors to assess the subject and focus the camera lens automatically.
Automatic White Balance (AWB): A camera feature where the camera assesses the scene and sets the correct white balance.

B

Background merger: The blending of a subject into the background due to similarities in color.
Backlighting: Lighting situation where the primary light source is behind the subject, pointed toward the camera.
Balance: Including a secondary subject of lesser importance or size on the opposite side of a photograph to eliminate a void.
Bird's eye: Photographing from a higher point than your subject.
Blending mode: A feature in digital image editing software that enables you to change the way one layer interacts with other layers.
Bokeh: Japanese word meaning "haze" or "blur". The way the lens renders out of focus points of light to create a muted background.
Bracketing: Taking a number of exposures of the same scene at different EV settings to ensure that one is correctly exposed, or to create an HDR image.
Brightness: The intensity of light in an image.

C

Candid photo: An approach that espouses non-intervention: you simply stand back and observe. Not posed.
Catch light: The light reflected in a subject's eye, the glimmer that comes from an external light source. Catchlights add life to your subject's eyes and is extremely important in portrait photography.
Center-weighted metering: An exposure metering pattern with a bias towards the center of the image.
Clipping: When detail is lost in either the highlight and/or shadow areas of an image.
Color cast: An overall color shift in an image, typically caused when the incorrect white balance is set.
Color temperature: A measure of the temperature of light, given in degrees Kelvin (K).
Complimentary Color: Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel. Example: Red and blue.
Composition: Techniques used to set up the elements of a photo. Some examples include: Simplicity, symmetry, rule of thirds, leading lines, etc…
Compression: Typically used in reference to image files and the way in which they are saved. JPEG files use lossy compression to produce small files sizes, with some data loss. Raw files are uncompressed.
Continuous Autofocus (AF): Mode that allows the camera to constantly adjust the focus of the lens to compensate for a moving subject.
Contrast: The range between the brightest and darkest parts in an image. Contract can be low or high.
Crop: To remove unwanted areas from an image, usually using image-editing software.

D

Definition: Subjective assessment of the clarity and quality of detail that is visible in an image.
Depth of field: The area of the image in front of and behind the point of focus that appears acceptably sharp.
Diffusion: The scattering of light particles, which softens the light and shadows cast by it.
Digital Manipulation: To make changes to a digital image using image-editing software.
Distortion: Commonly refers to a lens aberration, where straight lines appear curved, especially toward the edges of the frame.
Dots Per Inch (DPI): Used as a measure of print resolution: the greater the number of dots (of ink) per linear inch in a print, the higher the resolution.
Dutch Angle: Tilting of the camera to create a photo that is an exaggerated diagonal.
Dynamic range: The difference between the brightest and darkest parts of a scene that a camera can record information in. Usually given as a range of stops.

E

Edge Merger: The merging of a subject with the edge of the frame. Example: a portion of a person's shoulder touching the edge of the frame giving the illusion it is missing.
Exposure Value (EV): A single number given to the permutations of aperture, shutter speed, and ISO that all produce the same overall exposure. A change of one EV is the same as change of one stop.
Evaluative Metering: A metering pattern that assesses the scene as a whole, sometimes by dividing it into zones. Also known as Matrix, Multi-area, and Multi-segment metering.
Electronic Viewfinder (EVF): A viewing system that uses a small eye-level LCD screen to provide the photographer with a through -the-lens view of a scene.
Exposure: The fundamental process of allowing a specific amount of light to reach the camera's sensor for a specific amount of time to create a digital photograph.
Exposure compensation: Camera feature that allows you to adjust the exposure from that given by the camera, usually in 1/3, 1/2, or 1 EV increments.

F

F/Number (F/Stop): Term used to refer to the size of the aperture in a lens. Expressed as a fraction of the focal length; f/4, f/11, f/22, etc…
Feathering: Blurring a border or bounding line by reducing the sharpness or suddenness of the change.
Fill-in: Using flash or a reflector to lighten (fill) any shadows falling across your subject. Commonly used in portrait photographs.
Fill the frame: A composition technique whereby the subject has little or no space around it. This can be very effective in certain situations as it focuses the viewer completely on the main subject without any distractions.
Filter: (1) A piece of glass or resin, often colored, that is put in front of the lens to modify the light entering the lens. (2) A software feature that changes an image (or part of an image), sometimes to emulate a lens filter.
Flare: An aberration that manifests as either distinct colored polygons, or as an overall haze that reduces contrast. Caused by non-image forming light reaching the sensor.
Framing: The technique of drawing focus to the subject in the photo by blocking other parts of the image with something in the scene. For example, photographing a model through an open window where the window is included in the photo.
Focal length: The distance between the optical center of a lens and a sharp image of an object at infinity projected by it. Usually measured in millimeters.
Focus: The point at which the light rays are brought together to produce the sharpest image.
Form: Giving depth to an image by implying dimensionality through light and shadow.
Full-frame: A sensor size that matches the traditional size of a 35mm film frame; approximately 36mm x 24mm

G

Ghosting: Commonly regarded as a type of flare, ghosting occurs when light repeatedly reflects off the surface of the lens and is seen in the image.
Grayscale: A monochrome digital image made up of shades of gray.
Golden Triangle: Composition technique whereby a subject is placed on a grid of angles. This is done by dividing the frame with a diagonal line going from one corner to another, then adding two more lines from the

corners to the diagonal line. The subject is then placed where the lines converge.
Golden Ratio: Composition technique that separates the photo into squares, then forms a spiral that looks similar to a snail shell. Also called a “Fibonacci Spiral”. The composition serves as an invisible leading line.

