



PSA-EID Study Groups

Welcome to PSA-EID Study Groups!

Study groups are an opportunity to learn new photographic techniques, to learn how other people react to our images, to learn what other people are doing photographically, to share and improve our photographic methods, learn new methods, and to interact with other photographers regularly, in short, to learn and to improve our images.

Each study group has up to seven members, one of whom is the group's Administrator. Most groups have general photographic interests where anything photographic goes, but a few are specialized in such topics as Monochrome, Creative Images (defined as "departure from reality,") and special software methods.

Whatever the group's interests, it interacts each month through the internet by way of its Administrator. Each member sends its administrator a new image and description. The Administrator posts all images on the internet once every month. Two weeks later each member sends his or her comments on all the group's images of that month for all to see.

This document gives the guidelines as to how all this is done.

Timing

The process starts on the tenth of the month, the deadline for sending images to your group's administrator. The administrator will normally post them to the Group's web site on the tenth, or as soon after that as possible, and will advise you of the posting.

You don't have to wait until the tenth. If you can get them in sooner, it will be a big help to the administrator. If your images are not received by a few days before the deadline, you will get a reminder that they are due, but you should not count on being reminded; the administrator may not have time to remind everyone.

About two weeks later, on the twenty fifth of the month, your comments on all of the current month's images are due. They are posted on the twenty fifth, and you will receive a corresponding notice.

If you have a problem in meeting either of these deadlines, or will not be able to participate that month, let your administrator know in advance as a courtesy. It may be possible to make special arrangements for your participation if the administrator knows beforehand.

Every group has a vacation, “a no images or comments this month,” at irregular intervals about once a year. After all, even the administrator needs a vacation once in a while.

Submitting Images

Standards on image and file size are needed in order that images will be displayed properly without taking too much time to download (especially for members using dial-up connections,) and to keep consistency in appearance throughout EID study groups.

The EID standards are that your image must fit in a box that is no larger than 500 X 500 pixels, that the file size of your image should be no larger than 100KB, and that all images must be in JPG format.

Some groups and their administrators may elect to use a larger image size, up to 768 X 768 pixels with approval of the Study Group Director.

This is how to size your images:

1. In Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, you can resize your image with the command sequence Image > Image Size. In the dialog box check “Constrain Proportions” and “Resample.” Use the Bicubic method, (or Bicubic Sharper method if your image editor has it.) In the boxes labeled “Pixel Dimensions” at the top of the menu, change the pixel dimensions so that neither the height nor width is greater than 500 pixels. Pixel Dimensions are the only numbers that need to be changed. You do NOT have to change the resolution of the image. (The “Resolution” command is only a command to your printer for printing.)

Other image editing programs use a similar image resizing command.

2. After changing the pixel dimensions, you need to set the file size. The easiest way is to use the “Save for Web” command. This brings up a dialog box where you will find a little arrow or “list” symbol on the right side above the word Optimized. If you click on this you will find a selection "Optimize to File Size." If you select this, you can enter 100 KB in the box “Desired File Size,” and Photoshop will select the highest quality that will keep the file under 100KB.

Other image editing programs have equivalent commands.

3. The next step is to save and name your image. The standard way to do this is with a number assigned by your administrator. If your number is, for example 3, then your image file every month) is named "m3.jpg". This will be a big help to your administrator in keeping track the group's images on the web site without the administrator having to rename everyone's files.

If you have done a lot of work on the image, or for any reason would like to show a "before" or "during" image to illustrate what or how you did something, you may include a smaller thumbnail image to be placed on the web site with your discussion of the image. Size these images the same way as the main image (above,) except that the maximum size must be no more than 250 pixels in either dimension and the maximum permissible file size is 50 KB. Name the file to include the word "Before" or "During" in the file name, like this: "m3 BEFORE.jpg". This is something that is probably not necessary every month, but can sometimes be very helpful in explaining your work.

Your administrator has instructions to return to you for correction any image file that exceeds these dimensions and sizes. If this happens, please don't be offended.

When you send your image to the administrator, include a description a description of your image and how you did it. This is very important in helping the other members to understand just what you did and what your objectives in making the image really were.

Some suggested items to include are a description of the subject matter, the effect you were trying to achieve, what attracted you to the subject; whether the image is from film (and what film) or digital camera, how it got into the computer; the photo editing program and any other software you used, and (most importantly) the software steps you did to the image; and any technical details like focal length, shutter speed or aperture, or other camera settings that are relevant to evaluating your image. It is OK to include comments on new software or new equipment as part of the discussion of your image, but please don't make your discussion solely about that; it is the image that is most important.

Please also include a title, just as you want it to appear on the web site. Don't make the administrator guess what the title might be.

