

SHOOT FOR THE STARS

By Carol Bailey, FPSA

Have you heard other PSAers talk about stars and didn't know what they were talking about? Have you seen the Star Ratings listed in the PSA Journal and wondered how the members got them? Or do you know what the Star Ratings are, but don't know what to do to get them? If you answered yes to any of the questions, then this article may get you started shooting for the stars in five easy steps.

The Star Rating activity is simply a method of recognizing photographic proficiency in PSA recognized exhibitions. Each division (Color, Nature, etc.) has its own requirements for achieving the various star rating levels. The formats for the applications are also different. This leads us to step one.

Step one: Choose your area or areas of interest (e.g. Color, Nature, Travel, etc.) This is the easiest step and you have probably already done it. Remember, you can always add or delete areas of interest at a later time.

Step two: Get the Star Rating information on the web site or by writing to the Star Ratings Director of each Division you are interested in. If you write, don't forget to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. The name and address of the Star Ratings Director can be found in the PSA Journal in the "Services and Activities" section. Look under the "Services for Individuals" and then the Division. Once you find the proper Division, the items are in alphabetical order so you need to go to "Star Ratings."

"Services and Activities" are currently listed in the PSA Journal quarterly. Be sure to use the latest issue of the PSA Journal with this information as the Directors and addresses do change.

Step three: Entering the exhibitions is the most time consuming. It is also the most rewarding once the score cards start coming back showing your acceptances. While you are waiting for the information sheet to arrive, you can get started on this step.

Every month the PSA Journal has a section, "Exhibitions", which lists the recognized exhibitions for each Division. There are instructions for using the listings at the beginning of the section. Go to <http://www.exhibitionforms.com> and print the entry forms you need. Write to the exhibitions at the address shown in the PSA Journal to request an entry form if one is not on the website. The entry form usually covers all Divisions so you don't need to print nor ask for more than one copy in most cases.

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS on each entry form. Some exhibitions may have restricted subjects. Others may plan to sell the images on a CD. A few reserve the right to demand the original for their own future use without payment to you. If you do not agree with the conditions, do not enter the exhibition. Fill out the entry form and labels as required for the sections you will be entering. Mail your entry so it will arrive before the closing date.

Step four: Keep records of what you have entered. Update the records when you receive the score card and catalog. Whether you use a computer or a card system, keep the following in mind:

- 1 The information that will be required when you apply for a Star.
- 2 Acceptances are counted only in the section they were entered in, ie. acceptances in a color exhibition cannot be counted towards a nature star, even if the picture is a nature subject.

3 The format for star applications is different for the various divisions.

4 Setting up your records properly will save a lot of grief when you reach the higher number of Stars. (Don't think you will never get that far.)

5 If you have a computer with a spreadsheet application, you may want to have a file for each division with the following column headings: Acceptance number; title; date; and salon. (This is in addition to any data base files you may have.) The advantages of these files are you can tell at a glance how close you are to a star and they are easy to manipulate into the proper order or sequence for the Star Rating application. This is especially handy if the division wants the same information in two different formats (date order on one and alpha by salon or title on the other.)

6 A separate "tracking file" is useful. The column headings could be: Exhibition, Division, Score Card, Return, Catalog, Medal, Followup, Remarks. You simply fill in the Exhibition name, Divisions entered, and dates for the score card, returns and catalog. When they arrive, cross out the date. If you receive a medal, write in yes and cross it out when you receive it. The follow-up date and remarks would be used if you do not receive something or find an error in the catalog.

Note: If you would like more information on records on a computer, card file or binder, write to the author. She would be happy to share the information she has and what has worked and what hasn't.

Step five: Apply for your star when you reach the required level of acceptances and titles. Each time you apply for a star you should check the latest "Services and Activities" directory in the Journal for the name and address of the Star Ratings Director and the proper fee.

The requirements for the various stars can be found at <http://www.psa-photo.org/star-rating.htm> There are additional stars after the 5th star is reached in each of the divisions.

That is all there is to it. Soon you will be reading your name in the Star Ratings Awards section of the PSA Journal. As you earn your Stars and try harder for acceptances, your photography will improve.