H
Highlight: The brightest or lightest parts of an image.
Histogram: Graph showing the distribution of tones in an image, from pure black to pure white. Can be used to determine exposure accuracy and clipping.
Hot shoe: A fitting found on the top of most digital SLR cameras that allows a flash to be attached to the camera.
Hue: Name for the visual perception of color, in terms of the shade or complexion of the color.

I
ISO: An international standard film rating, denoting a film’s sensitivity to light.
Image stabilization: Lens-based or sensor-based technology that typically uses sensors to sense and counter camera shake.
Isolate the subject: Using a shallow depth of field to isolate your subject as a way of simplifying a composition.

J
Joint Photographic Expert Group (JPEG): One of the most popular file formats for recording and saving digital photographs. It uses compression to reduce file sizes with some loss of information. This data loss is cumulative, so more data is lost every time a JPEG file is resaved as a JPEG.
Juxtaposition: Inclusion of two or more elements in a scene that can either contrast with each other or compliment each other. Enables story telling.

K
Kelvin (K): Scale used for measuring color temperature.

L
Landscape (format): When used to refer to an image format, signifies that the longest side of the rectangular frame is horizontal (as opposed to portrait format).
Layer: (1) A feature of image-editing software that allows some elements of an image to float above others, thereby allowing adjustments to be made selectively. (2) Composition style that places elements of interest in the foreground, midground and background to create visual appeal.
Leading lines: Lines that appear in a photograph that have been framed and positioned by the photographer to draw the viewer’s eye towards a specific point of interest. Example: A railroad track leading the viewer’s eye to a train or a dock leading to a fisherman.
Left to Right rule: Theory indicating a viewer “reads” a photo from left to right, similar to a book, therefore positioning movement flowing from left to right is most pleasing.
Light Emitting Diode (LED): The display technology behind the vast majority of camera screens.
Levels: A feature of image-editing software that is based around a histogram. Allows you to adjust the black and white points (shadows and highlights), as well as the midtones.
Light meter: A tool used to measure light and produce an exposure reading. All cameras feature a built-in light meter that takes reflected light readings.

M
Macro: Specifically refers to close-up photography at a magnification ratio of 1:1 or greater, so the subject appears at least life size on the sensor.
Macro lens: A lens designed specifically for macro photography.
Manual exposure: An exposure mode that gives you full control over the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO settings.
Megapixel: One million pixels. The term is used to describe a digital camera in terms of its sensor resolution.

Memory card: The solid-state storage device used by virtually all digital cameras and smartphones. The most common type in current use is SD.
Merger: Subjects converging and becoming one. For example, when two four-legged animals merge, it's often difficult to differentiate the legs of one subject from the other.
Metadata: Information about an image that forms part of the image file itself. Metadata can record the location, time, and creator of an image, among other things, as well as camera, lens, and exposure details.
Midtone: A tonal area in an image that is equidistant between pure black and pure white.
Monochrome: Any image made up of a single color, typically black.
Movement into space or "Rule of Space": Adding visual space in front of the direction that an object is moving, looking or pointing to imply motion and direction.
Multiple exposure: A camera feature that allows you to take several shots and combine them into a single image.

N
Negative space: The area surrounding the subject. This acts as breathing room for your eyes. Too little negative space results in cluttered and busy photographs with every element in the photo demanding the viewer's attention. A large amount of negative space can create an unbalanced or asymmetric composition.
Noise: Random variations in digital images. There are two types of noise – chroma noise and luminosity noise. The former exhibits as colored patches or speckles; the latter as an underlying texture. Noise has two main causes: heat (as a result of long exposures) and high ISO settings.
Opacity: Used in digital imaging as a measure of how transparent a layer is. Typically shown as a percentage value where 0% is entirely transparent and 100% represents total opacity.
Optical viewfinder: A camera feature that uses an optical system to view a scene, rather than relying on the camera's LCD screen or an electronic viewfinder. All DSLRs use an optical viewfinder.
Overexposure: When too much light is received by the sensor, resulting in an overly bright image, most often with a loss of detail in the highlight areas.