Make the image(s) into attachment(s) to an e-mail to your administrator and the written material (including title) a part of the body of the e-mail. Do not make the written material or images part of an MS Word or other attached document. Since the administrator will copy and paste from the e-mail into a formatted HTML document for the web site, having to open additional attached documents makes extra work.

Finally please make "PSA-EID" the first words in the subject line on your e-mails. With this, it is much less likely to be lost in spam filters.

Submitting Comments

Your comments on all of your group's images for the current month (due by the twenty fifth,) are really what the study group is for. This is where everyone has a chance to learn.

"This is a nice picture" or "I like it" are not by themselves very helpful comments. Here are some alternate suggestions and thoughts for comments:

We do NOT score the photos. No numbers, no stars, etc. This is a "study" group, not a photo contest. It is a sharing of images, techniques, and personal reactions so that all members can learn to make better photographs.

You don't need to comment the same way as a camera club judge would do, but you may if you like.

You can say how YOU react to the picture as a whole as if you saw it in a gallery and were making comments about it.

You can say how you react to the digital techniques used to edit the images, the choice of techniques and their execution, especially if you can suggest better ones.

You can say what you would have done in a similar situation or to correct a similar problem.

You can say how the same effect could have achieved using another technique.

You can suggest other things to do to the same image.

You do not need to confine your comments to digital editing techniques, but should feel free to suggest different or better compositional methods, camera or lighting techniques, or ways to improve impact or interest, that is, anything that would help make a better image.

It is all right to point out (in a constructive manner) anything you that you consider a defect, but remember that photographers often have emotional attachment to an image, so you need be diplomatic about it. The study group is supposed to be a fun sharing of ideas and an enlightened sharing of our reactions. The more creative the suggestions the better and more informed we will all be.

You can download the photo, work on it yourself, and include a thumbnail of your ideas in the comment to illustrate your point. In this case you can simply select the image you want to discuss on the member's web page image, right click on it to bring up a local menu, and select "Save As" to where you can find it in your computer. Do your thing to illustrate your point, and then save it as under "Submitting Images" above, making the

maximum dimension 250 pixels; this will automatically give a file size within reasonable bounds. A thumbnail this size is not very good for showing anything subtle, but does a good job in illustrating format and composition, and sometimes tones and colors. Give the thumbnail a filename consisting of original file name, followed by your number, like this: m1-m3.jpg (if you are commenting on member 1's image and you are member 3.) This gives all members a better idea on what is being discussed.

Please send the administrator your comments in the body of an e-mail, and attach any thumbnails directly to the e-mail, just as you did for the images themselves; please don't send your comments as attached documents.

Understanding Comments

Since most of us have emotional attachments to some of our images, there will probably come a time when comments by fellow members can sting, even though offence was not intended. It will help to remember:

We don't know what the other person knows, so let us take intended constructive criticisms in a positive manner.

Don't get upset; not everyone sees his or her own crooked horizons. (It is permissible to giggle to yourself at some of them, however.)

Appreciate the comments and ideas that we acquire from the rest of the members. Remember that not everyone has the same tastes, nor does everyone visually like the same cars, architecture, fashions, colors, or whatever.

There isn't always a right or wrong, often merely preferences; the supposed "rules" of composition are not cast in concrete, but are merely guidelines that don't necessarily always apply. There are times when any supposed "rule" can be violated to achieve a better image.

We all know that there is often more than one way to perform a digital technique so be happy to hear about other methods.

A Word About File and Image Sizes

Members are sometimes concerned with two aspects of image files.

For one, they sometimes worry about having their files stolen from the web in spite of the copyright notice on the site. This should not be a concern; if someone wants to steal an image from the web they are stealing pixels, and 500 pixels on a side aren't enough to produce a good print. For most purposes a printing resolution of 240 ppi is the lowest resolution that will produce an acceptable print. Divide a total of 500 pixels by 240 pixels

per inch and you get a print of less than two inches square, hardly big enough to be worth stealing. Besides that, an image with no more than 500 pixels on its longest side is not big enough for salon or most club competitions, either.

The other concern is that a 100 KB file may not have enough resolution to show off an image properly. Actually, it IS big enough because your monitor does such a poor job of providing fine detail; even 100 KB is large enough to provide more detail than your monitor can show for most images of 500 pixels on a side. Try it yourself: make a group of successively smaller files from the same original. Most of the time you will not notice a loss of detail until you get to a file much smaller than 100 KB.

The problem addressed by requiring an upper limit to file sizes is that many members of PSA study groups and others who view the web site use slow dial-up internet service, so larger file sizes would take a discouragingly long time to download, for no good reason.