

Communications

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Writing Outlines for Photos

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two miles west of St. Mark. Nine different materials are being tested for alfalfa weevil control. Now is the best time to spray, according to Will Brown, extension agronomy specialist.

What is a Cutline?

The cutline is the type beneath a picture (sometimes called *underline* or *caption*). It should give the reader additional information needed to fully understand the picture.

- Give first and last name of all people in the picture, plus correct titles. Get these correct—don't guess.
- Unless otherwise indicated, people in the picture are always named left to right as shown in photo. It's often best to name the award winner or VIP person first, regardless of position. Double check cutline against people in picture.

Examples:

New officers of the Morrill County Extension Council are, from left, Alan Allen, Freetown, secretary; Julie Jones, Langton, vice chairman; Bob Watt, Moberg, chairman; and Jackie Rose, Newville, treasurer. They were elected May 1 at the Council meeting in Moberg.

Lynn Lowell, center, Rowville, won 4-H showmanship honors at the Boone County Fair May 17 in Columbia. She showed her Angus steer to the grand champion spot over 30 other exhibitors. Show judge was Jess White, left, Wallberg. Martin Maller, Clinton, University of Missouri area livestock specialist, is at right.

- Say when and where the photo was taken. Don't assume the location is obvious or the date irrelevant.
- Make the cutline easy to read. Use short and to-the-point sentences.
- Be descriptive but use adjectives sparingly. Let reader decide whether the girl in the picture is "glamorous," "happy," or "quizzical."
- Don't repeat the obvious, such as "pictured here," or "shown above." If the subject is pointing, smiling, or looking at the sky, you don't need to say so in

the cutline (unless used to identify one person in the group).

Examples:

Weak: About 60 Morris County 4-H'ers who recently attended Camp Red River at Red River State Park near Columbus are pictured above at the camp.

Better: About 60 Morris County 4-H'ers attended Camp Red River June 4-6 at Red River State Park.

Weak: Pictured is Janet White with her reserve grandchampion single barrow at the Woolstone Community Fair. Janet is president of the Stoney 4-H Club and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clevis White.

Better: Janet White showed the reserve grandchampion single barrow at the Woolstone Community Fair. Janet, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clevis White, is president of the Stoney 4-H Club.

- Get to the point fast—don't start with a generalized statement. Grab hold of the most prominent or most important feature in the picture.

Example:

Weak: The alfalfa weevil is a growing problem in Missouri. It's now time to spray alfalfa for control in this area. Above, insecticides are being applied to a University of Missouri alfalfa weevil demonstration plot to test the effectiveness of nine different materials.

Better: Researchers apply insecticides on the University of Missouri alfalfa weevil demonstration plot on the Joe Denning farm,

Picture-Only Release

If you plan a picture news release only (with no story), your cutlines will likely be longer than if you send the picture with a story. Even when sent with a story, the picture and cutline should make sense if used alone (cutline should be more than just a label or partial sentence). Study your newspaper for cutline style.

Form

Get your photo and cutline to the editor in most usable form.

- Cutline should be typed, double spaced, and identified with sender's name, address, and phone number.
- It should be attached to back of photo with rubber cement or adhesive tape. Cutline can then be folded over front of photo to protect it.
- Do not use staples or paper clips on photos. They leave marks.
- Do not write on back of photos except for putting name on back of mug shots (shows face only). Then use soft blue pencil lightly on back lower margin. Every mug shot sent to newspapers should be identified right on photo.
- A separate cutline should be attached to each photo.

Parts adapted from P. J. McDonald, Associated Press.

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