Caption Writing

Tips
Types
Design
Tips for Caption Writing

Accuracy, Caption-ese, Style, Identification
Accuracy:

Know what you are talking about

- Do not make judgments about others’ moods based on photos
  - Pay attention to the actions around the subject
  - Confirm the mood by talking to the subject

Sad? □
Tired? □
Mad? □
Embarrassed? □
Caption-ese:

Avoid describing the obvious

- Avoid phrasing that tells viewers about obvious actions, such as shakes hands, looks on, gestures, chats, etc.

Principal Jake Vanderfind looks on as math teacher Vince Smith shows him something on the computer.

Get real, the viewer’s eyes are open

Band directors Joe Black and John Bob shake hands.
Caption-ese: Clichés and trite wording

- Avoid clichés or trite wording that describe actions with feelings, such as happily rejoices, jumps with joy, claps with glee, etc.

Addressing subjects of photos

- Avoid addressing or talking to people in the photo. For example, do not use: Hey Bob, what are you doing with that car?
Style:

Verbs and Nouns

- Use action verbs instead of forms of the “be” verb
  - Jumps
  - Plans
  - Reads
  - Sings
  - Scares
  - Studies
  - Prepares

- Use vivid nouns and descriptions to help peak readers’ interests
  - Ford F150
  - 15-year-old girl
  - Old Navy T-shirt
  - Fashion designer
Style: Tone

- Echo tone of photo with tone of caption
  - Funny photos can have funny captions
  - Serious photos needs serious captions

Go for the funny

Avoid the funny
Style:
Varied starting points

- Use various styles, such as starting out with why, what or how, but don’t always rely on -ing words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Why/How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choosing to sing “I think I love you” by Jessica Simpson, sophomore Amanda Dempsey entertains the crowd during intermission.</td>
<td>After the first half of the annual fashion show, sophomore Amanda Dempsey sings a rendition of “I think I love you.”</td>
<td>On the dimly lit school auditorium stage, sophomore Amanda Dempsey sings a rendition of “I think I love you.”</td>
<td>While the fashion show models change into different outfits backstage, sophomore Amanda Dempsey entertains the crowd with a rendition of “I think I love you.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identification: Large and small groups

- Identify all the people that can be clearly seen in the photo.
- If the photo contains five or more people and is not a posed group shot, then individual identification is not necessary, unless one or two people are obviously the center of attention of the photograph.
Types of Captions

Nameline, Brief, Quote, Sentence, Extended, Sports, Group, Special Situations
Nameline Caption

- Used for thumbnail or mug photographs (used in people section of yearbook)
- Includes name of person
- May include identification of person pictured
- Only caption style to not end with a period

Justin Black, photographer
Sentence Caption

Principal Lauren Thomas celebrates with coach Jake Smith and players after the team wins the school’s first district championship.

- Full caption covering who, what, where, when, why and how
- People in the photo are named and identified with their appropriate titles
- Avoid stating the obvious
- Great sentence captions use complete, present tense sentences and feature vivid nouns and action verbs
Extended Caption

- Gives readers lots of important information, without them having to necessarily turn to a story
- This type of caption is the one that people that critique and judge publications love to read

- Multi-part caption including:
  - Lead-in
  - Sentence caption in present tense
  - Secondary statement in past tense
  - Quote or even more extra information
Before completing his third goal, senior Gorden Parker (4) scoops the ball while Peller’s junior Ty Jackson (13) tries to stop halt the action. The team lost 10-4 during the district title game.