PHOTOS

Photographs create a mood and reflect the day’s news. They are the most-looked-at items in newspapers. Stories with photos command greater readership than stories without.

The key to the effective use of photography is a good working relationship and planning among the editor, designer, reporter and photographer.

BASIC PHOTO GUIDELINES

- Every photo should have a clean, clear center of interest.
- Every photo should have a cutline. Cutlines are the most overlooked element in the paper, but they are the most read. A cutline should add more information than the reader can see. Don’t state the obvious.
- Every photo should be relevant; provide another layer of information.
- Every face should be at least the size of a dime. Also known as the “rule of thumb”: If a face can be obscured by your thumb, it’s probably too small.

SELECTING PHOTOS

Considerations for choosing the best photos:

- Appropriateness. Does it say what it’s supposed to? Does it enhance the story instead of repeating what the story says?
- Impact. Does it make the reader stop and look?
- Design possibilities. What can the photo do to enhance the overall visual presentation of the page?
- Quality. Too dark, too light, too grainy, out of focus?

BAD PHOTOS

Characteristics of bad photos include:

- Out of focus
- Distracting objects in background (things sticking out of people’s heads)
- Image flopped
- Poor cropping (too much or too little)
- Clichés: “Grip-and-grin” award photos; the “police line-up”; person at their desk; meeting or panel/podium shots

Avoid turning good photos into bad ones by cropping them clumsily, playing them too small or by dummying them where they compete with another photo or look like they go with a different story.

It is better not to have a photograph on the page at all than to use a bad photo.
CROPPING
Edit and crop photos before you design the story on your dummy.

**Good cropping:**
- Adds impact/finds focus of photo and enhances it
- Eliminates what’s unnecessary
- Leaves air where it’s needed

**Bad cropping:**
- Amputates body parts (at the waist or feet) or appendages (baseball bats, musical instruments)
- Forces the image into an awkward shape
- Changes the meaning of the photo by removing information
- Violates works of art

PHOTOGRAPHIC DESIGN STRATEGIES
Ways to establish order through the placement of photos on a page:
- Emphasize a combination of large and small photos, avoiding the same size photos.
- Distribute photographs so that both the top and bottom of the page receive photographic impact.
- When only one photo is used, make it a page-stopper — a center of visual impact.
- Establish direction and motion with photos.
- Place related photos in clusters, but size them differently for visual contrast. Photos have more impact when placed near each other.
- Let white space lead the reader’s eye. Do not always use up all the available space. Let it breathe.
- Coordinate photography and type. Avoid competing type and photos.
- Borrow ideas from magazines and other publications.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS
Props and/or actors are posed to make a point for a story that is difficult to illustrate any other way.

A good photo illustration:
- Instantly shows readers what the story is about.
- Should never be mistaken for reality.
- Works with the headlines and overall design.
- Performs with flair. It is dramatic.

Beware relying too heavily on these as a substitute for real photos, because illustrations lack immediacy, spontaneity and, to some extent, credibility.
PHOTO HALFTONES

Newspaper printing presses cannot print gray, so photos must be converted to a series of dots, called a halftone. The density of a halftone is measured by the number of lines per inch. The finer the screen, the smaller the dots. The less visible they are, the more realistic the photo appears. Newspapers usually use an 85-line screen; magazines usually use 133-line screens because their reproduction is better.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Photos are art and should be respected as such. The integrity of photographs should always be protected.

- Never crop a photo dramatically without first consulting the photographer. You wouldn’t cut a story by one-third without consulting the writer; think of photos in the same way.
- Photos should never be flopped to fit a design.
- Mortising — placing one photo on top of another — should be avoided. Overprinting, insetting and silhouetting should also be avoided.
- Type on photos generally should be avoided except in certain circumstances (i.e., the photographer knows that the photo is going to be used in that manner; there is an empty or “appropriate space” in which to utilize type).
- Photos should not be manipulated (i.e., removing extraneous people or objects from a photo) — this alters reality and creates a false situation. We should not be in the business of fooling the readers.

Be aware of community standards. Strong, emotional photos can create controversy, especially those of dead bodies, victims grieving, people in compromising positions and others of questionable taste. People are more likely to accept these type pictures when it is not local. If these type photos are run large, it could be seen as sensationalizing.
PHOTO SPREADS

Photo spreads are self-contained visual packages that give special photos the play they deserve. They are different from standard news layouts. They can break more rules: Body type can be wider and larger than normal; you can play with headlines and decks.

What’s necessary for an effective photo spread:
1. The entire scene. Often called the establishing shot.
2. Close-ups or details ("color" shots).
3. A good mix of horizontal and vertical shots.
4. A good mix of a variety of shots (i.e. from different angles, vantage points, etc.).

Guidelines/considerations for designing photo spreads:
1. The reporter, photographer and designer should work together from the outset.
2. Write your headline first and consider it as another art element on the page. Display type may be appropriate, as well as label heads. But do not let the type compete with the photos.
3. Resist the temptation to run too many pictures. As with stories, don’t be redundant. Edit for quality, not quantity.
4. Do the photos need to be organized to illustrate a sequence of events?
5. Photos generally have the best impact when designed in a cluster rather than spread out all over the page.
6. Select one dominant photo. These usually work best in the top of the layout.
7. Look for direction in photos.
8. Push white space to the outside of the package. Don’t trap it between photos. All interior margins should be equal (usually 1 pica).
9. Every photo should have a cutline. Usually the cutline is under the picture, but it can be next to the picture, flush with the bottom of the picture. Don’t “gang” cutlines.
10. Don’t run too much text, or too little. Keep text blocks modular.