

# PRESENTATION OF PRINTS FOR JUDGING

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This document advises how to produce prints for club judging evenings and for WAPF competitions. It is based on my club experience, as exhibitions coordinator for WAPF, and as a WAPJA judge. I have experienced the difficulties running WAPF exhibitions and competitions. Together with Ron Speed and Brent Acie I judged the 2019 Wagin Interclub. These comments apply widely, not only to WAPF competitions, but also competitions with APS requirements, including the Perth National Photographic Competition (Royal Show).

*The comments here are advisory, and explain some of the competition rules.  
Whenever you enter a competition, read the rules carefully.*

## DEVELOPING YOUR MASTER FILE

Although the principles described here are based around Lightroom Classic and Photoshop, the concepts are applicable to any development software.

Lightroom Classic's inbuilt workflow guides you along a fairly safe path, but if you use Photoshop without understanding what you are doing, you can easily and irrevocably wreck your original image. Photoshop and similar pixel editing applications eventually perform calculations on your image file, changing it forever. The use of Layers and Masks delays the calculations, but when you flatten or resize the image, the calculations are performed and your image file is changed permanently. Using RAW images avoids this problem to some extent – the image has to be saved in a new format and the RAW image is never modified, but then you have to manage your workflow to avoid losing all the work you have spent developing the image. If the original was a JPEG, and you didn't open it in Lightroom Classic or ACR before working on it in Photoshop, and then you save it, your image is permanently changed. You have to recover the original from the camera card – if it is still there.

The way around this is to always ensure you start with your original image, and develop it to make a **MASTER FILE**. This has all the development: input sharpening, noise reduction, removal of distractions, cropping, tone and colour adjustments, creative sharpening, all completed, **BUT NOT RESIZING**. Lightroom Classic guides you along this path with its inbuilt workflow, but with Photoshop, save your file as a master in Photoshop (.psd or .tif) to preserve the layers. Don't save the Master File as a JPEG. It cannot be adjusted later, and you may overwrite the original JPEG image.

*HINT: Mark your master files consistently to distinguish them from copies in the Lightroom Classic Grid View or Bridge window. Flag them or use a colour code.*

**THE MASTER FILE IS USED TO PRODUCE EVERYTHING ELSE YOU NEED – SCREEN-SIZED JPEG FOR DIGITAL JUDGING, WEB IMAGES, AND PRINTS.**

*Start from your master file to produce any required output – digital or print.*

Every time you save a JPEG in Photoshop, it applies the JPEG algorithm, changing pixels permanently. This algorithm compresses the file and sharpens the image. The more times you save, the more likely you will end up with posterization (stepped tones where they should be smoothly graduated) and JPEG artefacts that destroy fine details.

Every time you resize a file in Photoshop, a new set of pixels is created, extrapolating from the original pixels, so this process removes detail. Resizing your master file to produce a screen-sized JPEG is fine, but you cannot increase the size of the screen-sized JPEG to get back the same detail as the original.

The size of the file you print should be much larger than the screen-sized file submitted for the digital stage of the competition, because prints require far more detail and colours.

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*NEVER USE THE SCREEN-SIZED JPEG FILE TO PRODUCE YOUR EXHIBITION PRINTS!!*

## PRINTING YOUR IMAGE

### WHETHER YOU HAVE YOUR OWN PRINTER OR YOU TAKE THE IMAGE TO A PHOTOFINISHER FOR PRINTING, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINTING PROCESS.

Firstly, decide exactly the print dimensions to produce. There is no sense in producing a large A3 sized print if you don't have a sharp image with fine detail. While a large print is dramatic, in a judging session a small one is different, and sometimes catches the judge's eye. Having said that be aware that WAPF has a set size for competition prints. The matted print shall be 40 x 50cm and the minimum size of visible image is 400cm<sup>2</sup>.

I have standard dimensions and standard aspect ratios so that matts made for one print should fit another. I use the following standard aspect ratios: Square, 4 x 5, 3 x 2, 16 x 9 and 16 x 6. Those getting prints done commercially could use the standard print sizes offered by their photofinisher. Crop and size your image to precisely fit the standard size, checking the edges to ensure no distractions *and you have enough margin to fit under the matt.*

The next choice is type of paper. There are a number of excellent papers you can choose, all of which affect how your image will look. Make your choice carefully – it does influence the judge. I love matte papers, particularly for my mono images. The satin finish papers are also popular. Metallic papers are well worth a look to make vivid colours pop. Heavier papers stay flatter, particularly if your image is large.

Glossy paper is not used by professionals for paper prints, because a glossy image has to be perfectly flat to avoid a distracting reflection. They only achieve this with prints on acrylic bases, or on aluminium. Satin finishes are a good alternative to gloss for matted prints.

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## RESOLUTION

The standard resolution of 72 ppi (pixels per inch) used for internet files and digital images is too coarse for prints. The individual pixels will be visible. It is wasteful and needless to print at a higher resolution than 300 ppi.

It is usual to set the resolution for printing at either about 240 ppi or 300 ppi depending on viewing distance. Massive advertising posters intended to be viewed from 20 metres will have a very low resolution. Below 200 ppi may be acceptable for large prints of A2 or larger. But for photographs of 40 x 50 cm down to mini-prints, 300 ppi can be used.

