

USER GUIDE

SPS MEMBERS' FORUMS



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SPS Members' Forums User Guide

1.0 Getting Started

1.1 Introduction

Sheffield Photographic Society hosts an exclusive web based discussion Forum for SPS Members. We hope the site will be home for active and informative discussion about all aspects of photography with direct relevance for members of Sheffield Photographic Society. The forums are structured to focus on local area and society related topics which cannot be found on other on-line photography forums and consequently offer a unique resource for SPS members.

The site is only accessible to fully paid up members of Sheffield Photographic Society and consequently represents a safe and private place for discussion... discussion which no doubt will be continued at society events and evenings in a 'real world' context!

New members of the society are able to use the forums to ask for guidance or comment from the more experienced and established members, or simply browse the forums to gain a better understanding of who is who within the society.

1.2 Access the Forums

Access the SPS Members Forum site at:-

www.sheffieldphotosociety.freeforums.org

or click the 'SPS Members Forums' link on the SPS Website.

When you first access the site you will not be able to see the forums or access any discussion topics. This is the view that non SPS members will see and will be unable to progress beyond, making the site private, secure and exclusively for the use of SPS Members.

1.3 Register (for new forum members)

As a paid up member of Sheffield Photographic Society you will be able to register by clicking on the '**Register**' link at the top of the page. If you have already registered in a previous SPS year you will NOT need to register again and can log-in to the forums as usual.

Fill in the relevant information as follows:

Username

Please use your full name as recorded on your SPS Membership.

The forums are only accessible to registered SPS members and there is consequently no need for pseudonyms. Your registration will not be

authorised if your Username does not correspond with the name of a current SPS Member.

Please ensure you enter your username accurately, you will be unable to change this later.

For example, the username for a SPS member called John Smith would be *John Smith*.

Email Address

Please enter a current and valid email address. This is required for your registration to be finalised. Please ensure that the email address you enter is the same as you have provided when signing up for your SPS Membership. The email address we have on the SPS Members' Database is an important part of us being able to ensure that new applications for Forum membership are actually from paid up members of Sheffield Photographic Society.

You can alter your email address in the user control panel once you have been registered, if required.

Password

Please enter a 'robust' password which is difficult for others to guess. A combination of letters and numbers usually provides the greatest level of security. Remember, you will need to enter this password every time you access the forums, so please make sure it is memorable to you.

You can alter your password in the user control panel once you have been registered, if required.

Language

Please select - British *English*

Timezone

Please select - (*UTC*) *Western European Time, Greenwich Mean Time*

Full Name

Please enter *your* full name as you gave when joining or renewing your membership of Sheffield Photographic Society

Gender

Please select *Male* or *female* as appropriate

Birthdate

Please provide your date *of* birth. This information will not be displayed on the forums.

Photographic Equipment, Photographic Software, Photographic Interests

The information you enter in these three boxes will appear next to each post you make within the Forums and will allow other SPS Members who

use the forums to better understand your photography expertise, interests and equipment. This will help any queries, advice or comments to be personalised for maximum benefit. Please keep the descriptions concise and current. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason in providing this information then please feel free to enter 'Information Withheld' in the relevant Comment Box.

You can alter or update the information contained within these three boxes via the user control panel at any time once you have been registered.

Confirmation Code

Please follow the instructions by writing your answer in the relevant box. Normally this will simply mean writing exactly what you see in the coloured graphic box.

Please finalise your registration application by reading the terms of usage and, if you agree to the terms, ticking the 'I agree to these terms' box and clicking on the 'Submit' button.

Final Stage of Registration

Once you have clicked the 'Submit' button you will be taken to a new web page where you may see some advertising from sponsors of Free Forums. Unless you wish to sign up for any of the offers, you should ensure that you opt out of any of the advertisement options before pressing the 'Submit and Continue' button.

1.4 Registration Confirmation

The next step is important in ensuring the Forums remain private, secure and for the exclusive use of SPS Members.

You will receive an email confirming your Username and stating that your registration is awaiting activation by the board Administrator.

The SPS Member who administrates the Forums will verify you as a paid up member of Sheffield Photographic Society by checking your username and email address against the SPS Members List before activating your account. Whilst every effort will be made to activate your account immediately, the forum administrator is a keen photographer too so please be patient if this process takes a number of days... the administrator may be out taking photos!

