

Academic Photography

Shortcode	Description
Caption: Excellent	Captions -- at their best -- should answer a viewer's questions about a photo. Your caption has done all of that and more, and your readers will be grateful. All of the basics are here: clear sentence construction, AP style, active verbs, factual information about the situation and important context. Captions are often overlooked, but this caption shows exemplary attention to detail.
Caption: Mediocre	Consider what questions a viewer would have about this photo, this scene and these people. Consider how those questions could be most clearly answered. While the caption might have answered some of the basics of the caption, more attention is needed. Consider this checklist: 1) AP style, 2) active verbs, 3) background facts, 4) creative sentence construction, 5) use of quotations.
Caption: Weak	One of the key functions of a caption is to connect a photo to the story that it will accompany. In order to do that, captions need to provide basic factual information: 1) What are the names of the people in the photo? 2) What are they doing?, 3) Where are they?, 4) When? Of course, all of this needs to be communicated in a concise, active sentence written in AP style. The bonus -- after those questions are answered -- would be to address the "how" and "why" of the situation. Consider how your caption could better live up to these requirements.
Composition: Distracting background	Consider how you could have been more intentional about the objects shown in the background here. Generally speaking, the presence of brightness, color, people or other sharply focused objects will distract the viewer from the intended primary focus. How can this be fixed? 1) Get closer; 2) Use a more telephoto lens; 3) change your angle up/down or left right; 4) wait for the background elements to move out of the frame. Would one or more of these techniques have helped?
Composition: Excellent	The composition of this photo is great: the organization of people and objects in the frame is clean and inventive. The image shows attention to avoiding congested backgrounds and portraying a clean central focus for the image. It all comes together here: camera angle, distance to subject and lens choice. Excellent composition.
Composition: Get closer	One of the most challenging but important demands of being a photojournalist is to get close to your subjects. Indeed, the camera makes this difficult because your subjects are often conscious if not intimidated by the presence of a camera. However, viewers expect that images will give them a new view into the world: one of the most compelling ways to do that is to get close and showcase the eyes and faces of your subjects. This image could give us a much more intimate and personal view of the subject by getting closer.
Composition: Mediocre	Solid composition is shown here in this image. The intended center of attention is clear and well showcased with good attention to background. However, it would be nice to have a more inventive and adventurous composition. Consider all of the compositional possibilities: rule of thirds, framing, leading lines, foreground vs. background, repetition or an original angle. While not all of those might have helped in this particular situation, the image could use more attention to composition.
Composition: Weak	The composition of this photo needs more attention. Photographers make an infinite number of decisions in each frame: what to include, what to omit, how high to stand, where to stand side to side, etc. With each of those decisions the photographer sends a message about what is important in the scene. This image could have been more deliberate about how to arrange the objects within the frame.
Cropping: Excellent	Smart and focused cropping can elevate an already excellent moment, and that is what this image shows. The photo is free from unnecessary elements, avoids cutting off key storytelling elements and maintains interesting composition. Good attention to this seemingly small detail.
Cropping: Weak	Cropping here needs more attention. As a rule of thumb, try to crop by starting with only the most vital element in the frame within the cropping tool: this might be something as small as a face or even a person's eyes. Next, expand the sides of the cropping tool until only the essential parts of the photo are included. Of course the new crop should avoid cutting off people's body parts in awkward ways as well. Consider how this photo could be better cropped.
Lighting: Strong	In addition to "moment" and "composition", the consideration of "lighting" makes a great photo. This image shows why that is true. The lighting here shows understanding for how direction and intensity of light contribute attractive and storytelling images. The image also shows use of camera settings and digital imaging to capture the light.
Lighting: Weak	Consider how lighting weakens the image here. Rather than showcasing the most vital elements of the situation, the image's lighting complicates the viewers work here. When choosing an angle (and even when choosing an assignment), ask what angle, what time of day and what situation will provide the best light. And if attractive light is not available, consider how you could use flash to supplement the existing light.

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Storytelling: Strong	This image has a strong storytelling quality: it harnesses the power of photography to freeze a decisive moment. Nice work in working to find a moment that engages the viewer.
Storytelling: Weak	Photographs have the potential to showcase meaningful moments about everything, including academics. Consider how your photo could select a more emotional moment, or perhaps a moment of interaction between people in the situation. Would more patience or more time spent in the situation have yielded a different moment that would have spoken to the viewer with a greater storytelling quality?
Technical: Poor toning	The camera settings are the first opportunity to ensure a photo has proper brightness, contrast and white balance. However, basic digital toning is often needed. This toning should not be used to deceive the reader, but rather to allow the photo to match the original scene and attract the reader's attention. The most common digital tool to make this adjustment is Photoshop. Consider how this photo might improve in appearance with digital toning.
Technical: Strong	The technical aspects of this photo are strong. From the settings on the camera to the digital toning of the photo, the image is solid. Nice work of knowing the correct shutter speed, aperture and ISO for the situation. Also, the levels of brightness, contrast and color balance are well adjusted here.
Technical: Too dark/bright	Be sure to pay attention to camera settings that control exposure. The shutter speed, aperture and ISO govern the appearance of the finished image. If the combination prevents enough light from being captured, the image will be underexposed and dark. (This is a result of a shutter speed that is too fast, an aperture that is too closed or an ISO that is not sensitive enough). On the flip side, slow shutter speeds, sensitive ISOs and open apertures will result in overexposed images. You can Google "photo exposure" for videos and more information.
Topic: Mediocre	The topic/situation here connects with academics. With academic photos often being a challenging assignment, your photo does well here. However, consider how a different approach or focus to this assignment might have created more dynamic and compelling images for the average viewer. With more advanced planning, consider if you could have found a different topic.
Topic: Strong	Excellent work here in choosing a topic that is both interesting to the viewer. Oftentimes, finding these situations is as much work or more than shooting the photo. And this can be especially true for academic photos, where situations are often not very active or emotional. Finding a strong topic also demands planning and research. Well done.
Topic: Weak	The situation in the photo could be improved. Because academic situations are not always necessarily action-packed, photographers need to research activities well in advance to get images beyond the obvious and repetitive. What topic would have been more compelling?