Texas 4-H Photography Contest

2025 - 2026 Rules and Guidelines

Last Revised: September 2025

PURPOSE

The Texas 4-H Photography Contest encourages self-expression and allows youth to demonstrate skills learned in photography, including the use of photographic equipment and process of photographs.

RULES AND PROCEDURES	
Participation Grades	Senior age 4-H members in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 as of September 1, 2025.
Photo Eligibility	All photos must be taken with a digital camera (smartphone cameras are included). Photo must be taken by participants between the dates of January 1, 2025 and the time of entry. Photos may be submitted only one time and in only one category.
Photo Format	Must be .jpeg, .jpg. Contestants may use any file naming structure. No RAW files allowed. (updated; removed .png)
Qualifying from County	Each county may enter only one entry per category for a total of 18 entries. As such, counties are highly encouraged to have a selection process (such as a contest) in place to determine each photo that advances in the 18 categories.
Entry Fee	$10.00 per photo
Registration and Uploading	Step 1: Register and pay for entries on 4HOnline. Step 2: Upload all photos on Submittable. Instructions and a direct link will be provided during the 4HOnline registration process.
Deadlines & Entry Period	Registration on 4HOnline and Submittable Opens: April 1, 2026 Registration on 4HOnline and Submittable Closes: April 15, 2026 at 11:59 pm Entries must be approved by the county office by 5 PM on April 21, 2026 **No late entries will be accepted in either system.**
Event Name	2025-2026 Texas 4-H Photography Contest
Ratio and Size	**Size Ratio:** any size ratio, except for panoramic, is acceptable. For this contest, panoramic is defined as a photo with an aspect ratio of 3:1 or 1:3 or wider/taller. **File Size**: Photo must be a minimum of 1 MB (1,000 KB) and a maximum of 20 MB. **Tips**: Upload the highest resolution possible. Review your photo at 100% size before uploading. Check your photo's file properties and/or metadata to ensure it meets the file size requirements. 1 MB (megabyte) is equivalent to 1,000 KB (kilobytes). Photos that are less than 1,000 KB do not meet the minimum file size requirement.
Alterations	Color and Black & White photos are allowed in all categories. Although slight computer enhancements are allowed, such as cropping, minor adjustment of lighting, and red eye reduction; substantially altered photography, such as applying design styles, or using computer graphics will disqualify an entry. Any other alteration, manipulation, or edits to a photo would require the photo to be entered into the Enhanced category.
Text on Photographs	Photographs must not contain camera or user placed text. This includes such things as date stamps, comments, watermarks, or titles. Text or wording that is part of the original photograph (i.e. photo of a street sign, etc.) is acceptable.
Original Work of 4-H member	The entry must be the original photographic work of the 4-H member and not a photo taken by family members, other 4-H members, or secured from any other printed/electronic source. Any photo proven to be found as not original work will result in disqualification of ALL the 4-H member's entries into the Photography Contest. Additionally, actions may be taken against the 4-H member in regard to the Consequences of Misbehavior and Code of Conduct signed by the 4-H member.
ADA Accommodations	If the participant needs any type of accommodation to participate in this program or has questions, please contact Derrick Bruton at d-bruton@tamu.edu by April 1.

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AWARDS, DISPLAY AND JUDGING	
Awards and Recognition	1. **Quality Awards:** Blue, Red, White and Green Participation quality awards will be given based on the total score value. Score ranges for each award are outlined on the attached score sheet. 2. **Best of Show Awards:** A Best of Show rosette will be awarded to one photo in each category. 3. **Monetary Awards:** Each Best of Show winner will receive an e-gift card valued at $250.00. 4. Tentatively, award packets for each county will be available for pickup at Texas 4-H Roundup. If the packet is not picked up, it will be mailed to the county office afterwards. Score sheets with comments will be made available through Submittable. Score sheet access is tied to the email address of the Submittable account holder.
Judging and Results	For Quality Awards, each photograph will be judged against a set of judging criteria, and not against photographs of peers. Based on total points awarded for each photograph, the participant will be awarded either a blue, red, white, or a participation ribbon (outlined on the attached score sheet). The Best of Show Awards is a competitive process whereby judges will select the best photo within a given category. Volunteer judges will make those determinations and all decisions are final. Results will be available on the Texas 4-H Website after Texas 4-H Roundup concludes.
Roundup Display and Participation	This is not a Texas 4-H Roundup contest. However, if timing and resources permit, photos may be displayed publicly during Texas 4-H Roundup. If possible, county award packets will also be made available for counties to pick up during Roundup. Roundup participation is not required by photography contestants.
RELEASES	
Content	Photos that are deemed obscene, vulgar, sexually oriented, hateful, threatening, or otherwise violate any decency standards or laws are strictly prohibited. The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program reserves the right to determine and refuse inappropriate or unsuitable entries.
Copyright	The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program respects the rights related to copyright laws and intellectual property. All photos must be the participant's own work. Use of a photo from other sources/people is not allowed. The photographer retains the copyright of any submitted images.
Display and Future Usage Rights	By entry, the participant grants a license to the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and any other public or private agency authorized by the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program, the use and rights associated to the use of the photographic likeness, in promotional publications, and other media, without compensation. Certain photos may be used for 4-H program and marketing uses.
Model and Property Releases	It is required that each participant have sufficient permission granted to both the photographer and the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program to publish and use, as needed, any photo showing any recognizable locations or people photographed. Documentation should be retained by the participant and be available upon request from the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program.
DISQUALIFICATION	
Reasons for disqualification *Disqualification for any reason will forfeit all entry fees. No refunds will be given.*	• Broken content rule. This includes inappropriate or unsuitable content. • Broken copyright rule. Photo is not the original work of the 4-H member. This action is considered theft, which is a major offense in the Texas 4-H Rules & Guidelines. • Broken display and future rights usage rule. • Broken model and property release rule. • Category: Does not meet category criteria, rules or guidelines. (see category descriptions) • Category: Multiple county entries into a category. • Category: Same photo entered in multiple categories. • County did not select/certify photograph to represent county by the deadline. • Entry fee not paid or only partial fee paid. • Extremely poor quality and/or low resolution causing the subject matter to be unrecognizable. • Manipulation of photo beyond what is allowed. Disqualification for any reason will forfeit all entry fees. No refunds will be given.
Appropriateness of Category	It is extremely important that 4-H members, project leaders, parents, and County Extension Agents review the descriptions of each category very carefully. Do not enter photographs into categories that are duplicates from other categories or ones that do not clearly meet the category description. Photographs that do not meet the description of the category may be disqualified at the judge's discretion.