Once your registration is confirmed you will receive a further email indicating that your account has been activated.

Congratulations. You may now use the SPS Members' Forums.

2.0 Finding Your Way around the Forums

2.1 Logging In

Access the SPS Members Forum site at:-

www.sheffieldphotosociety.freeforums.org

Enter your Username and Password at the bottom of the page and click 'Login'.

2.2 The Board Index

Provided you are a registered SPS Member and your account has been activated you will gain access to the SPS Members Forums. After a couple of seconds you will be taken to the Forum Board Index (The Forum home page).

SPS Members may return to the Forum home page at any time by clicking on the 'Board Index' link towards the top left of each page.

2.3 The Forums

There are currently five Forums on the SPS Members Forums site for use by SPS members. These have been chosen to provide a structured discussion of Photography which is tailored specifically towards Sheffield Photographic Society. The Forums are:-

Forum Photographic Competition

The place for the monthly digital competition. Entered by SPS Members, judged by SPS Members.

SPS Rules and Annual Review

The place for the Society Rules and Annual Review. This forum is 'read only'.

Critique

The place to post your photos if you want other SPS Members to provide critique.

General Discussion

The place for general discussion of all matters relating to photography, photographers, equipment, technique and printing.

SPS Events, Evenings and Outings

The place to discuss SPS events, evenings and outings and to post your photos from them.

SPS Council

A sixth Forum exists which is only visible to elected SPS Council Members and is used for SPS Council discussions relating to the running of the Society.

SPS Marketplace

A separate Forum section can be found at the bottom of the board index page in which SPS Members may post details of **items for Sale** or **Items Wanted**. As the titles of these two forums suggest these may be used by SPS Members wishing to sell or buy photographic equipment and offers the security of the transactions only being undertaken with fully signed up SPS members.

2.4 The Menu Bar

The top menu bar provides a number of drop-down menus which assist members to search the forum content, manage their account settings and profile information and gain help in accessing or using the forums themselves. The options available are:-

Logout (Username)

Clicking on this tab logs the user out from the SPS Forum site on completion of their viewing session. To log back in to the forums the user will have to again enter their username and password.

Arcade

This option provides access to a number of fun online games. SPS members may compete to see who has the skills (or spare time!) to record the highest score. Beware, these games can become addictive!

Calendar

This option provides access to a calendar which includes details of key SPS dates and events. Clicking on an event title will open up a new dialogue box that provides more detail of the event, if available.

Members who have details of an event that may be of interest to other SPS Members should email p-matthews@hotmail.co.uk to request that the event is added to the calendar.

Chat

This option allows more informal discussion to be held between members who are logged in to the forums at the same time, without the need to start a new forum discussion. The dialogue can be seen by all forum users... so keep it polite!

FAQ

This section provides answers to some of the most commonly encountered questions relating to forum usage. Please read through this section if you are having problems accessing or using any of the features on the forums.

Search

Clicking on this tab provides options to search for specific posts by keyword, author and by forum

User Control Panel

By clicking on this menu tab the SPS Member can access the User Control Panel and alter a range of items which govern how their forum account functions.

3.0 The User Control Panel

3.1 Overview

The SPS Member can:-

- Bookmark posts for notification and tracking of replies
- Save and manage draft posts
- Manage attachments. Here the member may view all photographs they have attached to their posts and delete these if they so wish. Please note that the post itself will not be deleted, only the photograph it contains. Members are encouraged not to delete attachments unless absolutely necessary as doing so will remove important information from their post which may make the discussion harder to follow for other members.

