

# The ABC's of CAPTION WRITING

**start with the basics**

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**

## STRONG PHOTOS = STRONG CAPTIONS



These photos were taken at the same track meet.  
Which one tells a more interesting story?

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**

## STRONG INTERVIEWS = STRONG CAPTIONS



*What questions do you think this reporter asked to be able to write this caption?*

*The Glass Menagerie* gets an updated look as sophomore English 10 Honors student Aaron Tyres films his group's scene for their project. Tyres and four classmates used iMovie to film during the first week of October. "Mrs. Emerson gave us three weeks to write and one week to film. We modernized the plot by setting our film in 21<sup>st</sup> century Baltimore. We earned an A on the project," Tyres said.

# STRONG LEAD-INS = STRONG CAPTIONS



**FRIENDS ARE HANDY.** Comforting her friend, junior Kaitt Maikin holds junior Naomi MacDonald's hand while she gets her blood taken. "The blood drive was fun and I got really good food and the nurse even made me a special wrap. It didn't hurt, but I was really lightheaded afterwards," Mankin said. *photo by Nikki Slade*

- Strong lead in (2-5 words) should direct you to what picture it identifies.
- Think of it as a mini-headline – word play is encouraged!
- Be sure to vary the format  
Do NOT start with:  
–ing words ("During", for example)  
Names  
Grades  
"pictured above"  
"shown above"  
"seems to"  
"attempts to"



# The ABC's of CAPTION WRITING

*What picture do you think these caption starters belong to?*

1. WALKING TO THE BEAT

2. GET LOW

3. HIGHLANDER RUMBLE

4. LION AROUND

5. KICKING OFF THE YEAR

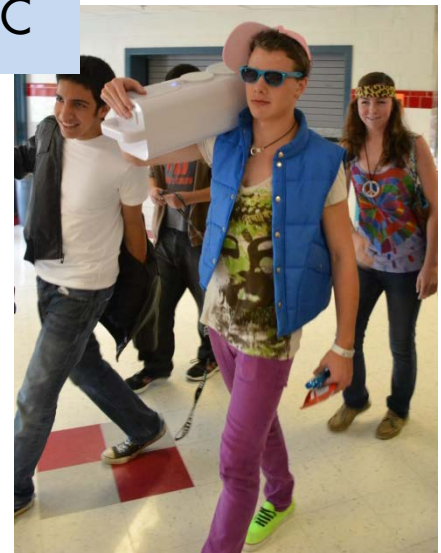
A



B



C



D



E



## **STRONG CAPTIONS:**

- answer WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHY of every photo in the book
- draw the readers into the spread
- are always factual

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**

## Sentence #1



*Who? What? When? Where?*

✦ Describe the **ACTION** that is going on in the photo *(without stating the obvious)*

✦ Write in present tense

✦ Name all parties involved

✦ Uses active voice  
*(avoid helping verbs)*

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All Clear! In her last meet as a middle school runner, eighth grader Nan Pearson clears the last hurdle in the 100 meters.

## Sentence #2

**B**

*Why? How?*

- Provide information that gives **BACKGROUND** about the event in the photo
- This information should not appear in the copy or other captions
- Should answer any of the W's not answered in "Action"

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**

## Sentence #2

*Why? How?*

Provide information that gives **BACKGROUND** about the event in the photo. *Consider the action before and after the photo.*

- This information should not appear in the copy or other captions
- Should answer any of the W's not answered in "Action"

All Clear! In her last meet as a middle school runner, eighth grader Nan Pearson clears the last hurdle in the 100 meters. She won the race against South Middle School on Sept. 20 and finished the season undefeated in this event.



**Sentence #3**



- Provides **CONTEXT**, tying the photo to the spread topic
- Often a quote, but can take other forms such as statistics, survey results, or any sentence that provides secondary coverage of the spread topic.

For sports photos describes what led up to the play and what the result was.



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All Clear! In her last meet as a middle school runner, eighth grader Nan Pearson clears the last hurdle in the 100 meters. She won the race against South Middle School on Sept. 20 and finished the season undefeated in this event. "I had run a 5k for charity the night before so my legs were tired. I wasn't sure how that would effect me but I guess adrenaline just took over – I ran my best time ever," Pearson said. *photo by Erik Thomas*



*Can you identify the ABCs of this caption?*

# Action Background Context

SWISH SPLASH. As varsity girls basketball coach Mike O'Brien pegs a water balloon at one of his players, JV coach Rob Bouchard looks on, laughing. Players, coaches and campers took a break from girls basketball camp and went outside to throw water balloons. "I was the only one to hit Coach O'Brien with a water balloon; I hit him square in the chest. It was awesome," sophomore Elena Karakozoff said. *photo by Emily Winchester*



*Can you identify the ABCs of this caption?*

# Action Background Context

PAINTING A FRESH START. New year, new adviser, new newsroom. Junior Myriam Assaadi paints over handprints and names in the journalism room before the start of the school year. "There were a lot of random paintings and drawings on the walls so we wanted to paint over it and later hang up more journalism related posters," journalism teacher Lindsay Benedict said. *photo by Erik Thomas*