TEXAS 4-H PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST
2025-2026 CATEGORIES
(all descriptions have been revised/simplified)

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	NOT ALLOWED
Animals – Domestic	Photos of domesticated animals adapted for human environments. Examples: dogs, cats, horses, pigs, chickens.	Wildlife, all waterfowl, zoo animals, or animals not under human care.
Animals – Wildlife	Photos of undomesticated animals in natural or zoo-like environments. Examples: deer, ducks, birds, snakes, whales.	Domesticated animals, livestock, or pets.
Catch-All	Photos that do not fit in any other category.	Duplicate entry of a photo already submitted in another category. Photo that belongs in another category.
Details & Macro	Close-up photos highlighting fine details or making small objects appear larger than life. Examples: insect eyes, veins on a leaf, water droplets.	Standard close-ups that don't emphasize fine details; digitally created "macro look" (heavily cropped to simulate a close-up)
Dominant Color	Photos where one specific color is the primary visual element. Examples: a bowl of lemons in strong yellow light.	Black & white, sepia, duotone, or multiple equally dominant colors.
Elements of Design	Photos emphasizing line, shape, pattern, form, texture, or perspective. Examples: repeating tile patterns, ripples in water showing repeating patterns, a spiral staircase showing perspective, textured bark on a tree, etc.	Digitally created or computer-generated designs (Photoshop, Illustrator, etc.).
Enhanced	Photos significantly manipulated or created using editing techniques. Examples: composites, stitched panoramas, artistic filters.	Use of stock, AI-generated, or non-original images.
Food	Still-life style photos highlighting food for artistic or commercial effect. Examples: meals, cakes, fruits, table settings.	Alcoholic beverages or photos where food is not the main subject.
Landscape & Nature (Non-Animal)	Photos of outdoor scenics and natural settings without animals as the main focus. Examples: gardens, seascapes, cityscapes.	People, man-made structures, or animals as the main subject.
Leading Line	Photos using lines to guide the viewer's eye toward the subject. Example: a river leading to a bridge.	Weak or implied lines that do not clearly guide the eye.
Long Exposure	Photos using extended shutter speeds to capture motion effects or low-light scenes. Examples: fireworks, night skies, light trails, waterfalls.	Images with artificial blur or digital effects simulating long exposure.
Motion/Action	Photos that capture and freeze movement. Examples: sports, running animals, spinning rides.	Images of objects that are typically stationary or slow-moving. Blurry or poorly focused photos unless intentionally artistic.
People	Photos of individuals or groups across all ages and activities. Examples: families, children, portraits, fashion, sports.	Photos without model consent; animals or objects as main subject.
Plant/Flora	Photos of a single flower, tree, bush, or plant as the primary subject. Examples: a rose, a tree's canopy. *(Large landscapes with multiple plants belong in Landscape & Nature.)*	Large landscapes where a single plant is not the central focus.
Reflections	Photos capturing mirrored images in water, glass, metal, or other reflective surfaces. Examples: lakes, puddles, water droplet, building facades.	Images where the reflection is not the primary subject.
Shadow/ Silhouette	Photos where a shadow or silhouette is the primary subject against a brighter background. Examples: shadows of people, animals, or structures.	Images where the shadow or silhouette is not the primary subject.
Transportation	Photos showcasing vehicles or modes of travel. Examples: bustling urban streets, cars, buses, trains, boats, bicycles, airplanes, and rockets.	Images where transportation is background only, not the subject.
Theme – Volunteers in Action (New)	Celebrate the heart of Texas 4-H by capturing volunteers in meaningful moments of service. From mentoring youth and leading workshops to organizing events and supporting communities, showcasing the dedication, passion, and behind-the-scenes efforts of 4-H volunteers who make a difference every day.	Posed portraits without volunteer activity shown; photos where the subject is not a 4-H volunteer.