Communications in Agriculture

*Communications in Agriculture* is designed to introduce students to topics related to promoting agriculture through a variety of media sources. It is a specialized course for students interested in pursuing a career in communications. This product features a full-color student and teacher edition. The activities and assignments are included along with PowerPoints and tests in Word and ExamView formats on a Teacher Resource CD (AG 8045).

Units Include:

- Communication Theory
- Photographic Journalism
- Business Writing and Resumes
- Journalistic Writing
- Broadcasting Media
- Graphic Design
- Creating Presentations
- Delivering Presentations

*Communications in Agriculture* covers the following career clusters and pathways:

- Agriculture Cluster - Agribusiness Systems pathway
- Arts, A/V Technology and Communication Cluster - Visual Arts, Journalism and Broadcasting pathway

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Communications in Agriculture

Student Edition

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### Digital Camera Terminology

When an electrical engineer working for the Eastman Kodak Company created the first digital camera in 1975, he could not have imagined the evolution of this technology nor the revolution it caused in the photography industry. While both film and digital cameras use light to create photographs, the digital camera saves the image as **pixels**, picture elements that are the tiny squares of a digital photo. **Memory cards**, rather than film, record the images. Digital cameras are differentiated

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**Key Terms**

- action photos
- aperture
- candid photos
- caption
- composition
- crop
- diaphragm
- digital zoom
- exposure
- focal point
- formal portraits
- informal portraits
- landscape view
- lens
- lighting
- macro
- memory card
- optical zoom
- photo credit
- pixels
- point-n-shoot camera
- portrait view
- resolution
- Rule of Thirds
- shutter
- silhouette
- still-life photos
- release button
- single lens reflex (SLR) camera
- video screen
- viewfinder

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**Unit 2**

### Photographic Journalism

#### OBJECTIVES

- Define digital camera terminology.
- Determine the elements of good photographs.
- Explain the types of photographs.
- Demonstrate how to crop a photo.
- Recall characteristics of photo captions.
- Describe how audience affects photojournalism and how photography affects the agricultural industry.
- Explain the uses and characteristics of photography in agricultural communications.
- Discuss guidelines for legal and ethical practices in photojournalism.

Throughout the years camera technology has changed dramatically, but one thing continues to remain the same – the impact of photography on a story. Photographic journalism is an old concept, but the elements and need for good photographs continues to hold true. A photojournalist may work directly for news sources as a full-time employee, or he may work as a freelancer selling his photographs to a variety of print media. Whatever the job may be, photos play a large part in the interest of any story. This unit will teach you some of the basic elements of photography along with ethical practices to consider.

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by how many pixels the camera records in a square inch, which is known as resolution. The higher the resolution, the more pixels the camera records per inch, the crisper the image can be, and the more it can be enlarged.

Photographers should shoot photos with a resolution great enough that photos will appear sharp and clear in the publication for which they are intended. Resolution is typically noted as pixels per inch (ppi) or dots per inch (dpi). Magazines require photos with higher dpi counts than newspapers, and newspapers require higher counts than Web publications. Higher dpi counts result in larger image files, though, which require more storage space. Therefore, photographers need editorial guidance on a photo's use before it is taken.

All film and digital cameras share some of the same basic parts:

• A glass or plastic lens captures an image by gathering light and focusing a subject.
• A diaphragm creates the opening or the aperture that controls how much light enters the camera through the lens. A lower aperture allows more light to enter resulting in softer background images.

• A camera’s shutter also controls how much light enters the camera by adjusting the length of time the shutter remains open as the photo is taken.
• A body provides the light-proof housing for the camera.
• A viewfinder can be either through a frame or a lens that allows the photographer to see the subject of the photograph to be taken. Digital cameras also have a video screen to see the image before it is taken and to review the image after it is recorded.

Just as with film cameras, digital cameras come in two basic types: point-n-shoot and single lens reflex (SLR). A point-n-shoot camera provides the user with the simplest way to capture a photograph. This type of camera has a built-in lens, fixed aperture and automatic flash, which it uses automatically to determine the correct exposure and focus as it records the image. More advanced versions have

Optimal Resolution

Magazine........ 300 dpi
Newspaper....... 150 dpi
Web............... 72 dpi
specialty settings to allow the user to take close-up photos using the **macro** setting, for example. Many also allow the photographer to zoom in one of two ways, optically and digitally.

**Optical zoom** is superior to digital zoom because it allows the photographer to maintain picture quality. When using an optical zoom, the photographer adjusts the lens to magnify or expand the area in the picture, but the resolution (number of pixels) and, therefore, the picture quality, remain the same. The range of the optical zoom is indicated by a magnification number such as 3X or 4X.

A **digital zoom** enlarges the subject by magnifying the center of a picture. As a result, the center of the picture appears larger, but image quality is reduced. Through digital zoom software, the camera adds pixels to create the larger image. In effect, it crops, or edits, the picture while it is still in the camera and reduces the picture’s resolution. A digital zoom adds convenience, but it limits the ability to enlarge a picture because of the lower image resolution. If available, optical zoom is the best option to use.

