

# Captions Vs. Cutlines

A **CAPTION** is like a title.

The **CUTLINE** is the text below a picture, explaining what the reader is looking at. It first describes what is happening in the picture, and then explains the significance of the event depicted.

# Obama vs. Palin

President Obama and former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin have agreed to disagree over the rules of a “death match” scheduled between the two in the Capitol Rotunda. Betting odds in Las Vegas give the nod to Palin, who has been known to shoot a moose, after the two met on Thursday.



**caption line**



**cutline**



*A supercell thunderstorm rolls across the Montana prairie at sunset. (Photo and caption by Sean Heavey)*

# Every single photo must have a **Cutline!!!!**

Must quickly tell the reader what the picture itself cannot say:

- Names
- Stories
- Dates
- Places
- Significance
- The 5W's and H

# Some Are Obvious. . . .





[lens.blogs.nytimes.com](http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com)

Firefighters of Ladder Company 4 — which lost seven men on 9/11 — perched together on their aerial ladder, watching a news bulletin in Times Square declaring that Osama bin Laden was dead on May 2.

# Some . . . Not So Obvious





Rich Lam / Getty Images

Australian Scott Jones kisses his Canadian girlfriend Alex Thomas after she was knocked to the ground by a police officer's riot shield in Vancouver, British Columbia. Canadians rioted after the Vancouver Canucks lost the Stanley Cup to the Boston Bruins.



# Writing Cutlines. . . . Don't

- Do not begin with the words **a**, **an** or **the**.
- Do not begin with names.
- Do not start with the name of the school.
- Do not write “*Above*” and “*pictured here*” (unnecessary).
- Cutlines should not repeat information contained in the lead.
- Avoid stating the obvious. (“Looking into the camera...”)
- Do not use adjectives.

# Writing Cutlines. . . . Do!

- Use present tense to describe action in a photo.
- Give readers information they cannot get from just looking at a photo.
- When identifying members of a group, write “**from left,**” not “*from left to right.*”
- Name people only if they are important to the picture.
- Names are spelled correctly and in the right order.
- Use a prepositional phrase (“During the state soccer tournament”) and -ing words (“Kicking in for the last few yards”), or other techniques. Don’t overuse any one technique!
- For stand-alone feature photos, compose a caption to go with the cutline.
- Use two or three sentences, if possible.
- Always include a photo credit. (“Photo by...”)

# Gunn plans for possible nationwide shutdown

LAURENCE ARNOLD  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Only a month into his job, Amtrak President David Gunn is planning for a possible nationwide shutdown of passenger trains next month and says quick action by Congress is needed.

"We are running out of time," Gunn said Tues-



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Amtrak President David Gunn gestures during during an interview.

He repealed orders that

Here, we see a dry, pointless cutline offers nothing at all that the reader can't gather from the picture.

*Yes, I can see the guy is gesturing. Snooze!*

# LOSING TRACK

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ARNOLD  
D. FRANK

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Amtrak President David Gunn will appear  
Thursday before the Senate Appropria-  
tions subcommittee that oversees Amtrak.

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Same picture, different cutline.

Here the reader learns something new, though the detail seems a little random.



By The Associated Press

David Gunn, the new, blunt-spoken president of Amtrak, said in an interview the national passenger railroad is in need of an immediate cash infusion. Without that, he is planning for a possible shutdown next month,

A much more effective cutline builds on the photo to draw the reader into the story — but without repeating information that's already in the article itself.

**How much of the information identifies what is in the photograph, and how much of the information extends beyond the photograph to other elements of the story?**





Justin Lane / Getty Images

Robert Peraza, who lost his son Robert David Peraza in 9/11, pauses at his son's name at the North Pool of the 9/11 Memorial.





Kyodo / Reuters

Whirlpool forms off the Japanese coast after the tsunami on March 11.



This sightseeing boat, Hama Yuri, was pulled 1300 feet from the coast and somehow balanced itself on a two story house during the tsunami in Japan.



HANDOUT / Reuters

Members of the national security team receive an update on the mission against Osama bin Laden in the Situation Room of the White House on May 1.



GARY HERSHORN / Reuters

Two lights from the former site of the World Trade Centers shine for the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

# **Your Turn !**

**First:** Gather information.

**Then:** You will try your hand writing captions for the following photos. Work individually or with a partner.





STAN HONDA / Getty Images

Phyllis Siegel, 76, left, and Connie Kopelov, 84, both of New York, embrace after becoming the first same-sex couple to get married at the Manhattan City Clerk's office.







