

WINPHOTO · WINPHOTO.IO

FREE REFERENCE · JUNE 2026

The 2026 Contest Rulebook

Rights, AI policy & the rules that disqualify you — for 20 major competitions, decoded from the official rules.

PHOTOGRAPH — ZIED MNIF · THE MATTERHORN

The same photograph can win one contest and be disqualified at the next.

Every calendar tells you the deadline and the fee. None tell you what the contest *takes* — the licence you grant, whether it's exclusive — or what quietly gets you thrown out: the AI clause, the editing line, the eligibility stops. This rulebook is that missing column, for every major competition open right now.

Each entry is flagged: **Light terms** (copyright retained, few barriers), **Check the terms**, or **Read the fine print** (exclusivity, a copyright grab, or several hard disqualifiers). Read the rights before you pay the entry fee — not after.

Sorted by deadline, soonest first. Always confirm the official rules before entering; terms change cycle to cycle.



*“Before you pay the fee, know what the contest takes —
and what quietly gets you thrown out.”*

PHOTOGRAPH — ZIED MNIF

The Independent Photographer Monthly Awards 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

The Independent Photographer · Closes Jun 30, 2026 · D-9 · From 15 USD per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images are explicitly not accepted.

Nikon Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards Ltd. · Closes Jun 30, 2026 · D-9 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI rendering or composites

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must own copyright and have taken the photograph themselves.
- Ai generation: AI-generated imagery disqualified. Animal subject must be photographed in nature; captive setups generally discouraged.

Ocean Photographer of the Year 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Oceanographic Magazine · Closes Jun 30, 2026 · D-9 · From 10 GBP per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the author and hold full copyright.
- Ai generation: AI-generated imagery is strictly prohibited.

World Nature Photography Awards 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Alternative Future Ltd · Closes Jun 30, 2026 · D-9 · From 30 GBP per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI rendering or composites

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-created images are not eligible — wildlife/nature integrity required.

Maghreb Photography Awards 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Maghreb Photography Awards · Closes Jul 1, 2026 · D-10 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI rendering or composites

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrants retain copyright; must be the photograph's original author.
- Ai generation: Generative AI imagery disqualifies the entry.

Photolucida Critical Mass 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Photolucida · Closes Jul 1, 2026 · D-10 · From 75 USD per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Image format: Open to all photographers worldwide; no career-stage restriction. One body of work only.
- Ai generation: AI-generated imagery not accepted for the 2026 call.
- Professional status: Critical Mass jurors, Photolucida staff, Board, and Advisory Council ineligible.

Close-up Photographer of the Year 8 (CUPOTY) 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Close-up Photographer of the Year · Closes Jul 12, 2026 · D-21 · From 22 GBP per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: Generative AI cannot be used to create the image, add elements, or extend the background. The image must start from a photograph.

PX3 Prix de la Photographie Paris 2026

[CHECK THE TERMS](#)

Farmani Group / Px3 · Closes Jul 22, 2026 · D-31 · From 30 EUR per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: AI permitted (dedicated category)

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must hold copyright or be authorised by the copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images allowed ONLY within the dedicated AI category. AI work is excluded from Photographer of the Year and Best New Talent honours.

Global Wildlife Fair International Photo Awards 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Global Wildlife Fair · Closes Jul 31, 2026 · D-40 · From 28 USD per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI rendering or composites

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images are not accepted; entries must be genuine photographs of wild subjects.

Tokyo International Foto Awards 2026

[CHECK THE TERMS](#)

Farmani Group · Closes Aug 1, 2026 · D-41 · From 30 EUR per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: AI permitted (dedicated category)

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must hold copyright or be authorised by the copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images allowed ONLY within the dedicated AI category. Excluded from Photographer of the Year and Discovery of the Year honours.

1839 Awards — Photographer of the Year 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

1839 Awards · Closes Sep 16, 2026 · D-87 · From 30 USD per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images are not admissible in any 1839 Awards contest; original files may be requested as proof.

