

# CAPTIONS

Captions are the text that accompanies photographs in magazines, newspapers and yearbook. This text provides information about what is going on in the photo. It's like a very short story!

Captions are very important, for several reasons. First and foremost, the captions are the historical record of the year. They identify who did what, and when. As a result, it is important that captions be factually accurate—20 years from now, those captions will be the only way people have to know what happened during that school year.

Also, a huge percentage of people who look at a yearbook will read the captions! Therefore, it's important that they are also well-written and interesting to read, and provide information that your audience wouldn't know without looking at the photo.

All captions for Tenas Coma must be at least two sentences in length. The first sentence—in present tense—identifies the people in the photograph and describes the action in the photo. The second sentence—in past tense—provides additional information that cannot be learned just by looking at the photo.

## THE FIRST SENTENCE

A caption's first sentence should include most of the basic information answered by asking the 5Ws and H—Who, What, Where, When, Why and How. A good first sentence should have a minimum of five of these elements: the who; what; where; and when; and either the why or how.

**Who is in the photo:** If there are four or fewer people in the photo, they must all be identified by full name and grade (if a student) or job title (if an adult). If there are five or more people in the photo, you may use a group identification (members of Key Club, freshmen, play audience...).

**What are they doing:** This description of the action needs to move beyond the obvious (John Smith kicks the ball). The action should be described

**When are they doing it?** What day was the photo taken? What period? Whose class?

**Where are they doing it?** At an assembly? In a classroom—which specific classroom?

**Why are they doing it?** What problem are they trying to solve? What are they building? What assignment are they working on? What are they hoping to accomplish?

**How are they doing it?** This allows you to further describe the action! Are they using some sort of tool or equipment? You can also describe the effort or emotion of the person or people doing the action. Be careful that you are being factual and not using your opinion when describing the how.

## THE SECOND SENTENCE

This sentence, in past tense, provides additional information.

- The result of a play or game
- Information about records broken or notable accomplishments
- Statistical information about what is going on (percentage of students who passed the HSPE, vote totals)
- Outcome/result of the event (who won the contest...)
- Reaction from someone who attended the event
- Reaction from someone who is pictured in the photo

This sentence may be a sentence that you write with information gathered from interviews, or it may be a direct quotation from someone.

## CAPTION VARIETY

Because there are many photos on a yearbook page, it's important that the captions seem varied and fresh. The easiest way to do this is to vary how the captions start. It's human nature to start a caption with the names of the people in the photo (the "who"). In order to keep captions from becoming boring, it is essential to start some with the what, the when, the where, the why and the how. All this takes is taking the information you already have gathered through interviewing and putting it in a different order—easy!