Paula Bronstein / Getty Images

Friends and loved ones gather at the Oslo cathedral to mourn 93 victims killed in twin terror attacks from a bombing in downtown Oslo and a mass shooting on Utoya island on July 22.





[Flickr: zeitlosimagery](#)

Before and after shot of Joplin, Missouri after an F-5 tornado strikes on May 22.





Slain Navy SEAL Jon Tumilson's dog "Hawkeye" lies next to his casket during funeral services in Rockford, Iowa. Tumilson was one of 30 American soldiers killed in Afghanistan on August 6 when their helicopter was shot down during a mission to help fellow troops who had come under fire.





[chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com)

Cars are abandoned on Chicago's Lake Shore Drive during the "Snowpocalypse" in February.







84-year-old Dorli Rainey was pepper sprayed during a peaceful march in Seattle, Washington. She would have been thrown to the ground and trampled, but luckily a fellow protester and Iraq vet was there to save her. (Joshua Trujillo / seattlepi.com)





Indian model and acid attack survivor Reshma Quereshi has make up applied before walking to present Indian designer Archana Kochhar's Spring/Summer 2017 collections during New York Fashion Week in the Manhattan borough of New York, September 8.





Nikki Hamblin of New Zealand stops running during the race to help fellow competitor Abbey D'Agostino of the USA after D'Agostino suffered a cramp in the 5,000m heats at the Rio Olympics August 16.





Maddie Meyer / Getty Images

Matt Mitrione reacts after his heavyweight bout against Travis Browne during UFC Fight Night 81 at the TD Banknorth Garden in Boston, Massachusetts.







[Flickr: dbryant](#)

Monstrous dust storm (Haboob) roars through Phoenix, Arizona July 3.





Yuriko Nakao / Reuters  
Girl in isolation for radiation screening looks at her dog through a window in Nihonmatsu, Japan on March 14.





A giant panda cub falls from the stage while 23 giant pandas born in 2016 are seen on a display at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Chengdu, Sichuan province, China, September 29.

*Wild Ant*  
(Stand Alones)



Scott Olson / Getty Images

Billy Stinson comforts his daughter Erin Stinson as they sit on the steps where their cottage once stood on August 28 in Nags Head, N.C. The cottage, built in 1903 and destroyed by Hurricane Irene, was one of the first vacation cottages built on Albemarle Sound in Nags Head.



Policeman detains an opposition activist in Baku on March 12. Azerbaijan police detained more than 30 activists of the opposition Musavat Party when its members took to the street of Baku to protest against the ruling elite following a similar rally a day before.  
(Reuters)





Fred Dufour / AFP / Getty Images

Cui Deyi, known as “Polar Bear,” plays xiangqi in Handan, Hebei province, China, while sitting in a box filled with ice. Buried waist deep in ice for more than an hour wearing nothing but a pair of swimming shorts, the man shivers and laughs at the challenge.



Ilyas Akengin / AFP / Getty Images

A woman and her children stand in the ruins of a battle-damaged house in the Kurdish town of Silopi, in southeastern Turkey, near the border with Iraq. Turkey is waging an all-out offensive against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), with military operations backed by curfews aimed at flushing out rebels from several southeastern urban centers.



Altaf Qadri / AP

A member of the National Students Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of India's main opposition Congress party, shouts slogans as he gets entangled in a police barricade. The students were protesting the death of Rohith Vemula who, along with four others, was barred from using some facilities at his university in the southern tech-hub of Hyderabad. The protesters accused Hyderabad University's vice chancellor and a federal minister of unfairly demanding punishment for the five lower-caste students after they clashed last year with a group of students supporting the governing Hindu nationalist party.



Angelos Tzortzinis / AFP / Getty Images

Ahmad Zarour, age 32 from Syria, reacts after his rescue by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station off the coast of the Greek island of Agathonisi, Dodecanese, in the southeastern Aegean Sea. The Maltese-based NGO, Migrant Offshore Aid Station, rescued 48 migrants and refugees near Agathonisi island on January 16th.



Ed Wray / Getty Images

An Indonesian woman lights candles near the site of last Thursday's terrorist attack during a "We Are Not Afraid" rally in Jakarta, Indonesia. Islamic State suicide bombers and gunmen struck the capital of Indonesia on January 14th, killing at least two and wounding 24 during the attacks.