

SAMPLE BRIEF

The Northern Light Open 2027

A fictional contest used for illustration.

This contest does not exist. Its name, rules and rule numbers were invented to show the format of a brief. Real contests appear only on page 2, each cited to its published rules.

RULES READ	BENCHMARKED AGAINST	DELIVERED	NATURE
Fictional rules, 1 Oct 2026	Eight real contests	3 working days after acceptance	A benchmark, not legal advice

01 ENTRANT FAQ, READY TO PUBLISH

Your terms, in the words an entrant would use.

Each answer sits beside the rule it comes from. Publish the middle column; keep the right one as your audit trail. Red flags point to the dispute notes below.

QUESTION	PLAIN LANGUAGE	THE RULE, VERBATIM
What do I give the organiser? DISPUTE NOTE 2	You keep your copyright. Every entry, not only the winners, lets the organiser reproduce, publish and exhibit it worldwide, without paying you and with no end date. The licence is non-exclusive, so you can still sell the image elsewhere.	<i>"Copyright remains with the Entrant. By entering, the Entrant grants the Organiser a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free licence to reproduce, publish and exhibit the Entry in connection with the Competition and the Organiser's promotional activities, in perpetuity."</i> RULE 9.1
Can I use AI? DISPUTE NOTE 1	Not to create your image, and not to alter it substantially. If you are shortlisted, you have seven days from the organiser's request to send the original camera file (RAW or an unedited JPEG), or your entry is withdrawn.	<i>"Entries must not be created or substantially altered using artificial intelligence."</i> RULE 6.2 <i>"Shortlisted Entrants must supply the original camera file (RAW or unedited JPEG) within seven days of the Organiser's request. Entries for which no original is supplied will be withdrawn."</i> RULE 6.4
Who can enter? DISPUTE NOTE 3	Amateur photographers aged 18 or over on 1 November 2026, of any nationality, living anywhere. Images must have been taken on or after 1 January 2025.	<i>"The Competition is open to amateur photographers aged 18 or over on 1 November 2026, of any nationality and resident in any country."</i> RULE 3.1 <i>"Images must have been taken on or after 1 January 2025."</i> RULE 3.3
What does it cost?	€15 for a single image, or €40 for a series of up to five. Fees are not refunded once you submit.	<i>"The entry fee is €15 per single image or €40 per series of up to five images. Fees are non-refundable once an entry has been submitted."</i> RULE 4.1
When is the deadline?	Sunday 31 January 2027 at 23:59 Central European Time (UTC+1). That is 22:59 in London and 17:59 in New York. Late entries are not accepted.	<i>"Entries close at 23:59 Central European Time (UTC+1) on Sunday 31 January 2027. Late entries will not be accepted."</i> RULE 2.1

02 WORDING THAT CAUSES DISPUTES

Three clauses entrants are likely to contest.

FOR YOUR COUNSEL

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | <i>"...not be created or substantially altered using artificial intelligence."</i>
<small>RULE 6.2</small> | "Substantially" is not defined, so an entrant who used AI noise reduction or AI masking cannot tell which side of the line they are on.

ASK Should the rule list permitted tools, or define alteration by what changes in the scene? Four contests on page 2 draw this line in their own words. |
| 2 | <i>"...and the Organiser's promotional activities, in perpetuity."</i>
<small>RULE 9.1</small> | It covers every entry, not only the winners, and "promotional activities" is not tied to the competition. Entrants may read it as open-ended use of their work.

ASK Should the licence name its purposes, set a term, or cover shortlisted work only? One contest on page 2 does both: shortlisted work only, for five years plus an online archive. |
| 3 | <i>"The Competition is open to amateur photographers..."</i>
<small>RULE 3.1</small> | "Amateur" is not defined. A paid commission, a stock sale or a print sale may or may not exclude someone, and the question is most likely to come up after the results.

ASK Should "amateur" be defined, say by income from photography, and who decides? |

03
BENCHMARK

Your clauses beside eight comparable contests.

