

SFUPS 2026 CONTEST SUBJECTS

	MASTERS	CHALLENGERS	VIDEO
JAN	ANGELIC – WIDE ANGLE – Create a wide-angle shot of any living subject that moves freely, that is shot into the sun and splits the sun's rays around them like a halo. Images must be single exposures only. Silhouettes are acceptable, but more credit will be given if subject is lit. No human subjects. Deadline: January 3rd	PORTRAIT – ANY LENS – Submit your best shot of any animal posing for the camera. Make sure to keep the eyes - or rhinophores - in focus. Deadline: January 3rd	FISH BEHAVIOR – ANY LENS – Demonstrate the characteristic behavior of a single fish species. This might include feeding, mating, territorial disputes, symbiosis, cleaning, tending to eggs or young, and the earliest stages of life. 30 seconds maximum. Deadline: January 3rd
FEB	ALL IN THE ANGLES – ANY LENS – Compose a creative shot that captures your subject from an unexpected angle, for example forcing perspective to exaggerate a particular feature, drawing attention to a feature that is not usually noticeable, or framing it against a background we would not normally expect. We are not looking for the typical "head on portrait" here! Fisheye or bug-eye lenses may be helpful. Any underwater subject - living or not - is admissible. Deadline: February 7th	SMALL IN FRAME – ANY LENS – Create a "small in frame" image of a subject within an expansive area of its environment. Subject must be less than 20% of the frame, and there must clearly be only one main subject. No solid black or blue backgrounds. Consider the rule of 3rds, leading lines, patterns, and other compositional principles when creating your shot. Any animal that moves freely is admissible as the subject. Deadline: February 7th	KEEP IT SIMPLE – PHONE OR GOPRO ONLY – Create a video with music that depicts the variety of life characteristic of a particular type of underwater environment or single location without the need for a big rig. Any accessories or lighting permitted. Name the environment or location in the title. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: February 7th
MAR	CREATIVE MACRO – MACRO – Use any of the creative techniques our speakers have explained in recent presentations to enhance your image of a macro subject in an imaginative way. This may include any kind of reflective or artificial background, color filters, snoots, bokeh, fluorescence, or motion blur. The effect must be created in one exposure in camera, not post processing. No plain black backgrounds. Please no harming of the subject to achieve the creative effect. Deadline: February 28th	DRAMATIC LIGHTING – MACRO – Use strobe positioning, inward lighting, a snoot, or one strobe to shape the light to dramatic effect in your macro shot, rather than flooding the frame with uniform lighting. The shot may have a black background or just create contrast and shadows with your lighting. No colored filters or artificial backgrounds. Deadline: February 28th	DANCING QUEENS – ANY LENS – Many creatures appear to dance underwater. Show us your favorites' best moves. Picking the right music can really help with the impact of this video! Length: 30 seconds maximum. Deadline: February 28th

APR	THE BEST STORY WINS – ANY LENS – How do you create a narrative in a single frame? Submit an image with a storytelling element that prompts the viewer to create a storyline in their mind or evokes an emotional response. No text allowed on the image. Deadline: April 4th	HUMAN AND OCEAN CONNECTION – ANY LENS – Use a diver as a model against a reef, wreck, or animal. The diver may be used to create perspective, illustrate scale, or convey an environmental theme. Deadline: April 4th	STORY WITHOUT WORDS – ANY LENS – Create a narrative about any underwater subject using careful sequencing of shots to set the scene and immerse the viewer in a single continuous storyline. Use appropriate music to help structure and enhance your story - no text allowed. Possible scenarios could be an animal searching for a mate, the life/reproductive cycle of a species, seasonal changes in a particular environment, or environmental concerns. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: April 4th
MAY	SPLIT SHOT WITH MAN-MADE STRUCTURE – WIDE ANGLE – A split shot prominently featuring a man-made subject above water, such as a building, town, lighthouse, or pier. Wrecks are acceptable as long as they are partially above water, but boats (including dive boats) are not. Deadline: May 2nd	PIERS AND PILLARS – WIDE ANGLE – Show us your best image of the pilings under a bridge or pier. Suggestions include capturing sunbeams, focusing on leading lines, or including close-focus subjects like seahorses in the foreground. No harassment of seahorses. The focus on any living subject should not be so close that it occupies most of the frame and the larger structure of the pier or pillars is not visible. Deadline: May 2nd	OUR OCTOPUS TEACHER – ANY LENS – Create a video that demonstrates the way we have all been amazed by the intelligence, curiosity, and abilities of these fascinating creatures. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: May 2nd
JUNE	DETAIL ORIENTED – MACRO – A super macro shot with its subject being tiny details invisible to the eye - such as the shape of a nudibranch eye or the details of jawfish eggs. Find a way to still make this image an interesting composition. The frame must exceed a 1:1 reproduction ratio before cropping. Use of diopters recommended. Deadline: May 30th	JAWFISH – MACRO – An image of any jawfish species, with or without eggs - or even capturing the male aerating his eggs. Deadline: May 30th	DADDY DEAREST - MACRO – The males of several of our favorite underwater subjects bear most of the parenting duties. Make a video that shows how they incubate, care for, and protect their young. Subjects may include seahorses, jawfish, and pipefishes. No harassment or use of video lights on seahorses. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: May 30th

