

ArtsEdge Critique Framework with our Rubric and Twelve Elements v.9

An article titled *Teaching Students to Critique* by Joyce Payne described the *ArtsEdge* framework to help students critique art created by their peers (based on [The Feldman Method](#) 1967, 1994). This *ArtsEdge* framework includes the four aspects of art criticism, including description, analysis, interpretation, and assessment. This framework is a useful model for preparing more meaningful comments that were largely missing in our critiques using only our rubric.

The sequence of the framework sections leads us to discuss the photograph generally from the bottom up in the hierarchy of the 12 elements ([A Fresh Look at the 12 Elements](#)). This framework starts with objective descriptions and finishes with subjective assessments. Comments written using this framework can help determine scores in our rubric and remind us that technical faults can have negligible or significant effects on the success of a photo.

Our critique rubric has been reordered in v.9 to work better with the *ArtsEdge* framework. The focus questions in the framework reflect those in the sub-criteria of the rubric or the twelve elements list. They remind us of what we should consider when write the four aspects of the critique.

- The visual inventory in the **Description** section should only list the relevant visual elements and techniques in the Technique and Composition sub-criteria of the rubric to get you engaged with the image.
- The **Analysis** section of the framework should objectively consider how well those compositional elements and techniques listed in the description work together to make a successful photo.
- The **Interpretation** section should subjectively consider the items in the Subject or Story, Creativity or Style, and the Impact of the photo.
- Finally, the **Assessment** section should mention the most important merits or faults of the photo and determine the overall effectiveness of the image based on the 12 Elements of a successful image.

Thus, your Analysis and Interpretation comments should guide your scores for all the sub-criteria in the rubric.

The four aspects of art criticism (description, analysis, interpretation, and assessment) are explained below using focus questions and writing prompts, which have been edited to meet our needs for photo critiques. **The focus questions and writing prompts below and in the rubric should define the sections or sub-criteria and should guide what you write in each of the sections of the critique framework.**

Describe all the Visual Elements & Techniques Used:

Focus questions:

- What do the title and apparent location tell you about the image?
- What is the genre of the photo?
- What are the subject and structural elements of the photo?
- How was the photo made? Do not assume anything except what can be objectively seen.

Writing prompts:

- Engage with the image objectively without drawing conclusions about it.
- List the visual elements that are recognizable and make a visual inventory of the image.
- List any obvious in-camera or post-processing effects like focus, exposure, texture, color, or lighting that you can see in the photo without drawing conclusions about them.

Analyze the Composition & Effectiveness of Techniques:

Focus questions:

- How are the visual elements (listed above) connected to create the composition?
- Are the elements balanced in the composition, or does the imbalance enhance the photo?
- Are there similarities or repeated elements in the composition?
- Are there points of emphasis or motion in the composition?
- How is the viewer drawn into an abstract image without apparent elements?

Writing prompts:

- Analyze how the photo is organized as a complete composition.
- Describe the merits or faults of the image composition without giving instructions for how they should have been composed, cropped, or otherwise fixed.
- Analyze how the visual elements and technical effects relate to each other and enhance or detract from the image composition.

Interpret Viewer Feelings, Impact & Story:

Focus questions:

- What are the expressive qualities of the image like color, texture, or balance?
- Does the photo remind you of other things you might have experienced (analogies or metaphors)?
- Does the image relate to societal, environmental, or humanistic issues?

Writing prompts:

- Describe the social, environmental, or humanistic impact of the image on you.
- Discuss how the image makes you feel or what it makes you think about.
- Discuss the story told by the image, the creativity of the photo, aspects of style, genre, or the image's message.

Assess the Overall Impact & Effectiveness:

Focus questions:

- What image qualities make you feel it is a success or failure?
- How does it compare to photos you assess as average, above average, or below average?
- How original is the photo? Why is it original or not original?

Writing prompts:

- Describe your opinion of how well the image reflects the criteria for a successful image.
- Discuss your analysis and interpretation of the photo and how they all work together (or not) to create a successful picture.
- You might also include references to sub-criteria that will likely affect your scores and the recognition level it might receive (e.g., exceptional, very effective, mostly effective, somewhat effective, or minimally effective).

Table 4. Interpreting Overall Scores - Recognition Ranges

Total Score	Recognition	Description
≥27	Exceptional photo	Exceptional example of our criteria
≥24 & <27	Very effective photo	Very effectively reflects our criteria
≥21 & <24	Mostly effective photo	Mostly reflects our criteria
≥15 & <21	Somewhat effective photo	Somewhat reflects our criteria
≥6 & <15	Minimally effective photo	Minimally reflects our criteria

