

Photojournalism Caption style

A caption (or cutline) is **required** for all images filed to **all CU photojournalism classes** or to any news organization, archive or agency. Your AP-style caption **must** answer these questions:

1. Does it identify, fully and clearly, **Who?** Are the names spelled correctly with the correct name on the correct person? Are ages included for minors?
2. **What** is in the picture? Complete the story.
3. **When?** The DATE, including the day of the week, day and year must appear in the body of all captions. Your images will be history some day.
4. **Where?** Be specific. Follow AP style for geographic locations. Use city, state and country unless otherwise noted in the AP Stylebook.
5. **Why?** Explain the circumstances, but avoid hyperbole. Remove as many adjectives as possible from the final caption.
6. Is it specific? Is it easy to read?
7. Is it grammatically correct and written in AP style? Did you check your spelling?

Example:

Waving to a capacity crowd of 84,000, Democratic Party nominee Barack Obama, left, a U.S. senator from Illinois, and running mate Joseph Biden, a U.S. senator from Delaware, accept their party's nomination at Invesco Field at Mile High during the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Thursday, Aug. 28, 2008. Obama, the first black presidential nominee, is likely to face Arizona Senator John McCain in the general election. (Photo/Kevin Moloney)

Captions are generally made of **two parts**, each composed of one or more sentences. The first part, almost always written in present tense, describes the action seen in the photo (see the first complex sentence in the above example). Start with an **action verb** if you can. Avoid passive voice when possible, and talk about action in the order that you see it as you look at the photo. The second part gives context to the image. This part is usually written in past tense and describes why the action, situation or content of the picture is important or interesting. Use future tense here if the important context is yet to come.

Name people in your captions from the the first person the reader would see, then from left to right. Separate the info with commas, not parenthesis. A clear left to right example:

Surviving Monty Python's Flying Circus cast members Terry Jones, left, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, John Cleese, and Michael Palin look on in surprise...

Or one based on the prominent subject:

Surviving Monty Python's Flying Circus cast member John Cleese playfully derides an award presented to the troop by the American Film Institute, while Michael Palin, right, cringes with laughter...

Follow AP style. **Be sure** to include the date of the event within the caption. (*Thursday, March 3, 2008 — Spell out day of week. Abbreviate multi-syllable month names. Include year.*) **ALSO be sure** to include your credit within this field (**Photo/Your Name**).

NEVER WRITE A CAPTION WITHOUT HAVING THE PICTURE IN FRONT OF YOU!

Digital Imaging Captions

Digital imaging systems have fields (NAA/IPTC headers) in the caption prompt to ask specifically for such things as date, source, and photographer's credit. In this case, you would simply enter the caption info and byline in the caption box without the other info bits (systems vary in appearance, but the required info is the same). Enter the following when using Adobe Photoshop™ to file your assignments digitally. In Photoshop pull the **File** menu to **File Info** to access the dialog:

The screenshot shows the 'File Info' dialog box in Adobe Photoshop. The title bar reads 'New-Moloney-6-2-97.jpg'. On the left is a sidebar with a list of metadata categories: Description (selected), Camera Data 1, Camera Data 2, Categories, History, IPTC Contact, IPTC Content, IPTC Image, IPTC Status, iView MediaPro, Adobe Stock Photos, Origin, and Advanced. The main area is titled 'Description' and contains the following fields:

- Document Title:** McVeigh
- Author:** Kevin Moloney
- Author Title:** Student
- Description:** Victory signs held high, Peggy Broxterman leaves Federal Court in Denver, Monday, June 2, 1997, after a jury convicted Timothy McVeigh in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Broxterman's son was among the 168 people killed in the blast. Some 850 were...
- Description Writer:** KTM <your initials here>
- Keywords:** bomb; Timothy McVeigh; terrorism; Oklahoma City; execution; militia; trial; court; federal; investigation; Stephen Jones; judge; jury; celebration; victory; joy; hands; police; courthouse; explosion; death; attorney; lawyer; Terry Nichols; Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building

Below the keywords is a warning icon and the text: 'Commas can be used to separate keywords'. Further down are:

- Copyright Status:** Copyrighted
- Copyright Notice:** (c) Kevin Moloney, 1997
- Copyright Info URL:** <http://www.KeinMoloney.com>

At the bottom of the dialog, there is a 'Go To URL...' button. Below the main area, the following information is displayed:

- Created: 2/12/07 2:29:45 PM
- Modified: 2/12/07 2:30:11 PM
- Application: Adobe Photoshop CS2 Macintosh
- Format: image/jpeg

At the very bottom are 'Cancel' and 'OK' buttons.

Document Title: Enter a “slug” or one-word description here.

Author: Enter YOUR name.

Author Title: You are a student. Enter “Student.”

