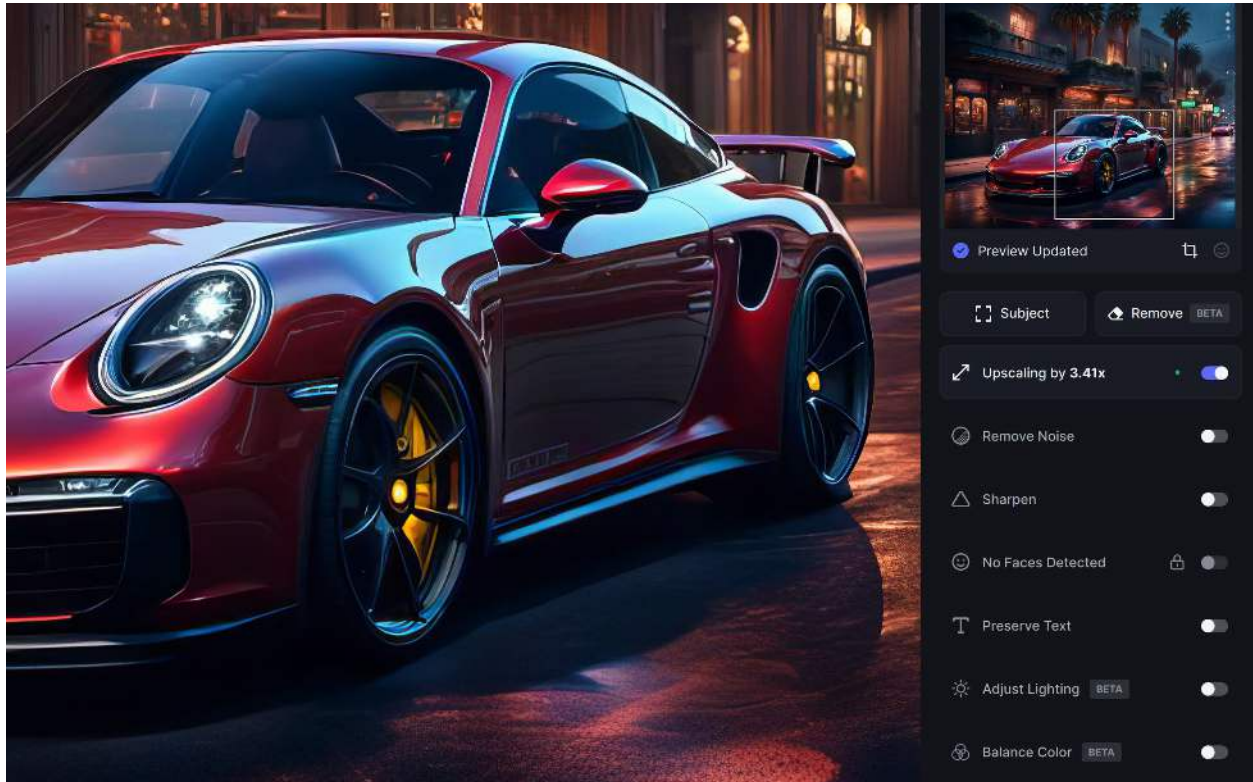


Topaz Photo AI Pitfalls: Protecting Your Competition Eligibility

Topaz Photo AI – Version 4.0.2 & Topaz Bloom App (cloud-based) – Version 2025



Introduction

The rapid advancement of AI-generative technology in photo post-processing has fundamentally transformed the creative process. While Topaz Photo AI traditionally consists of many AI tools that operate locally on users' devices rather than in the cloud, Topaz's new Bloom tool represents a departure from this approach as their latest standalone cloud-based AI application and key innovation in this field.

Using this cloud-based tool, users can creatively upscale AI-generated artwork and having an AI prompt adds artistic details, textures, and enhancements that seamlessly integrate with the original image's stylistic content.

However, it's worth noting that tools like Topaz Bloom will not be accepted in CAPA photo competitions, as they introduce synthetic elements that were not originally captured by the photographer.

CAPA Competition Guidelines

CAPA's Eligibility Criteria specifically outlines restrictions on AI tool usage. Understanding these limitations is essential for photographers seeking to ensure their submissions remain eligible for CAPA competitions:

Images that have been created or modified using specific AI generative techniques are not permitted for submission into our competitions. This includes:

- **In-painting** (where AI fills in generated elements not captured by the photographer or removes and replaces elements from a photograph with AI-generated content);
- **Out-painting** (where AI extends beyond the original boundaries of the photograph using generated elements);
- **Image-to-image AI** (where AI transforms an entire photograph based on text prompts or style references);
- **Text-to-image** (where images are generated from scratch based on text entered into a prompt description).

