

# What Is a Good Caption for a Picture?

*A good photo caption is informative and catchy. It explains the story of the photograph and provides context.*

An outstanding photo caption can change the mood of the image. It can lead to different interpretations. A good caption can turn an average picture into an iconic and world-known photograph.



Vj Day, Alfred Eisenstaedt, 1945

Consider the picture of the kissing couple below. Without the caption, we could guess whether the couple dressed-up for a costume party. Or we wonder if they got engaged and that's why the happy kiss. When you read the caption, you realise that it captures an important day in history. VJ day – Victory over Japan Day, August 15, 1945.

Now that you know that the whole country was celebrating, you are eager to learn more. Was the couple reunited after the war? What's their story? If you read about it, you will get surprising details about Alfred Eisenstaedt's photo.

You start researching the story and the people's identity in the picture. Thanks to one excellent caption.

That's the purpose of a good photo caption.

# Steps to Writing Perfect Photo Captions

## Choose a Photo Caption That Fits the Platform

Your photo caption's style and format depend on the platform your picture appears on. Is your image displayed at an exhibition? Or will it appear in a magazine? Or will it appear on a website or blog or a social media platform?

## Use a Conversational Tone and Present Tense

*Write your caption as if you were talking to a friend or a relative. People don't want to read complicated sentences.*

You have to consider the educational level of your viewers. A good photo caption targets a broad audience with various backgrounds. It should be easy to understand and interpret for everyone.

Keep in mind that the tone of your image and of the caption should be matching. Don't try to be funny if the photo is not humorous. Unless you want to use sarcasm or irony on purpose.

Using the **present tense** makes the photo seem more relevant. It creates a feeling of impact and the illusion of being right where the picture happens.



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When all you need is a cup of coffee before you start working

## **Know Who Your Audience Is**

It's important to know who your photographs talk to. What is their age, interest and nationality? Your audience influences the platform you use and the purpose of your photo caption too.

You cannot target every single person with your photo caption. A picture can talk to a broad audience, and there are a few universal signs we all understand. Such a kiss or a smile.

But language and the cultural background influences the interpretation of your caption. For instance, a photograph of a [funeral](#) in [India](#) could confuse people. The colour of mourning is white in the country. Your photograph uses its meaning without a caption. Or if you use the wrong one.



Indian bride getting ready for her wedding

### **Use a Quote or Lyrics Wisely**

Using a quote or famous lyrics as photo captions can be tricky. You want to avoid sounding like a cliché or being lame and cheesy. But sometimes someone else already said the words that describe your photo the best. If you use someone else's quote or lyrics, always credit them.

Be careful with using lyrics and movie titles as captions, though. Even if you credit them, there might be legal issues with using them if you try to make money somehow.

It can also happen that the best quote to caption your photo comes from the person who appears in it. The famous Instagram page '[Humans of New York](#)' always uses a quote from the subject of the photo as the caption.





My momma always said 'Life is like a box of chocolate. You never know what you're gonna get'". Forrest Gump

### **Add Value with Your Photo Caption**

*You shouldn't just describe what's obvious in the photo.* The photo caption should give extra value or information to the viewer.

You don't have to overcomplicate it. You can also just use the first sentence that comes to your mind when you look at the photo. Take the example of the photo of the hot air balloons below. Instead of using the caption 'hot air balloons in Turkey', you can also say the first thing that comes to your mind. I would use 'This is the pure definition of freedom'.



This is the pure definition of freedom

## **1. Create Involvement With Your Photo Caption**

Captions that create involvement and engage the viewer are the most effective. You might not always be able to use such a caption. But on social media platforms, engaging captions work like magic. Posing a question or starting a conversation with your audience can get you more followers or clients.

An engaging question can provoke more emotions and associations than an informative description.



Do you think we have enough time to save this planet?

## **Conclusion**

A photo caption can turn a good photo into an excellent one. And a good photo always screams for a caption.