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## IF YOU OWN A PRINTER

I assume that you have been trained in colour management of printing, and that you are aware of the process of creating a print. You should be familiar with the selection of printing profiles, the rendering intent, sizing your print output. If not, read up on these in your printer's operating manual, and instructions from printing paper suppliers. The training put on by Team Digital is highly recommended. It's free if you buy your printer from them.

If you are printing on from Lightroom Classic, click on your master file and go to the **PRINT MODULE**. Its inbuilt workflow will easily lead you to producing consistently good prints. You *Create Saved Print* if you want to print off identical copies. You save a *Printing Template* (click on + in the Template panel) to store all the print settings to use on other images. Name the template logically. Paper size, Paper type, Cell size. For example: A4 Ilford Metallic Gloss 285 x 200. Using a template means you do not have to worry about inputting the details every time.

If you are printing from Photoshop, start from your saved master file.

1. Resize the image to the length dimensions (mm, or inches) you have chosen with the print resolution at 300 ppi. A resolution of 240 ppi is acceptable for larger images.
2. Check the colours of the print will match the master by proofing the image. You select the printer and paper profile from the proofing menu, and make small corrections using Curves and Hue/saturation layers, comparing the proof to the original.
3. Perform output sharpening, which will depend on the print size, paper type and image viewing distance.
4. Rendering Intent should be *Relative* for Mono prints.
5. If you want to keep the print file for further copies, Save-as with a new name.
6. If you want to make prints of other sizes, start again from your master file

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## CREATING PRINT FILES FOR PHOTOFINISHERS IN LIGHTROOM CLASSIC

If you are to have others print your file, some of the above may be done. A lot depends on how you submit your images to the photofinisher. Most photofinishers have a web site with a file transfer function that you can use to submit images. A good photofinisher will work with a TIFF master with all your layers, using them to proof the image to their printer. All photofinishers will work with a JPEG file.

For that special image you want to frame and hang on your wall, or has a good chance of winning a major competition, contact Fitzgeralds and ask to sit with the printer. See below.

Lightroom Classic can be used in two ways to create a file for printing by a photofinisher.

- The **PRINT** module can be set up to produce JPEG files that can be sent to your printer.
- Use the **EXPORT** button in Library view to make a JPEG or TIFF for printing from your master file as below.

Use the following settings for the export dialogue box.

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## EXPORT LOCATION

Wherever you like. Recommendation: in a folder called 2019 Prints in your 2019 folder. If it is here, you won't see it in your master file's folder, avoiding a mix-up.

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## FILE NAMING

Set up a custom file name with the original file name plus size and type of print.

Example: G7C3418\_Satin A3.tif

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## FILE SETTINGS

As agreed with your photofinisher, or

File format: TIFF recommended      Compression: None

Colour space: Adobe RGB      Bit depth: 16 bits/component

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## IMAGE SIZING

Resize to Fit      Height & Width

W: 38      H: 38      cm      Resolution: 300 pixels per inch

These settings will work for A3 paper with 3 x 2 and longer aspect ratios. They should be varied to suit the size of the image you are producing. Lightroom Classic uses a frame to fit your images in, which is 38 x 38 cm in this case. A portrait image will be 38 cm high, and a landscape image will be 38 cm wide, irrespective of aspect ratio.

Turn off *Resize to Fit*, if your photofinisher will size and output sharpen the image.

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## OUTPUT SHARPENING

Sharpen for: Matte paper/Gloss paper      Amount: Optional

The photofinisher may adjust your file a little, resizing it slightly and perhaps adjusting with a Levels adjustment.

## RECOMMENDED PHOTOFINISHERS:

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### FITZGERALD IMAGING

Fitzgerald Street, Perth. Professional service used by Australia's top professional photographers, including Tony Hewitt, Nick Melidonis and Christian Fletcher. It is also used by WAPF for printing their ClickWest and WA Maritime museum competition images. Printing PrintWest competition images can be arranged through WAPF.

Take your image file in and see it on an Eizo ColorEdge colour management monitor, where it will be proofed (colours exactly matched) to the paper type you choose. State of the art printing inks and speciality fine art papers are available. Worth considering for major competitions, such as the Perth Nationals, and for framed prints. Get your best images printed and framed here.

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### MANDURAH PRINTERS

The following printers are used by club members:

TERRACE ART FRAMERS, Smart Street, Mandurah.

The gallery shows prints by Christian Fletcher and paintings by Emma Blyth. No colour management monitor? Epson printers.

CAMERA HOUSE MANDURAH. Colour management monitor?

OFFICEWORKS, HARVEY NORMAN. Cheap printing services.

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### ... NOW CHECK YOUR WORK!

Now you have your print, examine it carefully. It is embarrassing to find your image marked down, because the printer misbehaved slightly (nozzles should have been cleaned, or you used the wrong printing profile), or there is a distraction you missed on the screen.