Real contests from WinPhoto's verified rules records, each dated to the day its rights terms were last checked. The shaded row is your contest from page 1.

CONTEST	RIGHTS: SCOPE · DURATION	AI GENERATION	AI EDITING	ORIGINALS CHECK	C2PA
The Northern Light Open 2027 Fictional · your rules, page 1	Non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free · the competition and “promotional activities” · perpetual, every entry	“must not be created ... using artificial intelligence”	“substantially altered” is banned but undefined	Shortlist, 7 days: RAW or unedited JPEG	No
1839 Awards Photographer of the Year 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Perpetual, irrevocable, sub-licensable, incl. sponsors · promotional displays only · never sold	“AI-generated images are not admissible in any 1839 Awards contest.”	—	RAW and original files on request	—
Close-up Photographer of the Year 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Shortlisted work only, incl. sponsors · competition-connected uses · 5 years, plus a perpetual archive	“In all cases, the image must start from a photograph.”	Denoise, sharpening OK; no generative additions	Shortlist: Raw, else untouched JPEG	—
Epson International Pano Awards 2026 Rules as published, checked 3 Jul 2026	Non-exclusive, irrevocable, every entry · perpetual display use · press sub-licensing: 5 years	“not permitted, including generative and instructional AI content of any kind”	“content-aware fill applied to small areas” permitted	RAW on request for suspect entries	—
The Independent Photographer Monthly Awards 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Entries posted online · winners' entries for “advertising and trade” · no term stated	“Artificial Intelligence-generated images (A.I. Photos) are NOT accepted.”	—	—	—
ND Awards 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide, all media · any use connected with the competition	No AI clause in the published terms	—	—	—
Ocean Photographer of the Year 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Every entry, with partners · commercial use incl. merchandise, tied to the competition · no end date	“AI-generated imagery is strictly prohibited.”	Post-processing accepted	None stated	—
PX3 Prix de la Photographie Paris 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Every entry · perpetual, transferable, “infinitely sub-licensable” · to use and exploit	Only in its AI category; barred from Photographer of the Year	—	—	—
Travel Photographer of the Year 2026 Rules as published, checked 11 Oct 2026	Only in connection with the awards · merchandise needs a royalty · books need consent after 4 years	Ineligible if generated “wholly or partially” with AI	Denoise allowed; no AI additions or object removal	Shortlist: RAW; one section accepts jpeg as shot	—

“ ” verbatim from the published rules; other text is our summary. — not covered in the clauses WinPhoto holds on file for that contest. A commissioned brief reads each comparator's current rules in full before delivery.

Seven of the eight restrict AI-generated content in some form. ND Awards' published terms carry no AI clause.

TPOTY requires shortlist originals; CUPOTY requests them; 1839 Awards and Epson may. Your rule 6.4 allows seven days.

None of the clauses on file mention C2PA or Content Credentials, and neither do yours.

04
LESSONS FROM 2026

2026 disqualifications: what failed.

Four AI disqualifications reported in 2026. In each, the problem was raised by the public, not caught by the contest's own checks.

JAN 2026	Huazhu photo contest, Shanghai	OECD AI Incidents Monitor
MAY 2026	Hasselblad Masters	AI-AP, 28 May 2026
JUL 2026	Contest in Hohhot	China Daily, 15 Jul 2026
9 OCT 2026	Nikon Small World in Motion · Nikon is “reviewing the rules and procedures”	bdnews24, 9 Oct 2026

THREE THINGS A BRIEF CHECKS IN YOUR RULES

When originals are checked
Before results are announced, or only once someone objects.

What entrants must supply
Which file, by when, and what happens if it never arrives.

What happens to a prize
Whether an award already announced can be withdrawn, and by whom.

INDEPENDENCE
Buying a brief never changes how WinPhoto's public Rights & AI-Policy Ledger grades a contest. Ledger corrections are free for anyone.

NOT LEGAL ADVICE
A brief is a factual benchmark of published rules. We recommend your counsel reviews any wording before you publish it.