

Captions Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Tell the reader more than can be seen in the photo
- Grab attention with lead-ins and link photo and rest of caption
- Include the 5W's and H
- Use strong, lively, vital actions verbs
- Use strong, visual, specific nouns
- Use a variety of adjectives and adverbs while still avoid editorializing
- Keep them factual
- Use a variety of sentence patterns
- Use complete sentences
- Identify all main participants
- Use complete names
- Use present, tense, active voice for the sentence that captures the action of the photo. Background and supplemental information may be written in past tense.
- Consider the action before, during and after the photo as well as the reaction to the event
- Interview participants, advisers, teachers, officers, coaches and other sources to add specific information
- If using class or year designations for students, be consistent

Don't

- Don't state the obvious
- Don't begin with name leads
- Don't overuse the same lead patterns
- Don't begin with label leads
- Don't use "During" as the lead
- Don't use "pictured above", "shown above", "seems to", "attempts to," or "Appears to"
- Avoid excessive use of participles and gerunds (-ing words)
- Avoid the use of the passive "to be" verb (is, are, was, were)
- Don't pad the caption
- Don't use "gag" or joke captions
- Don't comment, question or talk to the picture