3.2 Profile

This includes:-

- **Edit Profile** – Here you can edit details of your full name (this is not your username and will not show up in posts), Geographic location, Gender, Photographic Equipment, Software and Interests. You may also add details of your websites or other links that you may wish to share with other SPS Members.
- **Edit Signature** – Here you may set up or change your 'signature', which will appear at the end of each post you make.
- **Edit Avatar** – Here you may upload an Avatar (Photograph or image which is displayed with each post you make)
- **Edit Account Settings** – Here you may change your Forum password

3.3 Board Preferences

These include:-

- **Edit Global Settings** – with options to determine how other users may contact you and options for preferred language, timezone and date format.
The option for 'Summer Time/DST is in effect:' ensures that the time shown for you on the forums is correct when the clocks go back or forward. In winter this option should be set to 'no', in summer this should be set to 'yes'.
Please note that whilst options exist for Private messages this feature is disabled on the SPS Forums. User should use email if private correspondence is required.
- **Edit Posting Defaults** – with options to enable BBCode and smilies, along with further options for automatic attachment of the user's signature and notification of replies to posts.
- **Edit Display Options** - How Images, signatures avatars, posts and topics are displayed within the member's posts.

3.4 Usergroups

Membership of usergroups are set by the administrator and cannot be subscribed to by SPS Members.

3.5 Friends and Foes

Friends are other SPS Members who may share similar photographic interests or equipment. By entering these members as friends their posts are highlighted in the member's forum views.

Foes are posters who the member wishes to ignore. These posts will be partially hidden from the member's view. However, we are sure all SPS members will be supportive in their discussions and members will not feel the need to add other posters to their Foes list!

3.6 VIP Membership

VIP membership is one of the means by which the freeforum hosts make money. Applying for this membership necessitates a subscription fee which is paid to the freeforum hosts and will give little benefit to SPS Members. I would strongly recommend that SPS Members do not apply to be VIP members unless they wish to donate money to FreeForums!

4.0 Viewing Messages

4.1 Forums, Topics & Posts (messages)

The Site is divided into 8 main Forums (Discussion Categories) along with 2 Forums for the SPS Marketplace. Within each of these Forums are a range of Topics (Discussions) which contain Posts (messages) from individual SPS Members.

Viewing Forums, topics and posts is simply a case of clicking the relevant heading and scrolling through the items you wish to read.

The search option on the top menu bar can be used to find specific posts without needing to browse through multiple forums, topics and posts.

4.2 Viewing Images

By default, posted images are resized to be viewable on a small computer screen. Clicking on an image will enlarge the image to fill your computer screen whilst dimming the background. Clicking again on the enlarged image will reduce the image back to the standard Forum view.

5.0 Posting Messages

5.1 Posting Protocols

All SPS Members who use the Forums are asked to post in a supportive and positive manner. Photography is, for the majority of SPS Members, a hobby to be enjoyed and Sheffield Photographic Society is the place where this enjoyment is encouraged and supported. The Forums should reflect this.

Members should refrain from making aggressive, defamatory or belittling posts which will serve to annoy or discourage other Society Members.

Members are also advised that posts containing obscene or religiously, politically or racially inflammatory comment will not be permitted and are asked to consider that the Society has a number of junior members who may also wish to enjoy the support and discussion provided within the Forums without exposure to unsuitable material.

Facility exists within the Forums for members to report posts which they consider inappropriate. Members who fail to post within the good spirit of the forums will be issued with a formal warning. Should members persist with such posts the facility exists to freeze the member's account or impose a permanent ban.

5.2 Making a Reply to a Message

Members who wish to contribute to an existing discussion have two ways to add their comments to the topic:

Posting a Reply

Members should enter the Forum and click on the required Topic. This will display the list of messages (posts) which make up that particular Topic (discussion).

By clicking on the 'Post Reply' button at the start or end of the message list a member can add a new message to the end of the list.

Once the reply is complete the member should click the 'Submit' button at the bottom of the 'Post a reply' section.

Quoting a Post

Clicking on the 'Quote' button at the bottom right of a particular message will insert the text from that message into the reply. This is particularly useful if the member wishes to respond to a particular point raised within the discussion.

Once the reply is complete the member should click the 'Submit' button at the bottom of the 'Post a reply' section.

5.3 Starting a New Topic

Members who wish to start a new topic (discussion) within a particular Forum should enter the Forum and click on the 'New Topic' button.

5.4 Formatting the Message

Members who are already experienced in Forum usage may wish to use the more advanced formatting tools available to improve the appearance or legibility of their posts. The SPS Forums support simple text formatting (Bold, underline, italics), font colours and font sizes. A range of emoticons (smilies) are also available.

