

OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21st century skills, participants produce a digital photographic portfolio that represents or relates to a chosen theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*. Semifinalists demonstrate competency in the production of a series of digital photographs taken at the conference site within the time limit specified and complete a presentation/interview.

ELIGIBILITY

Three (3) individuals per state may participate.

TIME LIMITS

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. All components of the individual's entry (digital photographic portfolio PDF) must be finished, submitted, and accessible via the Internet by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. One-half (½) hour is allowed to set up equipment and receive the on-site challenge and procedures.
- B. Two (2) hours are allowed to complete the on-site challenge.
- C. The presentation/interview will be three (3) minutes with two (2) minutes for the presentation and one (1) minute for the interview.

ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required.

PROCEDURE

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants review the annual theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants produce a digital photographic portfolio while observing the regulations.

- D. Participants submit the digital photographic portfolio PDF by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- E. Submission information will be provided on [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. A list of twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) is posted on the first full day of conference.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants report at the time and place stated in the conference program for the on-site challenge with all of the required equipment and software noted in the Regulations and Requirements section.
- B. Participants are allowed one-half (½) hour to set up and test their equipment.
- C. At the end of the set-up time, the event coordinator presents the on-site challenge and related procedure to the semifinalists.
- D. The challenge involves students taking photographs addressing a specific theme, or documenting a current aspect of the conference, such as a competitive event, a special focus of the site, a general session, etc.
- E. Semifinalists are given two (2) hours to complete the challenge, including taking their pictures, and editing or enhancing them. Editing must take place in the event room.
- F. The semifinalists save the final photos in a multimedia presentation on their laptop.
- G. Members can power down the laptop once finished and then power back up at the presentation/interview to save battery life.
- H. The laptop with the semifinal solution must remain in the room for judging and the presentation/interview.
- I. The participant signs up for a presentation/interview time once the two (2) hours has concluded.
- J. Participants report at the assigned time and place stated in the conference program for the presentation/interview.
- K. Judges assess the entries and the interview responses.
- L. The top ten (10) finalists are announced at the awards ceremony.

REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21st century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Photographs included in the portfolio must be unified.
- B. Participants are solely responsible for all aspects of the competition, including taking the photographs, editing, and completing the portfolio.
- C. Digital Photographic Portfolio:
 1. The digital photographic portfolio must be submitted as a multi-page PDF document with pages in this order:
 - a. Cover page – must include the event title, the conference city and state, the year, and the participant's ID number; one (1) page.
 - b. Summary of the theme – must follow the annual challenge, including a detailed description of how the theme was interpreted by the participant, why the particular subjects were chosen, as well as the challenges that were faced in the selection of the subjects, in taking the photos, and in selecting and editing the final images; pages as needed.
 - c. Photos:
 - i. Submission: the original photo and the edited version should appear together on the same page and must be labeled "ORIGINAL" and "EDITED." The description must NOT be on the page with the original and edited photos.
 - ii. On the page immediately following the Original and Edited photos should be a description of the two photos. The description should include the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length) and include a synopsis of how the original photo was edited/changed, and how the theme is addressed by both the style and content of the edited photo.
 - iii. Enhancements and/or editing should be done ethically and in a way that makes a better photograph.
 - iv. The order of the photos in the portfolio should be as follows: Original photo and edited photo on the same page, description on the following page, then repeat for the remaining photos.
 - d. Resource page – must include a list of resources used to complete the portfolio, including camera, software, hardware, etc.; pages as needed
 - e. Consent and Release Forms – Recognizable individuals pictured in the images must give their written consent before the images can be used in this event (see Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release form in 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix). All necessary consent forms must be included at the end of the multi page PDF album. Students may note in their photo description when a consent form has been deemed necessary and is included in the portfolio; pages as needed (if needed). NOTE: If consent forms are deemed necessary by the judges and have not been included by the competitor, the entry will not be judged.
- D. The entry must be finished, submitted, and accessible via the Internet by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- E. Entries received, or changes made to submitted entries after this deadline will not be judged.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants are required to provide their own equipment, including:
 1. One (1) laptop. Laptop must be fully charged with enough battery for the duration of the semifinal round
 2. One (1) computer mouse (if desired)
 3. Portable power bank (if desired)
 4. A method to transfer the images to the computer (such as a media reader) for editing

5. Tripod
 6. DSLR or dedicated “point-and shoot” camera, with a timer feature and/or remote trigger as well as the ability to be mounted to a tripod; cell phones are permitted as cameras
 7. Semifinalists may bring optional related accessories (i.e., filters, reflectors, extra batteries, etc.) to use in the on-site challenge.
- B. Participants do NOT have access to electrical power/ outlets during the event.
- C. No internet access will be provided during the competition.
- D. When preparing their multimedia presentation, semifinalists must include the following information for each photograph:
1. Camera make (e.g., Nikon, Canon, Panasonic, Sony, etc.)
 2. Camera model (e.g., CoolPix, Rebel, 5D, etc.)
 3. F-stop at which each photograph was taken
 4. Exposure time of each photograph
 5. ISO value, aperture (f-stop number), and shutter speed
 6. How the photo relates to the on-site challenge
 7. Any software or apps used to edit the photograph
- E. All multimedia presentations of images must be saved to the laptop and will be used by the member and the judges during the presentation/interview.