These restrictions apply whether or not text prompts are used in the AI generation process.

All parts of the submitted image are the creator's original work, containing no elements produced or captured by others.

Feature-by-Feature Breakdown

Competition-Safe Tools

Basic Enhancement (Topaz Photo AI)

Features:

- **Image Sharpening:** AI-powered artifact-free sharpening with models for standard, strong, lens blur, and motion blur correction.
- **Super Focus:** Advanced correction of focus and motion blur, computationally intensive but very effective (can use cloud rendering optionally).
- **Noise Reduction:** Powerful AI denoising with different models for JPEG and RAW, recovering details while removing noise.
- **Face Recovery:** Selective protection of faces from overprocessing during enhancement.
- **Dust and Scratch Repair:** Fixing physical defects and digitized photo damage.
- **Remove Object:** Removal of unwanted objects or clutter within images.
- **Adjust Lighting:** AI-based light and exposure balancing.
- **Balance Color:** AI adjustment of white balance and color correction.

- **Masking Tools:** Automatic and manual masking to selectively apply enhancements to parts of the image.
- **Gigapixel AI:** (upscaler with minimal alteration of original image)
- **Remove**

❌ **FLAGGED TOOLS** (Bloom – standalone cloud-based AI application)

- **Bloom** (creative upscale tool with or without prompt to add creative details to the image)

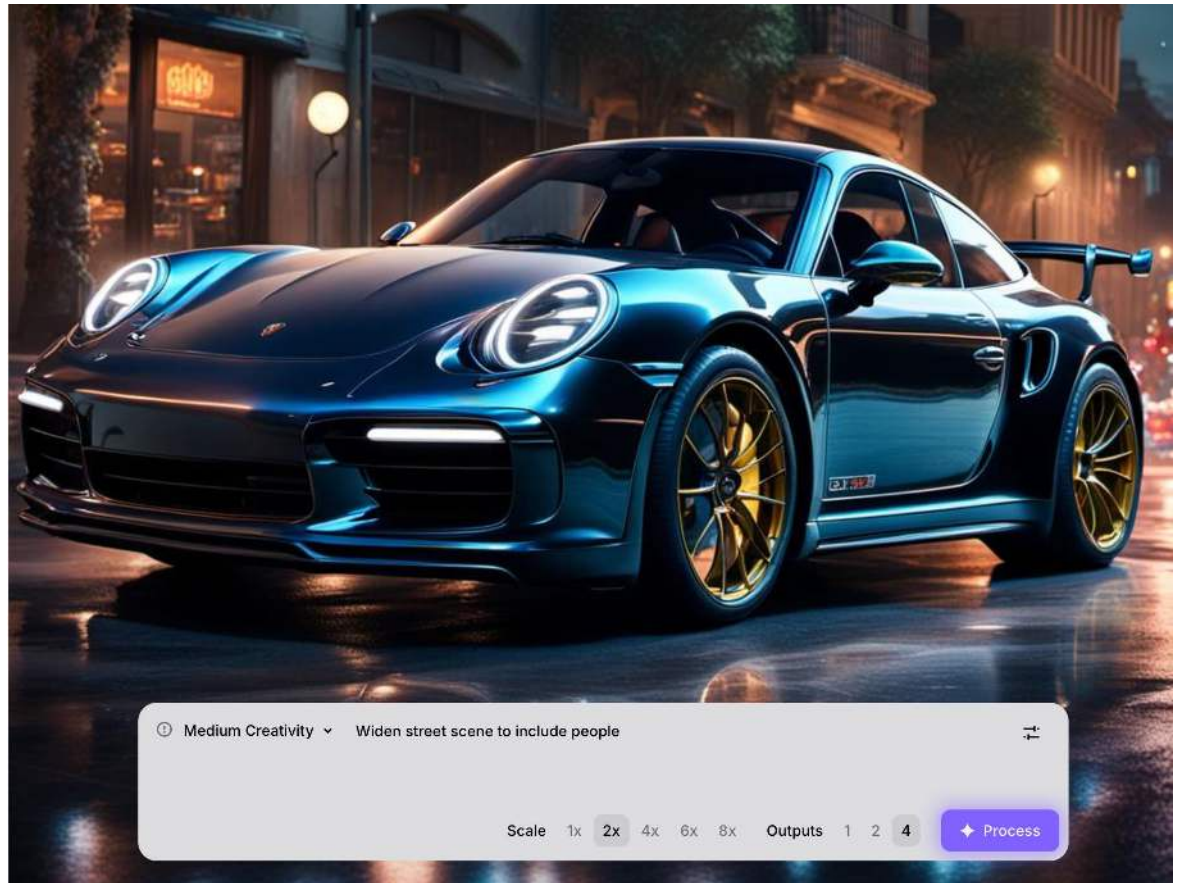


Figure 1 – Screen capture of the Topaz Photo AI's Bloom tool.