5.5 Previewing Posts

Clicking on the 'Preview' button at the bottom of the post editor will generate a preview of the formatted post to help the member ensure everything is as it should be before the post is submitted.

5.6 Saving Posts

Draft messages may be saved by clicking the 'Save draft' button at the bottom of the post editor. The saved post may be opened for further editing by the member at a later date by clicking on User Control Panel on the top menu bar and selecting 'Manage drafts'.

Members should note that only the subject and text within the post will be saved. Any attachments (Photographs) will be deleted when the message is saved.

5.7 Adding Attachments (Photographs)

The SPS Forums allow members to post photographs to illustrate points raised within their posts, to request critique on their photographs or simply to illustrate their current photographic projects.

Format

All photographs should be in jpeg format, resized to no wider than 1600 pixels and no taller than 1200 pixels. Members who require assistance in re-sizing their images should refer to the guidance contained on the SPS website for preparing photographs for internal society competitions.

Members should resize their photographs before composing their post (it is a good idea to save the resized image with a different name or in a different location to the original to avoid overwriting the original!)

It is strongly recommended that when saving your jpeg file for posting that you choose 'medium' rather than 'high quality' compression as this will reduce the file size and upload times for your images.

Adding the Photograph

Once the post is started the photograph may be inserted by clicking on the 'browse' button within the 'Upload Attachment' section of the message editor and navigating to the file location of the re-sized photograph.

The member may then add a File Comment (caption) to the photograph and upload the photograph using the 'Add the File' button.

The Photograph will be added to the end of the message and the post may be previewed by clicking on the 'Preview' button at the bottom of the post editor.

Clicking on the 'Place in Line' button allows the member to insert the photograph within the middle of their post text (at the cursor position), rather than at the end of their post.

Once the photographs are uploaded and placed in the required position, the post may be submitted as normal.

*Note:- To add a photograph to your post you should use the **'Upload Attachment'** section of the message editor as described above. Please **do not** use the **'add image to post'** link that is immediately below the main message box as this is an option only for advanced use of file sharing sites and its use will cause the photos to be incorrectly displayed on the Forums.*

Photograph Security and Copyright

Members should note that, as is common with all other Forums, photographs posted on the SPS Members Forums may be saved (downloaded) by other Forum users. Should members wish to ensure that their photographs are not useable by others they should ensure that they are overlaid with a suitable copyright message or posted at a pixel size that is too small for beneficial use by others.

Within the Critique Forum, downloading, editing and re-posting photos that have been posted by other SPS Members can be a valuable method of providing critique and suggestions for improvement, however SPS members should note that usage of the photographs posted by other members for any other purpose will be an infringement of copyright and such unauthorised usage will likely result in a permanent ban from the forums.

5.8 Adding Your Avatar

In order that SPS members can have a clearer idea of who is who within the Society we recommend that each forum member uses an Avatar. This is a small passport style photograph which will be attached to each post the user makes on the forums.

All avatar images should be in jpeg format, cropped square and resized to a size of 90 pixels wide x 90 pixels high. Members who require assistance in re-sizing their images should refer to the guidance contained on the SPS website for preparing photographs for internal society competitions.

Members should resize and save their avatar images to their computer before attempting to upload their avatar to the forums.

An avatar can be attached to your posts by accessing the 'User Control Panel' – 'Profile' – 'Edit Avatar'. Once in the 'Edit Avatar' dialogue box the avatar image can be uploaded by using the 'Browse' button and clicking 'Submit' once complete.

5.9 Voting in Polls

The Forum Photographic Competition allows SPS Members to judge the submitted entries by voting in a Poll. Voting is simple. The member should simply tick the checkbox that appears next to each option in the list that they wish to vote for and, when the permitted number of options have been selected, confirm their vote using the 'submit' button.

Please vote carefully in any polls as, once submitted, your vote cannot be changed.

5.10 Get Posting

As for all computer related activities, reading user instructions is laborious and often confusing. We would encourage all SPS Members to learn how to use the Forums by accessing them and by making their own posts.

The forums are generally intuitive to use, however should a user experience any problems that they feel unable to resolve after referring to this guide and the Forum FAQ guide they should email the board administrator, Peter Matthews, (p-matthews@hotmail.co.uk) for assistance.