

The Name Game: Writing Effective Photo Titles and Captions Handout Sheet

RMOWP 2016 Workshop

Know your Audience:

- Reader – needs information
- Stock buyer – needs keywords
- Fine art buyer – needs emotional connect

Photo Captions:

- A photo caption is a few lines of text used to explain a photographic image in a publication or portfolio. May also be called a cutline.
- Elements of a photo caption:
 - Explains the action
 - Names the principles
 - Explains why the photo compliments the article
 - Notes important details (who, what, where, when, why)

Photo Titles:

- A photo title is a name given to a photographic image, usually to identify it for a purchase. A title describes an image, evokes an emotion, or offers insight into the mind of the photographer.
- A stock photo title should provide keywords for search engine optimization, including the following:
 - Communicates the subject matter in exact, brief, and descriptive words.
 - Includes the photo's main subject in general terms.
 - Includes composition details (the who, what, where, when, and why information, i.e., species name, portrait/landscape, emotion/mood, and attributes including number of subjects, location, and date taken.
 - Uses keywords to describe the visual content and concept of your image for search engine optimization.
- Stock photo titles should avoid the following:
 - Foreign words
 - Creative titles that do not communicate your subject matter
 - Punctuation characters unless they truly belong in your title. Do not use periods or exclamation points at the end.
- Fine art photo titles provide an emotional connect to your buyer by using one of the following techniques:
 - Explains the action
 - Evokes an emotion
 - Tells the story
 - Expands the view with creative title
 - Expands the view with clever title

Suggestions for further reading:

- Online explanation of photo titles and captions
<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2008/11/04/image-caption-design-simply-elegant-or-boldly-graphic/>
- Online naming site <http://www.naming.net>

Have Questions? Please feel free to email me at staatve@sbcglobal.net.