EVALUATION

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. The digital photographic portfolio

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. The multimedia presentation
B. The presentation/interview

Refer to the official rating form for more information.

TSA HONOR STATEMENT

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

STEM INTEGRATION

This event has connections to the STEM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

LEADERSHIP AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21st century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability

CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the careers below:

- Animator
- Photojournalist
- Research and development scientist
- Reporter
- Website designer

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

2026 & 2027 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

- ☐ Digital portfolio was submitted
- ☐ Consent/Release forms are present (if required)
- ☐ ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO (70 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance 1-4 points	Adequate performance 5-8 points	Exemplary performance 9-10 points	
Portfolio Components (X1)	Portfolio is unorganized and/or is missing three (3) or more components.	Portfolio is missing one (1) or two (2) components and/or is loosely organized.	Portfolio has all required components in order and is well organized.	
Principles and Elements of Design and Composition and Creativity (X2)	There is little or no evidence of an understanding or creative use of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	Images demonstrate some knowledge and creative use of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	Images clearly demonstrate excellent and creative use of a variety of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	
Technical Quality (X1)	Photos are out of focus; blurriness is unintentional and does not contribute to the overall composition; photos display incorrect exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; there is little or no consideration given to lighting and/or special effects.	Photos are in focus; photos display correct exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; images exhibit some attention to lighting and/or the use of special effects.	Photo subject(s) are in sharp focus; blurriness is used effectively to enhance the composition; photos display correct exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; images are enhanced by attention to lighting and/or the use of special effects.	
Conveyance of the Theme (X1)	The images are flat and lack a clear connection to the theme; viewers are not drawn into the scene; images do not clearly convey the theme/challenge.	The images show some emotional depth; viewers make an emotional connection with the images/pictures and are drawn into the scene or learn something from the subject(s); images convey the competition theme/challenge.	The images show emotional depth; viewers make an instant emotional connection with the pictures and are drawn into the scene or learn something from the subject(s); images clearly convey the competition theme/challenge.	
Written Statements (X1)	A written statement may or may not accompany each photo, and/or the statement includes only some of the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length), and/or an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is not present and/or is written poorly.	A written statement accompanies each photo; the statement includes most of the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length); an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is included.	A written statement accompanies each photo; the statement includes the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length); an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is presented in a clear and concise manner.	

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO (70 points) – continued				
Resources (X1)	A resources list is present, but graphic and/or software packages used are not mentioned.	A resources list is present and the primary software packages used are included; contains an adequate list of resources.	Detailed and concise resources are provided; all software packages used are included.	
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO SUBTOTAL (70 points)				
<p>Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.</p> <p>Indicate the rule violated: _____</p>				

PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (70 points)

SEMIFINAL CHALLENGE (70 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
Principles and Elements of Design/Composition and Creativity (X2)	There is little or no evidence of an understanding or creative use of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	Images demonstrate some knowledge and creative use of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	Images clearly demonstrate excellent and creative use of a variety of compositional elements (line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, framing, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement/rhythm and pattern/repetition).	
Technical Skill (X2)	Participants do not demonstrate knowledge of and understanding of how to utilize photographic equipment and techniques; participants show little or no creativity in staging and photographing subjects.	Participants demonstrate some knowledge of and an understanding of how to utilize photographic equipment and techniques, or use it only minimally in the on-site challenge; participants show some creativity in staging and photographing subjects.	Participants clearly demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how to utilize photographic equipment and techniques; participants show creativity in staging and photographing subjects; participants show a high level of skill in the use of the tools to create high quality images.	
Technical Quality (X1)	Photos are out of focus; blurriness is unintentional and does not contribute to the overall composition; photos display incorrect exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; there is little or no consideration given to lighting and/or special effects.	Photos are in focus; photos display correct exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; images exhibit some attention to lighting and/or the use of special effects.	Photo subject(s) are in sharp focus; blurriness is used effectively to enhance the composition; photos display correct exposure values, white balance, and/or range of tones; images are enhanced by attention to lighting and/or the use of special effects.	
Impact and Theme (X1)	The images are flat and lack emotional depth; viewers are not drawn into the scene; images do not clearly convey the theme/challenge.	The images show some emotional depth; viewers make an emotional connection with the images/pictures and are drawn into the scene or learn something from the subject(s); images convey the competition theme/challenge.	The images show emotional depth; viewers make an instant emotional connection with the pictures and are drawn into the scene or learn something from the subject(s); images clearly convey the competition theme/challenge.	

