

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN AN IMAGE CAPTION?

IMAGE CAPTION

Try not to include specific/detailed info captured by the object description: who (e.g., specific persons, technical or complicated terms for objects, species, materials), where (e.g., country/city), and when (e.g., numerical date ranges). Exclude abstract themes/concepts (e.g, health, spiritualism, colonialism, justice).

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT STANDS OUT?

YES

Note it down and start your description there, you might want to capture the following....

NO

IT MIGHT HELP TO FIND A DESCRIPTIVE PATHWAY - START FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, OR FRONT TO BACK.

ARE THERE PEOPLE, THINGS OR OBJECT(S) IN IT?

Describe in general words the person/people represented (e.g., soldier, maid, god/goddess) or thing/object (e.g., dress, shoe, brooch, dinosaur, medium).

DOES THE OBJECT/THING HAVE AN OBVIOUS PURPOSE/IMPORTANCE?

Describe if the object/thing belongs to a type (e.g., is it a cup for wine or for communion?).

ACTIONS OR EVENTS?

Describe if an action or general event is taking place/represented in the image (e.g., wedding, funeral, game, dancing, death)

ANY PROMINENT AESTHETIC/PHYSICAL DETAILS?

Describe any prominent aesthetic or physical features such as size (e.g., miniature, large), texture, patterns (e.g., paisley, tartan), style (e.g., ancient, modern), colours, or shapes (e.g., symmetrical, asymmetrical).

REVIEW YOUR CAPTION!

Is it brief? Does it capture enough info to understand the image? Would a seven-year-old understand your caption?

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR WRITING IMAGE CAPTIONS

I NEED HELP WITH...

FORMATTING

Text in an image

Transcribe text as it appears in the image/use quotation marks (Museum of Contemporary Art (US), n.d.; The National Gallery (US), 2022).

Sentence structure/grammar

Use complete sentences, not fragmented. Use particles like 'a' or 'the' as needed (The National Gallery (US), 2022).

Orientation/context

'Use the first person when describing orientation: "our left"; "she faces us" (not "the viewer")' (The National Gallery (US), 2022)
'Depending on context, a description of the location/setting and the subject may be needed' (Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (US), 2019).

DESCRIBING PEOPLE

Race/ethnicity

When necessary for understanding the image, describe skin-tone. Where definite use terms: e.g., Black, Latino, Asian, and when not, use 'light-skinned'/'dark-skinned') (Museum of Contemporary Art (US), n.d.).

Gender

'When necessary for understanding the image, gender may be described, but no assumptions should be made. Default should be "person" except where gender is clearly evident and verifiable' (Museum of Contemporary Art (US), n.d.).

Age

'Use terms that indicate age: baby, toddler, child, youth, teen, young adult, adult, older person' (Museum of Contemporary Art (US), n.d.).

TERMINOLOGY

Links to Thesauri/Resources:

[V&A's LGBTQ+ terminology](#), the [Queer Metadata Collective project](#) (North America focused), the [Homosaurus](#) (International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary), and Carissa Chew's [Inclusive Terminology project](#).