The Metadata Challenge

Topaz Photo AI currently experiences issues with fully preserving or embedding all original metadata (such as EXIF data, GPS information, and capture dates) in exported image files, particularly when used as a Lightroom plugin. The software exports images with basic file format information, but detailed editing metadata including filter settings and edit history is typically not saved within the image file itself. For best results in retaining image quality and available metadata, saving as TIFF before converting to JPEG for competition submission is recommended.

Topaz Lab is not a member of the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) framework, which creates several verification challenges:

- No automatic documentation of AI modifications in image metadata
- Verification of which editing tools were used becomes difficult
- Photographers bear the full responsibility for tracking their own editing processes
- Competition verification become problematic without automated AI detection tools.

Since the Topaz Lab's Bloom is a cloud-based AI-generative tool, enhanced images with the Bloom tool remain detectable using specialized photo forensic tools.

Best Practices for Competition Photography

Before You Edit:

- **Preserve your original files** and work on copies when editing. For JPEG files, always duplicate the original before making any edits to maintain an untouched backup. For RAW files, this isn't necessary since RAW editors work non-destructively. Your edits are stored as instructions separate from the original file, and changes are only applied when you export the final image. The original RAW file always remains unmodified.
- Review the specific competition's AI usage policies
- Plan your editing workflow to stay within acceptable boundaries

During Editing:

- Utilize local processing modes when possible
- Avoid any tools that generate new image content
- Keep detailed records of your editing process
- When in doubt, use traditional (non-AI) editing methods

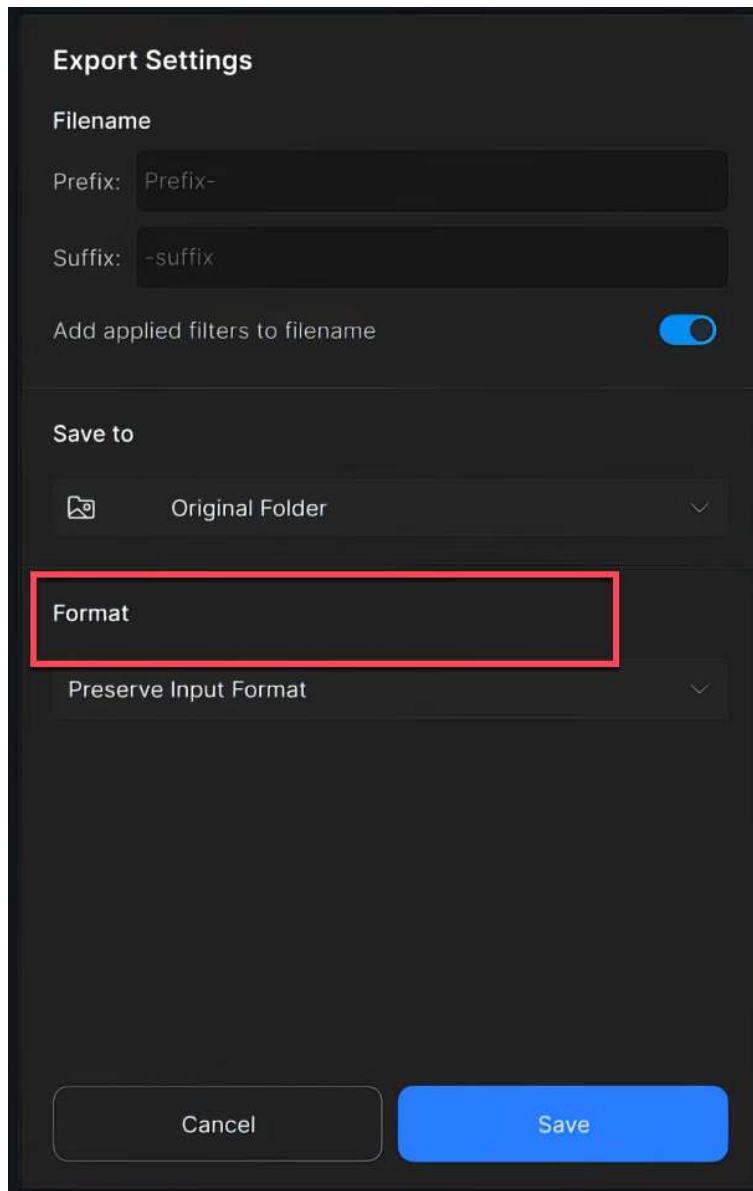
After Editing:

- Review your final image, comparing it to the competition criteria for compliance.
- Be prepared to explain your editing process if questioned
- Consider keeping both original and edited versions for verification.
- Always verify current requirements before submitting your work.
- Save Image first as a TIF format then to a JPG file format

Note – Saved TIF will contain the majority of the post process undertaken during the editing process.

Export Image with Metadata

Step #1: Select **Save** button which appears in the lower right hand corner to the editing window (see figure 2 below)



The image shows a dark-themed 'Export Settings' dialog box. It has several sections: 'Filename' with input fields for 'Prefix' (containing 'Prefix-') and 'Suffix' (containing '-suffix'), and a toggle for 'Add applied filters to filename' which is turned on. Below this is a 'Save to' section with a dropdown menu showing 'Original Folder'. The 'Format' section is highlighted with a red rectangle; it has a label 'Format' and a dropdown menu currently showing 'Preserve Input Format'. At the bottom are 'Cancel' and 'Save' buttons.

Figure 2 – Screen capture of the Save window

Step #2: Enter **TIFF** in the Form field, as shown in figure 3 below, and double-click the **Save** button

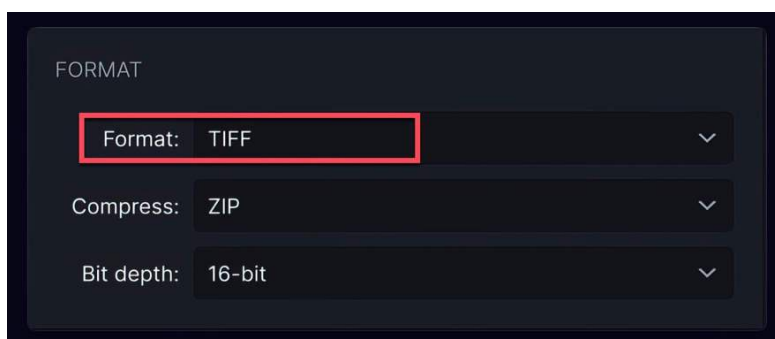


Figure 3 – Screen capture of the Topaz Save window with the format field set to TIFF.

Step #3: Select the Topaz **Save** option and set the Format field to JPG as shown in figure 4 below.

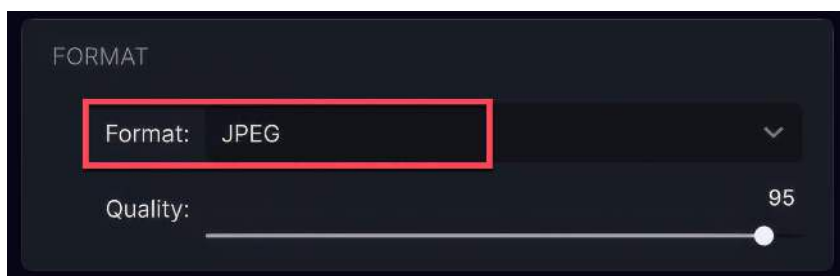


Figure 4 – Screen capture of the Topaz Save window with the format field set to JPG.

Special Note - Keep these files accessible throughout the competition period.

Image Requirements for Competition Winners

CAPA may request the following image files from the potential winners:

- Original unedited JPEG or RAW file
- All source images used in composites or blends
- Working file (PSD or DNG) showing your editing process
- XMP metadata file (when applicable)

Verification & Authentication Processes: All potential winning images files will be subjected to our analysis to ensure the authenticity of the submitted image and verify compliance with competition guidelines.

Important: Photographers that cannot provide the required verification files or fail our authenticity analysis then the image will be disqualified and competition results will be adjusted accordingly.

Closing Comments

If you have any questions or concerns relating to the above details, you can email me at competitions@capacanada.ca

Sheldon Boles – FCAPA
CAPA Director of Competitions