

Audio Visual Competitions

Good Practice

This document is offered, not as rules, but as guidance on good practice for those entering Audio Visual Competitions. There is an etiquette of what is generally acceptable in these types of competitions for the benefit of organisers and authors. However, some of what is mentioned below may well be in the rules of the competition.

Final File Size

It makes no sense at all to create a slide show of 700MB, when it could have been 40MB. There are issues for the organisers and you. For you the author, the problems are that your slide show may not run all that well on the laptop that is used on the presentation night or even when being judged. A file size of over 700MB demands a lot of computing power and many laptops even modern ones don't have it. If you have added animation too you could be in real trouble.

You may not notice any issues yourself while making your slide show, because you used a powerful desktop that could handle the file size. Is a slide show likely to be that large when it only runs for 5 minutes? Yes, I am looking at one right now that was entered into an AV competition and many others entered were also many times larger than they needed to be and it did impact on how the slide shows played.

Why is the file size so big?

The author made a slide show with a screen resolution of 1920*1080 pixels, which is fine, but did not resize the images in an image editor before making the slide show. Lets look at the result of one random image I took from my own image files. One that contained a lot of detail.

Example 1 - An image from a 20MP camera (Canon 5D) saved as a jpg at compression level 12 came up as a 16MB file

*Example 2 - The same image cropped to 1920*1080 saved as a jpg at compression level 6 = 632k*

A compression level of 6 or 8 is enough for your needs and you will not lose image quality because you have compressed the jpeg to level 6 or 8. You're only doing it the once. So, with example 1 you only have to put 45 images in your slide show around 16MB each, plus a music track or two at 10MB and your up there with with a 730MB file

in example 2, the same 45 images are under 29MB + 2 tracks at 10MB and we have 39MB

Which one of those two slide shows will run best on that 5 year old laptop do you think?

Slide Show Aspect Ratio

The aspect ratio you decide to make your slide show is a creative choice for you, but some clubs will make a rule restricting what you can create. Generally speaking the standard in 2015/2016 for audio visual is HD resolution 1920*1080

Try to aim for that size, because your audio visual will run OK on all PC screens, laptops, TV's and Projectors, even projectors with a lower resolution. This does not restrict your creative right to make a square slide show or a panoramic slide show, as long as you stay within those 1920*1080 pixel parameters or those specified by the rules.

Colour Space

Make sure you create your slide show with images in sRGB colour. Your image editor should be able to show you what colour space your using and allow you to convert your images prior to making your slide show.

If you get this wrong, it will only affect you with the images not being seen as you intended. Often the images can look weak in colour.

Music/Sound format

Some enthusiasts will say they always use Wav music/sound files because they are none Lossy, (i.e. *don't lose any quality when saved in that format*) Mp3's are lossy, but I challenge you to tell the difference on a set of computer speakers, a half decent Hi-Fi, or in a club room on presentation night. An Mp3 should be your final choice for your slide show because it helps keep your AV file size down.

A typical 5 minute music track as a wav file could be 30MB in size. The equivalent as an Mp3 will be around 5MB. Think of Wav -v- Mp3 sound files rather like the difference between a Photoshop file and a Jpeg file when viewed on screen. Very different in file size, but visually you can't tell the difference.

Slide Show Format/File Types

The file type you will present your slide show to the organisers should be file types that will play on a Windows computer without the need for other software to be required. The organisers cannot expect judges to download and install software on their own PC to be able to view obscure format types.

Typical file types you should use are:-

1. Executable files of the type you can create with PicturesToExe, Pro-Show Gold and other AV software. Nothing needs to be added to a PC to run these.
2. An Mp4 video. Most decent audio visual software programs will have an option to create an Mp4 at least up to HD size (1920*1080) and in fact Lightroom does this too. An Mp4 is a universal video format that will play on PC's' and Mac's without any additional software requirement

Do not create and submit a DVD Video disk from your slide show for two reasons.

What we are referring to here is a DVD that is created for viewing on a TV. Making your HD resolution slide show into a a DVD Video Disk will reduce its resolution to 720 pixels on the long side. So your slide show will lose quality in comparison with others, which is not a great idea in a

competition.

The videos a DVD Video Disk produces will not always play on a windows machine and can be a problem for the organisers. Remember they have to extract your slide show from the disk you sent them and prepare it with other slide shows for the judges.

Try to avoid DVD disks entirely. If your slide show requires the 4.7Gig of data that a DVD disk provides, you have done something wrong. Files from a DVD can and have caused problems for organisers. Be safe and send the organisers your slide show on a CD.

Entries on CD

The rules will probably stipulate this anyway, but if you're sending your entry on a CD, ensure you place multiple entries in well named folders and in the categories asked for. e.g. If you're entering two entries in an open section and one in a group section, then your CD should have two folders. One for the open section containing two slide shows and one Group folder with one slide show.

Write on the disk face clearly what the disk contains and who it's from. Don't make organisers have to put the disk into the PC and wait for it to spin up just to see who sent it.

Include a hard copy of the entry form with the disk in the post, but include the same word document on the CD with the files.

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Please feel free to use this document as it is or adjusted in any way you choose.

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