JULY	CREATIVE SHARK SHOT– ANY LENS – Use any in-camera creative technique to make your shark image stand out from the standard portrait. Possibilities include creative angles, use of light near the surface, motion blur, close focus, black and white, Snell's window, and split shots. No feeding or baiting activity visible in the shot. Deadline: July 4th	MARINE MAMMALS – WIDE ANGLE – Marine mammals include whales, seals, manatees, and polar bears (if you dare). Submit your best image of your favorite. The image must be taken underwater. Split shots with the animal underwater are acceptable. Deadline: July 4th	SWIMMING WITH GIANTS – WIDE ANGLE – Create a video taken underwater while diving with any larger subject, including whales, dolphins, manta rays, sharks, and whale sharks. No feeding or baiting visible in the shot. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: July 4th
AUG	TRANSLUCENCE – MACRO – Use directional lighting to capture the diffuse glow of translucent macro subjects, by day or night, and separate them from their background. Subjects may be backlit, lit from the sides, or lit with torches, for example. Subject must have at least one translucent area. Includes blackwater subjects. Deadline: August 1st	FLOATING IN SPACE – MACRO – Create an image of any macro creature that naturally inhabits the water column by day or night. The subject must be in open water. Surface reflections are permissible, but the subject must not touch or be floating on the surface. No harming or manipulation of the animal allowed. Only macro subjects smaller than a 5x7" postcard are permitted. Includes blackwater subjects. Deadline: August 1st	NUDI MATING DANCE – MACRO – Make a video that shows sea slugs laying eggs or mating. The subject may be any species of smaller sea slugs, not strictly nudibranchs. This includes headshield slugs, sapsucking slugs, and Janolus species. This is a macro category, so larger sea hares or larger side-gill slugs are not admissible. Subjects should be smaller than a 5 x 7" postcard. May include one or several species. Length: 30 seconds maximum. Deadline: August 1st
SEPT	BLUR ME AWAY – ANY LENS – Create a feeling of movement by using a motion blur effect in a single exposure in camera. Use a slower than typical shutter speed (for example 1/10s to 1s) and front curtain sync for static subjects or rear curtain sync for moving subjects. Using a zoom lens to create the effect in camera is permitted as well. Deadline: August 29th	ACTION SHOT – ANY LENS – Create an image that captures the behaviors of fast-moving subjects, conveys a sense of motion, or captures the peak of the action. The subject may be any freely-moving animal (not a human). Examples could be dolphins playing, predation, or schools of fish darting or changing direction. Deadline: August 29th	SLOW, SLOW, SLOW – ANY LENS – Create a video that uses slow-motion to artistic effect and emphasize and highlight important elements in your footage. It may be helpful to shoot your video in the highest frame rate possible with your camera to maintain clarity when it is slowed down. The extent to which your footage is slowed down can vary depending on the action or detail you want to emphasize. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: August 29th

OCT	WAVE-CRASHING ACTION – WIDE ANGLE – Create an image of waves breaking, for example at the beach, shoreline, or over a shallow reef. The image must be taken in the water (no drones) from any perspective, including from underneath or in an over-under fashion. Sunrise and sunsets make for more interesting backdrops. No surfers or models; the motion of the wave(s) should be the main subject. Other living subjects are permissible in the frame. Deadline: October 3rd	UNDERWATER LANDSCAPES – WIDE ANGLE – Create a black and white landscape-style image. Possible subjects include underwater rock formations, coral ledges, or freshwater environments like caves, cenotes, and springs. The main subject should be a naturally-occurring underwater environment, not an animal or man-made structure. Wrecks are not permissible. Look for high contrast and varying textures in the environment. Deadline: October 3rd	MERMAIDS – WIDE ANGLE – Create an artistic video of a mermaid shoot, underwater model(s), or freedivers - costumed or not. Video may also feature marine life, but humans should be the main subject. May be shot in a pool or any body of water. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: October 3rd
NOV	BLACK AND WHITE WRECK SHOT – WIDE ANGLE – Create a high-contrast black and white image that shows the interior or exterior of a wreck to dramatic effect. For example, capturing light penetrating the structure to highlight details and textures inside. Animals like sharks and goliaths can be in the frame but should not be the main subject. The same applies to models. Deadline: October 31st	FLORIDA WRECKS – WIDE ANGLE – We are lucky to be able to dive so many incredible wrecks close to home. Create an image of your favorite - this could be a shot of the entire structure, for example, or a closer shot of its most identifiable feature. Please include the name and location of the Florida wreck in your caption. Deadline: October 31st	WRECK DIVING – WIDE ANGLE – Make a video gliding through the passageways of a wreck. Exterior shots are permissible to set the scene, but the majority of the footage should be taken inside the wreck. Highlight the structure and the variety of life found inside. May include footage taken while swimming, static shots, and panning shots. Length: 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. Deadline: October 31st