

**Photo Contest Rules  
Lone Star Region  
Of the National Model Railroad Association**

**A. General Contest Rules**

1. Any member of the NMRA, in good standing, is eligible to compete except, Professional Photographers. A Professional photographer is any member who derives the majority (51% or more) of his or her income from photography.
2. Each entry must be accompanied by the official LSR (Board approved) entry form signed by the entrant along with the LSR or NMRA photo Judging form. Each entry by proxy must be authenticated with a valid NMRA membership number.
3. You may submit up to ten (10) entries with a maximum of five (5) entries in one category.
4. Prints must be mounted on flat, rigid board or matted with similar material. No folders or grass frames allowed. Photo and mount may not exceed 12"x16" in size. Minimum mount size is 8"x10" and a minimum print size of 5"x7"
5. Photos will be displayed to permit the maximum inspection (based on space available).
6. Photos that have won First (1<sup>st</sup>) place at previous Regional or National NMRA contests are ineligible.
7. Slides must be in standard 2"x2" mounts, and should be marked on the lower left-hand edge as the slide is viewed.
8. Prints should have the entrants name on the back of the mount. The title of the photo can be on the front but no photo will be accepted with the entrants name on the front.
9. Exposure of the original must have been made by the entrant.
10. The claim check from the LSR entry form must be presented to obtain the model after the contest.
11. Reasonable care and protection will be provided for entries by the Host Committee and the Judges.
12. Judges for the model and photo contest will be selected by the Region Contest Chairman with the help of the Host Division.
13. No entries will be accepted after Noon on Friday (unless otherwise posted). This will allow the Region Contest Chair and the Host Division to ready the contest room for judging.
14. Judging will be done on Friday evening (unless otherwise posted). The contest room will remain closed from viewing during judging. The room will reopen for viewing Saturday morning.
15. For the protection of the models, no bags, purses, camera bags, or drinks will be allowed in the model display area. You are welcome to take photos for your personal use.

**B. Categories**

1. Model – Black and White Print
2. Model – Color Print
3. Model – Slide
4. Prototype – Black and White Print
5. Prototype – Color Print
6. Prototype – Slide

**C. Judging Procedures**

1. The following judging system has been used in competitive camera club settings for many years.
2. View all the entries in a category one at a time to get an overview of the field. There should be no commentary between the judges at this point. The entries should be viewed again and each judge should indicate if the entry should stay or be eliminated. During this run through, a positive vote by any one judge will keep the entry in the running. Entries receiving no votes are set aside. During the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) run through, it requires two (2) positive responses to keep an entry. If the

field is still large, perform another run-through. The purpose of this process is to narrow the field rather than to pick the winner.

3. The judges now have a reasonably small field to select from. At this point considerable discussion is needed and encouraged between the judges as they compare the entries. Prints may be moved about and arranged as the judges seek a consensus. Different teams of judges may likely produce different winners from the field, however this is not surprising, as we are dealing with a subjective medium.

#### **D. Judging Factors**

As stated above photo contest are more subjective than model contest. A prize winning photograph is often more a matter of art and luck than execution of technique. Certainly, the photographer is faced with more things that are beyond his control than the model builder, at least where the prototype categories are concerned. Notwithstanding this subjectivity, there are some judging factors that are brought to bear by experienced judges.

1. **IMPACT:** Best explained by “I wish I’d taken that picture”. Given a choice, action is preferable to static scene. In model photography, the choice of the model will contribute to the impact of the picture. Does the photograph reveal obvious, distracting modeling flaws, or has the photographer taken pains to be sure that all of the elements shown work together to produce pleasing results.

When the environment is exceptional, or the viewpoint makes the ordinary extraordinary, full credit should be given for the contribution the photographer’s sensitivity brought to the subject.

2. **COMPOSITION:** The arrangement of the forms within the photo should be pleasing to the eye. How well did the photographer use the available space within his format? Did he or she follow the guidelines taught in art and photography classes? If the rules are broken, did the result justify that decision.

3. **ARTISTIC APPROACH:** This subjective area is where a strongly graphic or symbolic composition may move one judge and a “typical calendar shot” may be moving to another. One tends to evaluate artistic and aesthetic qualities based on one’s own experience. What moves us and the degree we are impressed will change as we are exposed to more and better images. A judge should not start out looking for a special kind of artistry, to do so would be imposing personal values, sensibilities, or preconceptions without giving the entries a chance to speak for themselves.

4. **LIGHTING:** In photography “Light is law”. It is the only thing that makes it possible to expose film. Skillfully handled, the result can be a work of art; badly handled, the result is a total failure or a snapshot at best. The photographer should be given full credit for use of multiple flash, supplemental reflectors, or a well developed room lighting, depending on the quality of the execution. The best execution of any lighting system in model photography is one that produces a realistic, natural appearance, without multiple shadows (there can only be one sun!), with accurate color, and without excessively harsh contrast and black holes devoid of details.

5. **EXPOSURE:** If a print appears washed out, or shadow details are obliterated, it is obvious it was improperly exposed. The judge may decide however, that an unusual exposure was skillfully handled to achieve a desired mood or dramatic effect.

6. **FOCUS:** Model photographers strive to maximize the appearance of sharpness throughout the photo to achieve realistic results. Generally “selective focus” is not desirable in model or prototype photos, since it produces fuzzy areas that are distracting; but there are always exceptions. The judges must determine whether the photographer achieved his or her goal or not.

7. **DIFFICULTY:** In prototype shots this relates to motion, lighting conditions (including weather), selection of appropriate viewpoint, inherent danger and the knowledge of special techniques and equipment. Model photography involves a different set of technical skills for close-up work while maintaining adequate depth-of-field. Lighting models adequately can be difficult and complex as well. Since a model may be photographed many times with different settings, there is little reason to see a poorly lit photo of model scenes. A prototype may be available only once.

8. **SPECIAL EFFECTS:** This would apply to deliberate blurring or panning to accentuate motion, long exposures at night to create light streaks, multiple exposures, shooting through fog or smoke, using filters, print toning, or any other special effects limited only by the photographer’s imagination. In model photos, special effects include smoke and steam simulation, fog, harsh

weather conditions and more. The final evaluation should be, as always, a response to how well the effect achieved the desired result: did it work, and is the result pleasing or evocative enough to have made the effort worthwhile.

9. **TECHNIQUE:** Is the color pleasing, correct or believable? Color saturation should also be evaluated. To some extent this is influenced by the quality of processing; however, whether the result is acceptable or not is a judgment for which the photographer is responsible. An unsatisfactory processing job may be redone. Black and white is more often controlled by the photographer, because more of them process their own. With digital all of this is changing. Good blacks and mid-tones, clean whites, and careful contrast control are essential to all contest-quality black and white prints.

10. **FINISH:** Consider the impact of the presentation of the entry. Prints should not be blemished or streaked and should be bonded correctly to the mount, with carefully measured borders. Mounts and mats should be clean and neatly cut, lie flat, and not show excess mounting tissue or adhesive around the edges. Slides should be neat and clean, free of fingerprints and scratches, and fixed firmly in their mounts that protect them from damage and hold the film flat. If a slide or print is not suitable for publication reproduction, it should not be considered for an award.

#### **E. Awards**

Plaques and ribbons will be given for all First (1<sup>st</sup>) place finishers in the photo contest. Second (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Third (3<sup>rd</sup>) place finishers shall receive ribbons. Honorable Mention ribbons are as deemed necessary by the judges. The decision may be influenced by the size and quality of the field.