

Words and Writing

Mod 7, Part 13

Caption Writing

Student's Name: _____

All the good rules you have been taught will still ring true for caption writing. You still need to attend events, interview those involved and stick to the facts. Once you know the 5Ws and H – Who, What, When Where, Why and How – captions write themselves. In Mod 7, Part 12 we discussed things you should do when writing great captions. Below are some final thoughts on caption writing.

Do NOT in Captions:

- Don't state the obvious
- Don't begin leads with names or overuse same lead pattern
- Don't use label leads (example: basketball girls, swimmers, etc.)
- Don't use an excessive amount of –ing verbs
- Avoid "During" to begin your lead as it's overused
- Don't use "Pictured/Showed Above," "Seems/Attempts to"
- Avoid using "to be" verbs
- Don't use "gag" or joke captions
- Don't comment or question the action in the picture; you are telling the reader what happened, not conversing with him

Sports Captions Consideration:

- Identify both schools' players and opponents by jersey number and name
- State position of the player(s)
- Consider plays leading up to the action
- Tell the result or outcome

For Group Shots (TEAM PHOTOS OR CLUB GROUP PICTURES):

- Begin with name of group
- Identify from left to right, but do not write that as part of the caption
- Give clear row designation in a different font than text
(CHEERLEADING Front: Name Here, Name Here. Row 2: Name Here, Name Here. Back: Name Here, Name Here.)

Helpful Hints:

- Attend the event and know what you are writing about
- Write the caption as soon as possible after the picture was taken
- Describe what is happening in the exact moment of the photo
- Avoid passive voice
- Don't add unnecessary phrases such as "left to right" or "pictured above"
- Check and recheck the spelling of the names and text
- NEVER make up information – it is journalistically wrong!

Assignment: Read Walsworth's Caption Writing handout for background information. In this exercise, we are going to work on writing captions in a variety of ways. At times, it is hard to include all four parts in a caption. Still, you should always include at least two and hopefully three of the four parts of a caption. Try to include all four parts of the **ABCD**. To make sure you don't always start with WHO is in the photo, try to start with WHAT, WHEN, or WHERE as listed below.



Information:

- Thoroughly Modern Millie production.
- Production presented by Drama Club.
- Cast selected from open tryouts.
- 72 students were part of the cast and crew.
- Max Rushmore was the director. He is a sophomore. The youngest director for a school production.
- Leads: Millie Dillmount played by Jennifer Dyller (junior); Miss Dorothy Brown played by Caitlyn James (senior); Jimmy Smith played by Ryan Miraz (senior); Trevor Graydon played by Billie Henderson (senior).
- Location: Paul W. Laird Auditorium, Prairie Village Academy, Des Moines, Iowa.
- Three-day show, Nov. 14, 15, 16. All three shows were sold out.
- The film is set early in the flapper era in 1922
- In this photo, Mr. Gradon (right) has just dictated a letter to Millie (center) as a part of determining whether she is qualified to work as a part of the secretarial pool for Sincere Trust. He begins slowly but increases the speed of his dictation throughout the song. Despite the speed of the dictation, Millie can keep up and is hired. This is the final pose in the song "Speed Test."
- "I was so surprised that I got the role of Millie. I was sure that a senior would get the lead." — Jennifer Dyller
- "My friends used to tease me about being in musicals but now they think it's pretty cool. They know how much I enjoy performing." — Billie Henderson

Caption Writing: Attention Getter (few words) > Basic Information (present tense) > Complimentary Information (past tense) > Direct Quote

After the lead, begin the caption with **WHAT**.

Caption Writing: Attention Getter (few words) > Basic Information (present tense) > Complimentary Information (past tense) > Direct Quote

After the lead, begin the caption with **WHERE**.

Caption Writing: Attention Getter (few words) > Basic Information (present tense) > Complimentary Information (past tense) > Direct Quote

After the lead, begin the caption with **WHEN**.