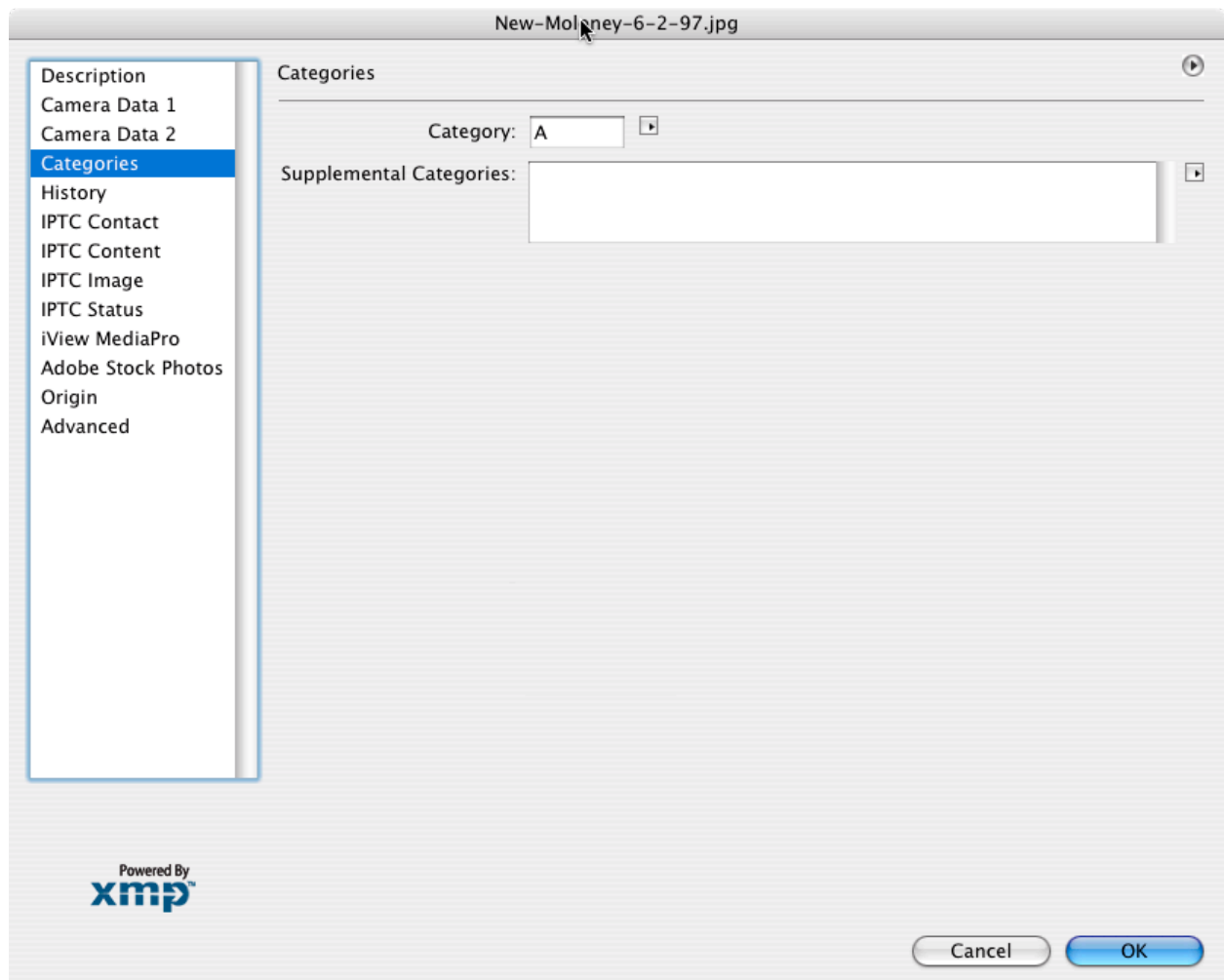
Description (or Caption): Enter the same info as required on the front page of this guide.

Description Writer (or Caption Writer): Your initials.

Keywords: Enter many keywords. Include subject names, general “big ideas” and themes, genre (news, portrait, landscape), prominent colors, weather and other elements. Think of every way someone would want to use this image and enter a keyword for that.

Copyright info: This is not required of you, but it is a good idea.

Click on the **Categories** item on the left side of the window.



Category: "A" is the AP category for news, feature and sports pictures. This will be the category you will always use for this class. Other categories include:

- A** News
- F** Business
- I** International
- S** Sports
- V** Advisory

Next, click on the **Origin** tab on the left side of the window.

New-Moloney-6-2-97.jpg

Origin

Date Created: 6/2/97 Today

City: Denver

State/Province: Colorado Country: United States

Credit: Kevin Moloney

Source: University of Colorado

Headline: McVeigh Guilty in Oklahoma City Bombing

Instructions: Attn: Kevin Moloney

Transmission Reference:

Urgency: None

Powered By xmp

Cancel OK

Date Created: Enter a simple date in MM/DD/YYYY format. The data will be reformatted by the software, but be specific and use full month, day and year digits, i.e. 06/02/1997

City: Enter the city name.

State/Province: Enter the state of province name, unabbreviated.

Country: Enter the unabbreviated country name.

Credit: This is you. Take credit for your work.

Source: This would be the publication name. Use "University of Colorado" here.

Headline: Write a simple and direct headline. Obscure cleverness is discouraged.

Instructions: Direct the image to the editor and enter any handling specifics. Here, "Attn: Kevin Moloney."

When finished, click **OK** to close the window. **BE SURE** to save your image again, or the caption info will be lost.