World Street Photo Awards 2026

[CHECK THE TERMS](#)

World Street Photo · Closes Oct 10, 2026 · D-111 · From 18 EUR per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: AI-assisted edits OK, no generative fill

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: Generative AI images are disqualified; AI-powered editing (noise reduction, masking) is allowed as long as the image originates from a real camera frame.

W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund · Closes Oct 12, 2026 · D-113 · From 50 USD per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder of the submitted work.
- Ai generation: AI-generated imagery is not allowed.

Travel Photographer of the Year 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Travel Photographer of the Year Ltd · Closes Oct 12, 2026 · D-113 · From 14 GBP per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and hold full copyright.
- Ai generation: AI-generated images are explicitly ineligible and will be disqualified.

The Nature Photography Contest 2026

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

The Nature Photography Contest · Closes Nov 15, 2026 · D-147 · From 10 EUR per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI rendering or composites

WATCH FOR:

- Copyright ownership: Entrant must be the photographer and copyright holder.
- Ai generation: Images must be 100% photographic in origin; AI-generated and digital-art images are not accepted. Finalists may be asked to supply the RAW file for verification.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year (63rd) 2027

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Natural History Museum, London · Closes Dec 4, 2026 · D-166 · From 35 GBP per image

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- **Capture date after:** Photographs must be shot within the past five years.
- **Image format:** Baiting prohibited (full ban as of 62nd competition) except for legitimate scientific research.
- **Image format:** Subject animals must not have been harmed, distressed, or restricted in their natural behavior. Captive animals must be disclosed.

Aperture Portfolio Prize 2027

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Aperture Foundation · Closes Jan 11, 2027 · D-204 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: AI permitted (dedicated category)

WATCH FOR:

- **Professional status:** Must be a current Aperture magazine print subscriber (subscription requirement extrapolated from 2026 cycle pattern).
- **Prior publication:** Cannot have been featured by Aperture within the past three years.
- **Capture date after:** Work must be created within the past five years.

Sony World Photography Awards 2027

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

World Photography Organisation (in partnership with Sony) · Closes Jan 12, 2027 · D-205 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: AI-assisted edits OK, no generative fill

WATCH FOR:

- **Age minimum:** Series and Single Image entrants must be 18+. Youth competition: under 19.
- **Capture date after:** Series work must have been published between 1 Jan 2026 and 12 Jan 2027; Single Image work must have been taken in 2026.
- **Image format:** You may enter BOTH the Single Image and Series competitions, but each must use a different body of work — submitting the same work to both is not permitted. (The 2026-cycle cross-track exclusivity was removed for 2027.)

World Press Photo Contest 2027

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

World Press Photo Foundation · Closes Jan 18, 2027 · D-211 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Standard terms — you keep copyright and full control; the licence is limited to promoting the contest.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- **Professional status:** Professional photographer status required (press card, recent publication credit, journalism union, or recognized photo association membership).
- **Image format:** Photographs taken at restricted events (commissioned-only access) are not accepted.
- **Image format:** Smartphone images permitted only in standard shooting mode. HDR, portrait mode, panorama, creative-lighting effects are not eligible.

Hasselblad Masters 2027

[READ THE FINE PRINT](#)

Hasselblad · Closes Feb 28, 2027 · D-252 · Free to enter

WHAT THEY TAKE: Partial exclusivity — some re-use of this image is restricted while the contest holds the license.

AI CLAUSE: No AI — RAW can be demanded

WATCH FOR:

- **Image format:** Open to all photographers using digital or film cameras, regardless of brand. Drone, smartphone, and tablet camera images excluded.
- **AI generation:** AI-synthesized imagery disqualifies. Forensic review at shortlist stage.
- **Age maximum:** Project//21 category restricted to entrants 21 and under at close.



Before you enter — check your own photograph

This rulebook is the map. To see whether *your* photo clears a specific contest's rules — the AI clause, the editing line, the file it can demand — read it against the published rules, free and without an account, at winphoto.io/analyze.

And when one entry really matters, the per-contest **Dossier** gives you the full brief: every clause quoted verbatim beside its plain-English meaning, the upload-spec gauntlet, the fee-vs-prize read — the dated document you re-read before you submit.

WinPhoto · winphoto.io — we never submit for you, never judge whether a photo is good, never recognise faces.