*Can you identify the ABCs of this caption?*

Action

Background

Context

SHAKE AND SCRAPE. On Aug. 23, a 5.9 earthquake rattled the east coast, unsettling the marching band during a rehearsal in the auditorium. As the marchers swarmed the steps to evacuate, senior Emma Artley dove off the stage in an attempt to avoid the traffic jam and scraped her knee. "It was really scary, I thought my life was ending," senior Emma Artley said. *photo by Yasmine Panah*



# **The ABC's of CAPTION WRITING**

**now let's put our formula  
to the test!**

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**



## GIVE IT A TRY!

A = action

B = background

C = context

**Who?** senior catcher Mark Myers

**What?** Warming up closer Ryan Rhodes during the game against Universal High School

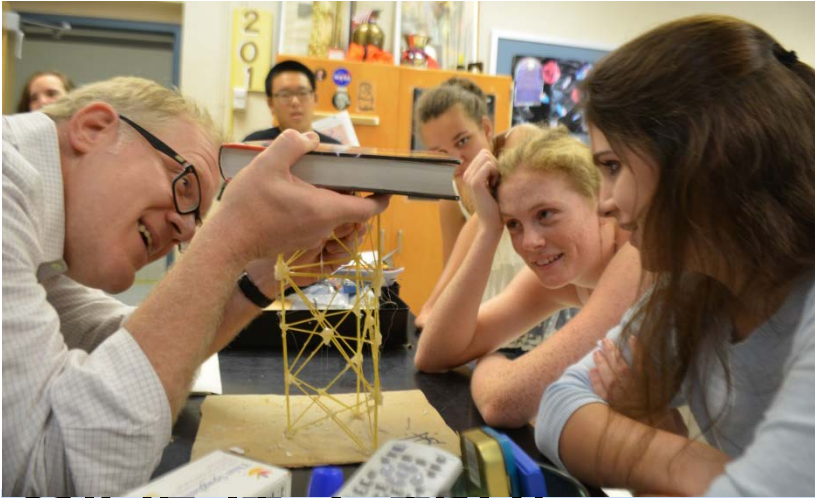
**Where?** home game

**When?** April 28

**Why?** "Rhodes and I have been playing together since fourth grade. I'm so excited that we both got recruited to play for Duke. I really can't imagine catching for anyone else."

**Outcome?** Myers entered the game with Rhodes in the top of the seventh inning, and Rhodes earned a save with the 3-2 win.

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**



**Who?** Physics teacher Dean Howarth and juniors Jon Lim, Susie Smith, Katie McGinn and Sara Satha

**What?** Test their spaghetti tower

**Where?** Mr. Howarth's room – Y201

**When?** Sept. 12

## **GIVE IT A TRY!**

**A** = action

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**Fun Facts:** Bernie Glazer built the toughest spaghetti tower, holding 6 textbooks before breaking, approx. 18 pounds.

Mr. Howarth bought 22 boxes of spaghetti when it was on sale last June in preparation for the project.

**Why?** "We had just completed our unit on static and dynamic loads and instead of a test we had to demonstrate what we learned by building a tower out of just spaghetti noodles and glue. My partner and I struggled a bit – I glued my hair to my forehead and Sara almost cried when our tenth tower broke before we even got to test it. But in the end we made a tower that held three textbooks, so we got a B+," McGinn said.

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**



**Who?** senior Nicole Daniels with the DESI club.

**What?** performs a traditional Indian folk dance

**Where?** the Culture Festival

**When?** Jan. 7

**Why?** "It was worth the 30 hours practicing the dance to have the opportunity to show off my heritage," Daniels said.

## **Fun Facts:**

Daniels and her two sisters have taken folk dance lessons for three years.

Nicole's mom made the costume with fabric she bought last summer in India.

Nicole's favorite Indian food is samosas.

Tickets to the Culture Festival sold out in less than an hour.

## **GIVE IT A TRY!**

A = action

B = background

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# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**



## **GIVE IT A TRY!**

A = action

B = background

C = context

**Who?** senior Dylan Kim

**What?** donates blood

**Where?** Key Club Blood Drive in the lecture hall

**When?** Oct. 7

**Why?** "I was really excited that I would be able to give blood this year. My mom and dad both donate on a regular basis and when I was young I used to go with them to the blood donor center. They've taught me how important it is to do what we can and I can give blood," Daniels said.

### **Fun Facts:**

The Red Cross collected 200 pints of blood during the fall blood drive.

All donors got cookies and juice after they donated and a T-shirt.

Dylan is applying to Harvard but he doesn't plan to put blood donor on his application.

# The ABC's of **CAPTION WRITING**



**Who?** Seniors Sean Smith, Bobby Jones, Ryan Cason and Kevin Thomas

**What?** Try to escape the moonbounce as it deflates

**Where?** Harvest Fest in the gym

**When?** Oct. 13

**Why?** "It was finally our turn for the moonbounce and Sean, Bobby, Ryan and I were all really excited to jump around. We had only been in it for a minute when it started to deflate. The guy said that it was a faulty fan or something. It was a bummer but it was fun while it lasted," Thomas said.

## **GIVE IT A TRY!**

A = action

B = background

C = context

### **Fun Facts:**

Harvest Fest was organized and paid for by the senior class

The event was usually held outside but had to be moved indoors because of thunderstorms.