

Elements of Photojournalism

Good photos tell a story better than the text that comes with it. And in order to tell a story, your photos should have the following elements:

1. Humans or people



Baltimore firefighters sit on a stoop across the street from a vacant row home where several firefighters died in a building collapse on Monday, January 24. The firefighter on the right is holding balloons that were given to him by a local resident.

Julio Cortez/AP

2. Emotions, i.e. facial or non-verbal expressions



A Covid-19 patient is embraced by his son and daughter before he is intubated at a hospital in Mission Viejo, California, on Tuesday, January 25.
Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

3. Action



A farmer fights a bushfire in Guatavita, Colombia, on Saturday, January 22. Daniel Munoz/AFP/Getty Images

4. Something extraordinary or unusual



A wax figure of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is prepared at a museum in Hamburg, Germany, on Wednesday, January 26. Marcus Brandt/Picture Alliance/Getty Images

Your photos should focus on the faces of people, not on their backs or the backs of their heads. Take photos of people in action; of people doing things. Avoid taking photos of people shaking hands or handing out awards as these tend to bore the audience.



Former baseball star David Ortiz celebrates in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo on Tuesday, January 25, after finding out that he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Ortiz, a 10-time All-Star known as "Big Papi," won three World Series titles with the Boston Red Sox and was World Series MVP in 2013. He hit 541 home runs during his 20 Major League seasons. Manolito Jimenez/AP

Make sure that your subject is always in focus. Know what subject should be. When taking photos of people stranded because of a storm, your focus should be on the people, not on the torrent of rains. If you want to focus on the rain, your story should be about the storm, not the stranded people.



A zookeeper watches a pair of Humboldt penguins during the annual animal count at the Marwell Zoo in Winchester, England, on Tuesday, January 25.
Andrew Matthews/PA Images/Reuters

Always take note of the angle of the shots you are taking. To make sure that you choose the right angle, **take a couple of shots in different perspectives.** This is similar to what film directors do when they want to capture the scenes of their movies in different points of view.



Ottawa's Tim Stutzle scores a goal past Columbus' Elvis Merzlikins during an NHL game on Sunday, January 23. Ben Jackson/NHLI/Getty Images