SEMIFINAL CHALLENGE (70 points) – continued				
Written Statements (X1)	A written statement may or may not accompany each photo, and/or the statement includes only some of the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length), and/or an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is not present and/or is written poorly.	A written statement accompanies each photo; the statement includes most of the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length); an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is included.	A written statement accompanies each photo; the statement includes the photo's meta data (camera make/model, f/stop, exposure time, ISO speed, focal length); an explanation of the relevance of the image to the challenge is presented in a clear and concise manner.	
SEMIFINAL CHALLENGE SUBTOTAL (70 points)				

SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (50 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
Organization Use of visual materials (X1)	Participant seems unorganized and unprepared for the presentation; illogical explanation of the photographs and/or stylistic elements is presented.	Participant is generally prepared for the presentation; explanation of photographs and/or stylistic elements is communicated and somewhat organized.	The presentation is logical, well organized, and easy to follow; explanation of the photographs and/or stylistic elements are communicated in an organized and concise manner.	
Knowledge (X1)	Participant seems to have little understanding of the stylistic photographic elements used.	Participant exhibits an understanding of the stylistic photographic elements used in their project; the presentation is for the most part, logical and/or clear.	Participants show clear evidence of a thorough understanding of the stylistic photographic elements; the presentation is concise and logical.	
Articulation (X1)	Communication of the design process is unclear, unorganized, and or illogical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are not evident.	Communication of the design process is somewhat logical and clear; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are somewhat evident.	Communication of the design process is clear, concise, and logical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are clearly evident.	
Integration of Theme (X1)	The current theme is not demonstrated in the product.	The current theme is adequately demonstrated in the product.	The current theme is exceptionally well demonstrated in the product.	
Delivery (X1)	The participant is verbose and/or uncertain in his/her presentation/interview; participants' posture, gestures, and lack of eye contact diminish the presentation/interview.	The participant is somewhat well-spoken and clear in his/her presentation/interview; participants' posture, gestures, and eye contact are acceptable in the presentation/interview.	The participant is well-spoken and distinct in its presentation/interview; the participants' posture, gestures, and eye contact result in a polished, natural, and effective presentation/interview.	
SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW SUBTOTAL (50 points)				

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: _____

SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (120 points)	
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To arrive at the TOTAL score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.	TOTAL (190 points)	
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Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

JUDGE

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
 - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more (online)
 - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more

MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
 - 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
 - 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
- B. Semifinal round materials
 - 1. Evaluation schedule
 - 2. Challenge and guidelines
 - 3. Interview questions

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. National TSA will collect entries until 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May. The results are shared with the CRC manager, event coordinator, and assigned judges.
- B. Review entries as they are submitted to the designated online storage utility.
- C. Manage communication and pre-conference evaluation (at least two [2] or more judges should be recruited earlier in the year). Coordinate with the Judge Manager.
- D. Collect the rating forms electronically and bring them to conference on a flash drive.

AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory event coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.
- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area or room in which the event is to be held for appropriate set-up, including room size,

chairs, tables, outlets, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.

- E. At least one (1) hour before the event is to begin, meet with judges and assistants to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the event manager before the event begins.
- F. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. On the first full day of the conference, post a list of the twelve (12) semifinalists in random order.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Before the on-site challenge session, check the room set-up. There should be enough seating and table space for twelve (12) semifinalists.
- B. Participants must provide their own equipment, including computers and cameras.
- C. Begin the event at the scheduled time by closing the doors and checking the entry list.
- D. Late entries are considered on a case-by-case basis and only when the lateness is caused by circumstances beyond the participant's control.
- E. In order to compete, participants must be on the entry list or must have approval of the CRC.
- F. All participants should be in the room at this time. Participants registered but not present may be disqualified.
- G. Review the on-site challenge and procedures with the participants.
- H. Manage the semifinalist session with judges, who may observe participants taking pictures or editing.

- I. As participants complete the on-site challenge, keep all laptops in the room for judging and presentation/ interviews, and manage the removal of participants' equipment.
- J. As participants depart, ensure they sign up for the presentation/interview.
- K. Judges independently score the multimedia presentation.
- L. Participants report at the time and place stated in the conference program for the presentation/interview
- M. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and the CRC manager to determine either:
 - 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round
 - 2. To disqualify the entryThe event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.
- N. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.