## MATTING OR MOUNTING

If you have your image printed by Fitzgerald's, you have the option of having the image printed with or without a border, and flush mounted on a board of the specified matte size. Images like this are accepted by WAPF. Club rules currently require matted prints, but there are no logical reasons why flush mounted prints should not be acceptable. A rule change could be considered if there is support for flush mounted images.

Most images however are submitted with a matt board frame. This is preferable, as it gives protection to the print during handling.

Re-usable matts save money and are acceptable for club judging, but they are usually not good enough for exhibitions.

The matt board inner bevel may cover some of the print so as it shows neatly. However, when you print, allow enough negative space so that the matt edge does not partially cover something important to your composition, such as the subject's feet. The alternative is to use a reveal, which is unprinted border between the image and the matt. Photofinishers can produce a very accurate reveal, but it is more difficult to do yourself.

Terrace Art Framers will matt your own prints professionally for little cost and are highly recommended, but if you want to do it yourself, read on.

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## MATTING MATERIALS

Materials are available from Jackson's and other art material suppliers.

Matt board is available in a variety of colours. Note that matts for WAPF competitions shall be white or black, but there is no colour restriction on matts for club judging. The choice of matt colour is important, and will influence the judge. It should complement the image. Black matts are the least distracting for most images. White ones can be distracting for dark, low key images, but are probably best for high key. There are a variety of subtly different white and black shades.

Matt board sheets are 812 x 1018mm standard sizes.

You will also need backing material, and 3mm foam board is usually used. In addition, you will need double sided adhesive tape, a strong tape and a standard adhesive tape.

The thickness of the matt, print and backing shall not exceed 5mm.

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## TOOLS

A matt cutter is the tool to make bevelled cuts on the inside of the frame. One made by Logan is available from Jackson's for around \$60. A special matt straight edge guides the cutter keeps the cut straight. There are more elaborate tools available that are easier to use at a higher cost.

A sharp box-cutter or craft knife is needed to cut up the matt board and backing. A special matt cutting knife is available in the kits to make neat straight edges.

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## MAKING THE MATT

The matt is required to be 40 x 50cm for WAPF competitions, so that the exhibition shows all the entries fairly. Smaller matts are accepted in club judging evenings.

Cut the backing to be 1 to 3mm smaller than the matte to ensure it is invisible from the front. Although many (including professional photofinishers) stick the matt and backing together only with double sided tape, it is better to join them with a hinge of heavy adhesive tape at the top edge. The matt and backing will never separate.

Practice with the matt cutting tools. Ensure the blade is sharp and undamaged. If the cut is not perfect, start again.

The photograph should be positioned with the image showing through the window. Print the image 3 to 5mm larger than the hole in the matt, and ensure there is enough negative space around your subject that it is not covered by the matt. I tape the image to the backing with the adhesive tape on the front of the print, but some tape it to the matt. Only adhere the photograph to the backing or matt at its top edge. It should hang freely. As humidity changes, matt board, backing and print expand and contract at different rates. If the print is fixed at more than one edge it will bubble.

First use two small pieces of tape to position the image. Check that the print is correctly positioned: that you can see no white edge, that nothing is cut off by the matt frame, and the horizon is perfectly horizontal. When you are satisfied with the position, use enough tape to hold at least 2/3 of the top edge. A common mistake is to use insufficient and the print slips while it is exhibited vertically.

The matt and the backing should be stuck together with double-sided tape. For mounts that will be re-used, small pieces of double-sided tape can peel apart easily. Magnets and Velcro have also been used, but remember the maximum thickness is 5mm.

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## PRINTS FOR COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION

Prints for WAPF competitions and exhibitions will spend far longer being hung than the 3 hours hanging of a club night. This will be several days to as much as two months. In addition, prints will be transported in bulk from one exhibition to another.

The quality of mounting is important. WAPF experience is that a large number of prints in recycled mounts come apart during exhibition. Such prints are disqualified.

If that special image has been selected from the digital round to be put in the final print competition, it is worth going that extra mile. Use a new mount, stuck together with plenty of double sided tape. Print judging is of the print AND mount. If the matt is dirty and dog eared, it will distract and be marked down.

## IMAGE FILES FOR PRINTING BY WAPF

The WAPF ClickWest, In My View and WA Maritime Museum competitions do not require the entrant to produce a print. Instead the entrant is asked to send in a High Res (high resolution) JPEG file in Adobe RGB or sRGB format, 4000 pixels on the longest edge at a resolution of 300 ppi.

For ClickWest and In My View, your image is imported into a print-sized Photoshop document, and is titled by the WAPF competition coordinator. This file is sent to Fitzgeralds for printing. The print is flush mounted on a foam board.

## PRINT LABEL

The title and author's name shall not be visible from the front of the print, so it is invisible to the judge.

The print should be labelled on the back, or the backing marked, at **THE TOP LEFT HAND SIDE**. This convention is so that when the image is hung, it will be the right way up as the author intended. If your image is labelled in the wrong corner it will not be hung and judged as you intend. Sometimes the orientation of an image is obvious, but there are many examples, particularly for abstract images, where it is not.

The labels for club judging shall have as a minimum Author's name, the Image category and the Image title.

Images for any other competition should be labelled exactly as required by the competition rules.

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