Sedona Camera Club Photo Critiquing Rubric v.9 - CRITERIA and Sub-Criteria

<p>Scoring Scale for Sub-Criteria</p> <p>5 = Photo is an exceptional example of the sub-criterion</p> <p>4 = Photo is above average and effectively reflects the sub-criterion</p> <p>3 = Photo is average and basically reflects the sub-criterion</p> <p>2 = Photo is below average and minimally reflects the sub-criterion</p> <p>1 = Photo does not reflect the sub-criterion</p>	<p>Not all the items listed under each sub-criterion are relevant or appropriate to every photo, so we must not score a photo based on items that are irrelevant to the photo. For example, many of the items listed under the Composition criterion do not apply to an abstract photo in which the entire image is the center of interest, and the story is left to the viewer's imagination. Some styles break the 'rules' to create an effective photo. However, at least one item for each sub-criterion should be satisfied for any photo to be a successful image. All photos from landscapes and wildlife to composites and abstracts should be able to score as high as any other photo.</p>
<p>TECHNIQUE</p>	
<p>Focus, Exposure & Lighting (Consider in Analysis, usually in-camera techniques, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the in-camera techniques used to create the photo enhance the photo? • Is the photo well-focused? If selective focus is used, is it effective? • Is the exposure appropriate, without any blocked shadows or blown-out highlights, unless it was intentionally and effectively over or under-exposed? • Does the use and control of light, either manmade or natural, enhance the photograph? 	
<p>Contrast, Color & Production Quality (Consider in Analysis, usually post-processing, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the post-processing and production techniques enhance the photo? • Is the global and local contrast appropriate for the photo? Is the sharpening done effectively? • Is the color saturation appropriate for the subject? • Are the colors balanced, supplying harmony to the photo? • Does the digital photo or print exhibit quality work? • Does the presentation give the photo a finished look? The borders used, either physical or digital, should support and enhance the photo, not distract from it. 	
<p>COMPOSITION</p>	
<p>Elements of Composition (Consider in Analysis, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the relative placement of image objects or elements enhance the photo? Elements include pattern, symmetry, texture, depth of field, lines, framing, perspective, space, balance, color, contrast, etc. • Are the center or centers of interest well placed? Does it stand out from the background? Does its placement work together with all other secondary elements to express the purpose of the photo? • Do the main lines or elements of the picture lead to the main subject? Do they add depth? Does your eye follow a path that keeps it within the picture? • Is the horizon line placed properly for the subject? • Are repetitious shapes or colors appealing to the eye and clearly a pattern or design? • Are composition rules like the rule of thirds applied, if appropriate? • Does the photo achieve simplicity with no extraneous elements? 	
<p>Subject or Story (Consider in Interpretation, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the subject clear, or if the photo is an abstract, is the message or intent apparent and cohesive? • Does the photo tell a story clearly and simply? Or does it otherwise evoke imagination or wonder? • Does the photo communicate to the viewer what the maker saw or felt when the photograph was taken? • Does the photo have a well-chosen title that helps the viewer understand the image? 	
<p>INTEREST</p>	
<p>Creativity or Style (Consider in Interpretation, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything particularly creative, novel, different or exciting about the way the subject or message is expressed or interpreted? • Does the photo represent a specific genre? If so, is it a good representation of that genre? • Does the photo employ a specific style? Is the style appropriate, and is it a good representation of that style? 	
<p>Impact (Consider in Interpretation, score 1-5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the photo have impact, which is the reaction one gets when viewing an image? • Does the photo evoke immediate laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion? • Does the photo draw your eye into the picture and keep your attention longer than expected? 	

PPA Twelve Elements of a Successful Photo in ArtsEdge Order

Twelve elements have been defined as necessary for the success of an art piece or image. Any image, art piece, or photograph will reveal some measure of all twelve elements, while a visually superior example will reveal obvious consideration of each one. The Twelve elements listed below are in the order that they should be considered in the ArtsEdge framework, which is also from most objective to most subjective.

Analyze the Composition and Techniques

- **Technique – In Camera (1-5)**
 - **Technique** is the approach used to create the image. Lighting, posing, capture, presentation media, and more are part of the technique applied to an image.
 - **Lighting—the use and control of light**—refers to how dimension and shape are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is manmade or natural, proper use of it should enhance an image.
- **Technique – Post Processing (1-5)**
 - **Color Balance** supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Color balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.
 - **Technical excellence** is the print quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Retouching, manipulation, sharpness, exposure, printing, mounting, and correct color are some items that speak to the qualities of the physical print. **Presentation** affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used, either physical or digital, should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.
- **Composition (1-5)**
 - **Composition** is important to the design of an image, bringing all the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.
 - **Center of Interest** is the point(s) on the image where the maker wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centers of interest. Occasionally, there will be no specific center of interest when the entire scene collectively serves as the center of interest.

Interpret Viewer Creativity, Style, Story, Feelings, and Impact

- **Subject Matter – Story (1-5)**
 - **Subject Matter** should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image.
 - **Story Telling** refers to the image’s ability to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect his own message or read her own story in an image.
- **Creativity or Style (1-5)**
 - **Style** is defined in several ways as it applies to a creative image. It might be defined by a **specific genre** or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds.
 - **Creativity** is the original, fresh, and external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.
- **Impact (1-5)**
 - **Impact** is the feeling one gets from viewing an image. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion. Impact can be an immediate wow factor, or it can be a subtle fascination that grows the longer you view the image. Any of these twelve elements can contribute to the impact of an image.

Table 2. Assessment Scale for Sub-Criteria

5	Photo is an <u>exceptional</u> example of the sub-criterion
4	Photo <u>effectively</u> reflects the sub-criterion
3	Photo <u>basically</u> reflects the sub-criterion
2	Photo <u>minimally</u> reflects the sub-criterion
1	Photo <u>does not reflect</u> the sub-criterion