

What Should You Look for When Joining a Photography Club?

Original article: Written by *Michael Gabriel*

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Whether you are a hobbyist or a professional photographer, joining a photography club is one of the best ways to improve your skills. The club can also be a good venue for meeting people who share the same interest as yours. You will not only form new friendships, you'll also have fun while learning new things about a craft that you love.

There are two basic types of photography clubs that you can choose from. The first one is the non-competitive club, which is primarily focused on providing different opportunities for members to show their work while also opening doors for improvement. On the other hand, a competitive photography club is one where the members want to regularly compete and get rewards for their efforts. This type of club schedules competitions throughout the year and invites distinguished guests to sit as judges and critics. Some competitive photography clubs, however, prefer to have fellow members as judges for their events. It is important to note, nonetheless, that some non-competitive photography clubs sometimes set up competitions among their members as a part of their year-round schedule of activities.

What to Do If You Want to Join One

If you want to join a photography club, the first thing that you should do is ask yourself the reason why you are joining. This will help you determine what type of club you should join. Do you want to join because you want to meet new friends and improve your craft? Or do you want to join because you want to improve your chances of winning in competitions? Are you a competitive person, or would you rather shoot and work quietly? The answers to these questions will help you decide which type of club to go for.

What to Look for in a Photography Club

Aside from choosing the right type, there are other essential elements that you have to consider before joining a camera club. In order to get the most out of your membership, you should look for a club that offers the best benefits for its members – whether it is in the field of learning or in terms of opportunities.

Common activities carried out by photography clubs include regular (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly) meetings, exhibits, guest speaker nights, workshops and seminars, competitions, club outings and field trips. There are also clubs that prefer to build inter-club associations in order to create a stronger photography community. Also, a majority (if not all) of clubs require a membership fee or an annual subscription, which will then serve as their main means of funding regular events (like meetings and workshops). For special events like exhibits and competitions, clubs usually ask for help from sponsors.

A good photography club offers an excellent mix of activities and venues for learning. Here are other elements that you should consider when choosing a photography club.

Location

A photography club that is located near the area where you reside or work is the best one for you. This will be an important factor when you need to attend meetings or events. Traveling several miles can take away the fun and excitement (except when you're having club outdoor field trips), so it is better to stay close to home.

Members Who Are Passionate About Photography

A good photography club is one that exemplifies love and passion for the art. Take time to find out what type of members make up the majority of the club.

There are clubs that allow non-members who show interest in the group to tag along in certain activities. It's like a free session to help you decide whether you want to join them or not. Take this opportunity as this is one way of gauging whether you would like to be stuck in a room with its members. Can you imagine yourself discussing things like natural lighting and ISOs with them?

Variety

It is likewise important to look for a club that has members from different backgrounds. You'll find better learning opportunities in a club like this.

This kind of club will expose you to talents of every kind. There are some camera clubs that are specialized, like a single parents photography club or a Christian photographers club. It is OK to join clubs like these, but if you want variety in both learning and fun, you should go for one with an interesting mix of members.

More Avenues for Experience

Joining a competitive club will prep you for major events like photography contests, while non-competitive clubs will expose you to different learning experiences. Which one is more important for you?

Majority of young photographers choose to go with a non-competitive club because it allows them more chances to share their experiences with others. In the process, they gain knowledge, too, from their fellow members' experiences. Look for a club that encourages sharing and learning more than competition.

Good Mission and Vision

Choose a photography club that openly tells its members about its mission and vision. Members ought to know what they are getting into, so this is an essential factor. The main objective of a good photography club should be to encourage its members to take photos while learning to love the craft more.

It shouldn't be used as a venue for profit making or for setting up a business. A camera club is a group that embraces the art of photography, not the idea of making money. If your intention is to make money out of your photography skills, you are moving through the wrong direction. Go and open a photography studio instead.

Financially Ideal

There are photography clubs that often go on out-of-town trips or creative expeditions. Join these clubs only if you have the means to do so. Don't stretch your budget to the limit just so you can go with them. A lot of photography clubs are mindful of their members' financial responsibilities, so you shouldn't go running after the expensive ones. After all, it's what the club has to offer in terms of experience and learning that's more important.

If it is your first time to join a photography club, or if you've just bought your first set of cameras, go for the simple clubs. You'll find a lot of opportunities for learning and improvement with these associations.

Experience

Whether you choose to go with a competitive or non-competitive club, the most important thing to remember is experience. Go for a club that is well-experienced, that has a rich history of tradition. Joining one might even help you meet some popular and well-respected photographers and industry leaders.

Exhibits

Finally, go for a club that actively participates in exhibits and other similar activities. Most clubs organize exhibits, but not all participate in non-club shows. A lot of civic and social organizations often set up fundraising photography exhibits.

Add-Ons

It will also be great if a photography club has the following activities or resources for their members:

- A studio or photo library showing the members' prized works.
- A darkroom – a digital and non-digital one.
- A room where members can hold regular workshops, training sessions and meetings.
- A website that not only shows the objectives of the club, but also constant news updates, tips and advice from photography experts. The website should also showcase some of the members' works.

If you've checked four or five of the items in the checklist above, you've found the right camera club for you. You're ready to explore and expand your photography skills!

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About the Author: Michael Gabriel

Michael Gabriel L. Sumastre is an experienced writer who loves to take pictures of the countryside as well as aerial photographs. He maintains his professional writing portfolio at [TheFinestWriter](#), and you can visit his photography portfolio at [Sumastre Photography](#). Michael was hired by Booking.com to photograph 10 of the most beautiful beaches in Palawan, Philippines.

