

# Captions

## Why are Captions Important?

1. Tells the story behind the photo emphasizing the five W's and H:
  - Who
  - What
  - Where
  - When
  - Why
  - How
2. Preserves the story behind the picture.

## Parts of a Caption

1. Lead-in
2. Descriptive Sentence
3. Background Sentence

### **Lead-in serves as a mini-headline for the photo**

- ✓ Short, catchy and clever mini-headline
- ✓ Grabs the reader's attention
- ✓ Captures overall mood of the photo
- ✓ Links the photo to the info provided in the caption



**Hammer time.** Carefully shaping the copper ring with a rawhide mallet, senior Jessica Price puts the finishing touches on sizing it accurately. Known best for her oil paintings, Jessica received a perfect score on her final Jewelry and Small Sculpture I portfolio.

### **Descriptive sentence tells what is going on the photo**

- ✓ Colorfully describes the photo using descriptive adjectives and adverbs
- ✓ ALWAYS written in present tense and active voice



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### **Background sentence provides information beyond the photograph**

- ✓ Provides information that can not be obtained by looking at the photo
- ✓ Relates to information provided in the descriptive sentence
- ✓ Always written in the past tense and active voice



**Hammer time. Carefully shaping the copper ring with a rawhide mallet, senior Jessica Price puts the finishing touches on sizing it accurately. Known best for her oil paintings, Jessica received a perfect score on her final Jewelry and Small Sculpture I portfolio.**

## Types of Captions

There are 6 Types of Captions. This refers specifically to the Descriptive Sentence of the caption.

### 1. ADJECTIVE

*Rainy* conditions can't dampen the spirits of the varsity cheerleaders as they dance to . . .

### 2. ADVERB

*Attentively* watching for their cues, members of the marching band entertain the halftime crowd . . .

### 3. COMMON NOUN

*Time* expires as AP Language and Composition students complete their difficult final exam . . .

### 4. DIRECT QUOTE

*"The new SAT format is much tougher for me since I don't write very well,"* said junior Todd Fritz as . . .

### 5. GERUND

*Jogging* is a popular choice for teens looking to maintain a healthy lifestyle . . .

### 6. PARTICIPLE

*Concerned* students look on from a distance as emergency crews arrive to

## Caption Type Usage

- Adjective and adverb captions are preferred because they are generally more interesting than the others
- Limit the use of gerund and participles because they are often overused, which impacts variety
- Do not use proper noun captions... NEVER begin a caption with the person's name or even an adjective that directly modifies it.

## Caption Examples: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

### **The Ugly:**

John Boyle runs with the football versus Frederick.

### **The Bad:**

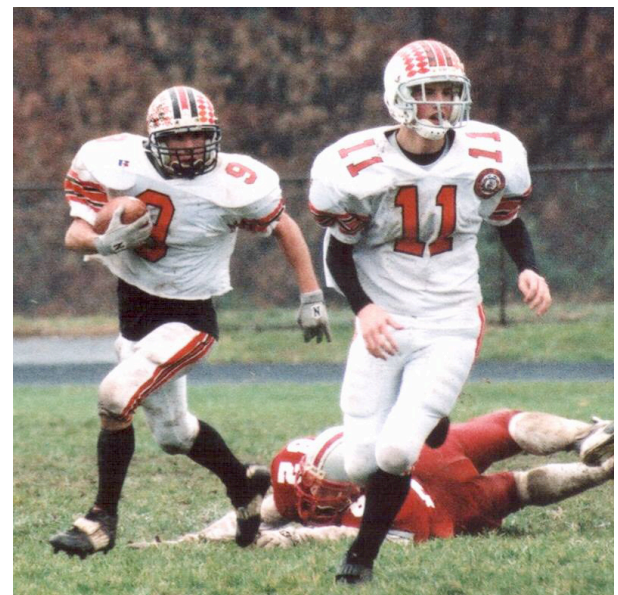
Running down the sideline versus Frederick is John Boyle. The Knight's won the game 28-13

### **The Average:**

**Big Gain.** Running down the sideline, senior John Boyle returns a punt versus Frederick. The Knights came back to win the game 28-13

### **The Good:**

**Off to the races.** Slicing through the Cadets' punt coverage, senior John Boyle (9) follows lead-blocker John Smith (11) down the sideline for 35 yards versus Frederick. Boyle, who was selected to the All-Area team, set a league record with five punt returns for touchdowns.



## Another Good Example:

Sources:

Mattingly, John. CSPA Caption Writing PowerPoint Presentation.  
Yearbook Fundamentals, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Columbia Scholastic Press Association. 1999.

**Eat my dots!** Showing off his old-school video game skills, English teacher John Darrell plays his way to the high score on Ms. Pac-Man at Venutti's Pizzeria. Darrell's A.P. Literature class held a benefit dinner for Hurricane Katrina victims on October 3.



## Caption No, No's

- **NEVER EVER** write "GAG" captions.
  - ALWAYS use factual information
- Don't editorialize
  - That's when you use adjective and adverbs that overstates the truth.



Pictured left, senior Jill Harrison **perfectly analyzes the slide in her attempt to cure the common cold.**

- Don't use directional leads.
  - Shown above, left, below, etc.

**Pictured left**, senior Jill Harrison perfectly analyzes the slide in her attempt to cure the common cold.



## How to Write a Caption

### **Step 1: Research**

- ✓ Compile all relevant information

### **Step 2: Compose a Rough Draft**

- ✓ Write a description and background

### **Step 3: Create Lead In**

- ✓ Creatively Link action to information

### **Step 4: Edit with a Rubric**

- ✓ Thoroughly evaluate against the caption rubric

## **More About Captions...**

### **Caption Formatting:**

- ✓ Photo Bys give credit to the photographer.
  - When the photographer is a student it appears as the following: Photo by John Smith.
  - When the photographer is an adult or our professional photographer it appears as the following: Photo courtesy of Bryn-Alan
  - Photo by's appear at the end of the caption in italics. Photo bys begin one space after the end of the last sentence of the caption
  - For example: **Eat my dots!** Showing off his old-school video game skills, English teacher John Darrell plays his way to the high score on Ms. Pac-Man at Venutti's Pizzeria. Darrell's A.P. Literature class held a benefit dinner for Hurricane Katrina victims on October 3. *Photo by John Smith*
  - There is no period after a photo by
- ✓ Single space after a period.
- ✓ Bold the lead in of a caption. See example above.

### **Sports Captions:**

- ✓ Identify both the school's players and opponents by jersey number and name
- ✓ Include the starting position of player to add depth to the description of the action
- ✓ Consider those players and plays that led up to this action shot
- ✓ Tell result of this play or the out come of the game

### **Group Photo Identifications:**

- ✓ Begin with the name of group
- ✓ Identify from left to right, but don't write that as part of caption
- ✓ Give clear row designation of Front Row, Second Row, Third Row, Back Row
- ✓ Row designation and group should be set in a different emphasis than the names in the identification
- ✓ Include first and last names of group members

#### Sources:

Mattingly, John. CSPA Caption Writing PowerPoint Presentation.  
Yearbook Fundamentals, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Columbia Scholastic Press Association. 1999.