

# Writing a Human Interest Photo Essay Story

*The photo and the story should complement each other. Together they should tell the story. They should avoid repeating each other. The story should help explain the what, when, and where. But the photo should provoke an emotional reaction.*

1. **Use the story to tell the reader something new.** When a reader looks at the photo they're usually confronted with some form of emotion and some information (based on what they see in the photo). The story, in turn, should provide the reader with a piece of information they were unaware of from simply looking at the photo. In short, the story should teach the reader something about the photo.
2. **Do not worry about length of the story.** A photo may say a thousand words, but sometimes a few words are required to put the photo in context. If a lengthy story is required in order to allow the photo to make sense, that's okay.
3. **Write in a conversational language.** Journalism, in general, doesn't use overly complicated language. But it also doesn't use cliches or slang. Write your story in a conversational tone, similar to the way you'd address a family member if you were showing them the photo.
4. **Don't keep repeating the details.** If multiple, consecutive photos in a story show either the same place or person or event, it is not necessary to keep repeating the details of these items in the story. For example, if you introduce the person in the first paragraph using their full name, you can simply refer to them with by their first or last name in subsequent captions.
5. **Make sure you aren't sloppy.** Sloppiness happens when someone just doesn't care, or doesn't consider the situation important enough to double-check. The result of sloppiness can be incorrect spelling, the wrong names for people in the photo, stories that don't match the photos, referring to a photo in the story incorrectly, etc. If you're proud of your work, do a good job from start to finish.
6. **Remember that what you print is considered fact.** As a photo journalist, whatever you print either in your story or photos is usually considered fact by your readers. They rightfully assume you've done your fact-checking and that what you're telling them is accurate. If you were too lazy or sloppy to do the job, you risk passing along incorrect information to a large number of people.