

WRITING CAPTIONS

 **Essentials** ▶ Learn to write journalistic captions with as much detail as possible.

ABCDQ.

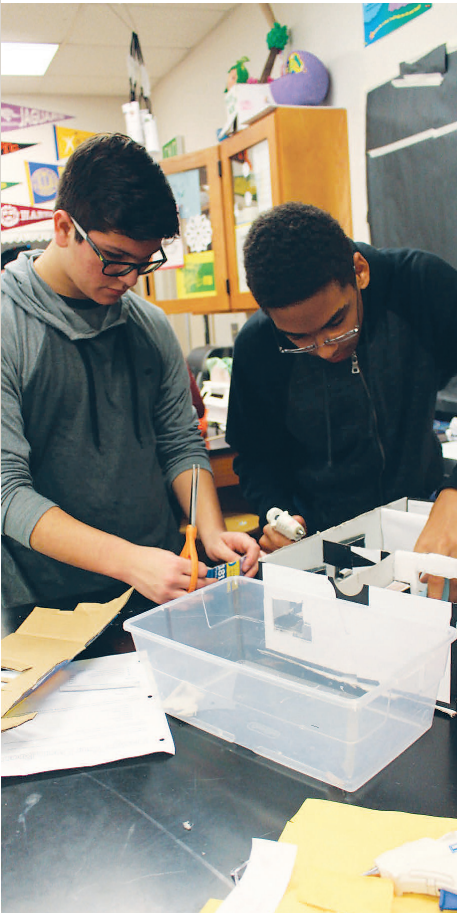
- A. Action** - Make it present tense. Describe what is happening in the photo. Active verbs matter here. Readers must be able to identify the photo based on the action.
- B. Basic information** - Give the essential information. Who is in the photo, what grade are they in, where are they and when is this happening? This can be part of the first or second sentence.
- C. Complementary information** - Give a little extra. Share something about the photo the reader would not otherwise know. This is the second or third sentence.
- DQ. Direct quote** - Include a meaningful, descriptive quote. This is the third sentence, unless you have a long storytelling caption, then it's the fourth sentence.

WHOA!

An ABCDQ caption is a mini story. Not every caption has to be ABCDQ. Simple headshots get a name and grade. Other situations may call for a shorter version. Mix it up!

Live by these caption rules

- ▶ Because the action in the photo never ages, write the action sentence in present tense. Other sentences are in past tense because the descriptors relate to a moment in the past.
- ▶ Don't state the obvious.
- ▶ Consider the action that took place before the shutter clicked and the following reactions. Include valuable information.
- ▶ Do not use joke captions. They create ethical and legal problems.
- ▶ Don't editorialize. Allow the action and the background info to tell a complete, factual story. Include the direct quote to help.
- ▶ Set and follow caption standards. If you identify students by grade level, do so consistently. The choice to use lead-ins is a section-wide decision.
- ▶ Make the introductory phrase visually distinct with bold face, color or all caps.



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Skill-builder

OH CAPTION, MY CAPTION

Mark the ABCDQ in each of these captions.

- ▶ Gluing down a piece of paper, Ian Gonzalez, 8, and Johnathan Wellington, 8, work to finish their group's college dorm. They created a college dorm using a hot glue gun, a shoe box, scissors and a lot of paper. "I joined AVID because I want to go to a four year college. I think this project gave us an idea of what living at a college looks like and encourages teamwork between students," Ian said.
- ▶ In front of Sleeping Beauty's castle, Angela Fields, 8, Amelia Townsend, 8, and Soriyah Amali, 8, walk around Disneyland. The night earlier, eighth-grade students went to school at 10 p.m. to board the buses that were traveling to Disneyland. "It was so fun for my friends and me to walk around Disneyland without any chaperones because we felt independent," Angela said. "But my feet ended up hurting afterward."
- ▶ Excited, Jessica Bailey, 7, points at the jumbotron seeing that the boys' basketball team had scored a point. The seventh-grade Lady Jags and the eighth-grade boys' basketball team had competed against Albani in the semifinals at the Golden One Center. "My friend and I were sitting down and talking about who would make the first three, but then our friend Jayvon Evans, 8, ended up shooting them. We were happy that he made the shot and congratulated him afterward by saying, 'Good job,'" Jessica said.