P
Panning: A technique to capture action with a sense of movement whereby the photographer follows the movement during the course of a long exposure to keep at least part of the subject sharp.
Panoramic (format): Used to describe a picture format where the image is long and narrow.
Partial metering: Metering pattern used by Canon. Measures at the center of the frame, using an area that is larger than a spot meter pattern, but smaller than center-weighted metering.
Pattern: Technique where the photographer uses designs in the photo to enhance. Patterns are visually attractive and suggest harmony.
Pixel: Short for picture element; the smallest unit of digital imaging.
Pixelated: Appearance of a digital image in which the individual pixels are clearly discernible.
Portrait (format): When used to refer to an image format, signifies that the longest side of the rectangular frame is vertical (as opposed to landscape format).
Pixels per inch (PPI): A measure of a digital image's resolution based on the number of pixels per linear inch.
Prefocusing: A technique where the focus is set (usually manually) in anticipation of the subject arriving. Suitable for fast moving subjects.
Prime lens: A lens with a single fixed focal length.
Program: An exposure mode where the camera sets both the aperture and shutter speed. Differs from auto in that the photographer can set the ISO, and can also shift the exposure pairing to prioritize depth of field or shutter speed.

R
Raw: Image file format that records the data from the camera as shot, with little or no processing. Processing is then carried out on the computer.
Red-eye: An effect created when light (usually from an on-camera flash) reflects off the blood vessels at the back of the subject's eye, making their pupil appear red in an image.

Red-eye reduction: A feature of a camera flash that attempts to prevent red-eye by firing a series of pre-flashes to dilate the subject's pupil.
Reflector: An object with a reflective surface used to bounce light onto the subject. Reflectors can be store bought or hand made and are usually hand held by a photographer assistant.
Repetition: A composition technique whereby elements are repeated throughout the frame. Example: pillars of a building in a row.
Resizing: Changing the size of a digital photograph either making it smaller to use online, for example, or increasing the size to produce an enlarged print. Increasing the size of an image reduces its quality.
Resolution: (1) Of a lens, is the measure of its ability to record fine detail clearly. (2) Of a digital image, refers to the number of pixels per inch (ppi) or, in the case of print, the dots per inch (dpi).
Rim lighting: Lighting technique where the subject is lit in such a way that it is outlined with light. Usually results in the subject falling into silhouette unless fill-in is used.
Red, Green Blue (RGB): The primary colors used in the recording and viewing of digital images.
Rule of Odds: Composition concept using an odd number of items/elements in a photo for greater impact. Example, 1, 3 or 5 flowers in a photo vs. 2, 4 or 6.
Rule of Thirds: A traditional composition rule, based on the idea of dividing the frame into three equal segments, both horizontally and vertically, using imaged lines. Key elements of the image should be placed along these lines, or at their intersection, for greatest effect.

S

Saturation: The intensity of color.
Scene mode: A set of pre-programmed exposure modes optimized for use with specific subjects – for example, landscape, portrait, and sports.
Sensor: The light-sensitive imaging chip inside a digital camera.
Sepia: Traditional color tone applied to monochrome images to give them an antique look.
Serial exposure: Making a series of exposures in quick succession for as long as the shutter button is held down, within camera's capacity.
Shallow depth of field: The appearance of a blurred background, while the foreground is in focus. Achieved by using a wide aperture (small f/stop number).
Shape: Highlighting objects in a two-dimensional way, such as through the use of silhouette.
Shutter: The mechanism inside a camera that determines how long the sensor is exposed to light. The time the shutter stays open is the shutter speed.
Shutter priority: A semi-automated exposure mode in which the photographer sets the shutter speed (and ISO), and the camera chooses an aperture that will give the optimal exposure.
Silhouette: Effect in which the subject appears as a black shape, usually against a brighter background. Can be caused by or created with strong backlighting and avoided through the use of fill-in lighting.
Simplicity: A technique designed to highlight a particular aspect of a photo by removing distractions. For example: Placing a subject against a neutral background.
Single-shot autofocus (AF): Mode where the lens is focused and the focus distance will not change until an exposure is taken or the shutter release button is released. Ideal for static subjects.
Single-lens reflex (SLR): A viewing system that uses a prism and mirrors to transmit the light passing through the lens to an optical viewfinder. Now used to describe a type of camera that uses that viewing system: for example, a digital SLR (DSLR).
Split Complimentary Color: Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel in a pattern. Example: Red, blue, red.
Spot meter: Very precise metering pattern that reads the light in a very small area of the frame.
Stop: A change in exposure equal to a halving or doubling of the amount of light. Can be used to refer to exposure in general, or any one of the exposure controls: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.
Sunburst or Starburst: Capturing the sun in your photo where you can actually see the sun's rays in a star-like shape.
Sync speed: The fastest shutter speed at which the camera's sensor is exposed to light in its entirety. At faster speeds the sensor is exposed to a traveling slit of light.
Symmetry: Concept of aesthetic composition involving equal weight and importance on both sides of the photo

T

Telephoto: A focal length with a narrow viewing angle, typically 35 degrees or smaller.
Texture: Depicting the way a surface may fell through shadow and light.
Tone: Suggesting an overall feeling through brightness or darkness in an image.

U

Underexposure: When not enough light is received by the sensor, resulting in an overly dark image, most often with a loss of detail in the shadow areas.

W

White balance: A camera feature used to adjust the color of an image to match the prevalent color temperature of the light.
Wide-angle: A focal length giving a wide angle of view, usually at least 50 degrees.
Worm's eye: Photographing at ground level, often shooting up towards your subject.

Z

Zoom lens: A lens covering a range of focal lengths.

References:

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