An SLR camera (so named because the same lens is used to view and take the photo) has interchangeable lenses (normal, close-up, telephoto or zoom, wide angle, etc.) and allows the user to have more control over the recorded image. To take full advantage of either camera type, the camera user should review the owner’s manual before taking any photographs.

**Elements of Good Photographs**

Photos preserve memories — great friends, great places and great times. Throughout the world, thousands of photographers take billions of photos of everyday events and special subjects. Are they all **good** photos? Absolutely not! In fact, only a tiny percentage of those photos are good. So, what characteristics do the “good” photos share?

First and foremost, a good photo is in focus — the image is clear and sharp. Out-of-focus photos look unprofessional. Getting a proper focus occurs by focusing the camera correctly and by holding the **release button** to take the photo.

Next, a good photo is well composed so the subject, also known as the **focal point**, attracts attention. **Composition** describes the arrangement of objects in the photo. In a well-composed photo, the subject will fill the frame so the photo does not have empty, useless space. Good photographs will have simple, uncluttered backgrounds when possible. Taking the photo from an unusual angle may also improve the final product.

A helpful concept for improving composition is the **Rule of Thirds**. According to this guideline, the brain prefers photos in which the subject is slightly off-center. Therefore, the photographer should position the subject inside the edge of the frame by approximately one-third. If the frame is divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically (imagine a tic-tac-toe grid), the points where the lines intersect...
are good positions for the subject of the photo. The photographer should avoid placing the subject in the exact center, at the very top or bottom, or in the corner. By using the Rule of Thirds, a beginning photographer can learn to create nicely balanced pictures.

The subject or event being photographed should be appealing and interesting for the photo to be considered good. Good photos also convey or suggest emotion through their content, and they provide information for those who see them.

A good photo will have proper exposure and **lighting**. Exposure is the amount of light striking a photographic material, such as film; it is determined by the size of the lens opening and the length of time the light is allowed through the lens. Proper exposure ensures the photos are neither too light nor too dark. In some cases, this will mean using a flash, which usually provides front lighting. Lighting refers to the direction of the light in relation to the photo’s subject. Other options are back lighting (creating a **silhouette**), side lighting, or top lighting for varying effects.

### Types of Photographs

Quality photographs can be important in communicating your message to an audience. They can be either **portrait view** (vertical) or **landscape view** (horizontal). To keep subjects interesting, photographers take a wide variety of images: formal and informal portraits, still-life photos, action photos and candid photos.

**Formal portraits** are taken in a photography studio, often in front of a portrait backdrop. The subjects are posed and look directly at the camera. These photos most frequently are for personal use, such as students’ school pictures.

**Informal portraits**, also called environmental portraits, also have the subject look toward the camera. The difference, however, lies in the surroundings. In an environmental portrait, the subject is
photographed in a natural setting, such as her office, his garden, or another personal location. These images are useful for profile stories about agricultural producers, companies and organizations.

Photos of subjects such as crops, scenic landscapes, antiques and buildings create **still-life images**. Other still-life examples might be photos of shadows, footprints or equipment. These artistic photos can be used in a variety of ways.

Think **action photos** only occur in sports? Think again. Action in agriculture can occur in the field as combines empty golden grain into the waiting semi-truck or when ranchers vaccinate and brand cattle. Action photos draw readers and viewers into a story because of the motion they show.

**Candid photos** are those in which the subjects are not posed. News photos most often fall into this category. Subjects in candid photos are not looking at the camera and may not be aware they are being photographed. These photos also can provide an honest look at the subjects of a news or feature story.

### Photograph Cropping

Although photographers work to compose the perfect photo, they often must **crop** a photo before it is published. Cropping trims part of the original photo, giving it a new top, bottom and/or sides. Cropping also eliminates unwanted clutter or background, resulting in attention to the subject or area of emphasis.

To crop a photo, an individual determines the placement of the subject using the Rule of Thirds. Then, two edges of the finished print are chosen and the remaining two are determined by the dimensions of the required finished print, such as a 4 x 6 or 5 x 7. When cropping, square images should be avoided. The new dimensions of a hard copy photo are marked at the edges with a grease pencil. Digital photos are cropped in photo-editing software, and the computer can control proportions.
Photo Captions

If a photo is published in a newspaper or magazine, it needs a caption, or label, to provide additional information for the reader. After headlines, photo captions are the most often read information in a publication. Therefore, captions demand crisp writing that is readable and informative. The captions should not duplicate material in the accompanying story, but they should identify who is pictured and where the photo was taken. The caption also should include a photo credit indicating who took the photo.

Many newspapers use a caption style in which the first sentence is written in the present tense and following sentences are written in past tense. The first sentence explains what is occurring in the photo, and the following sentences provide context and background. Although brief, captions are written with complete sentences, including articles and conjunctions.

Additional Guidelines for Writing Captions

- Identify people left to right or clockwise.
- Identify what is happening in the photo or graphic without trite phrases such as “pictured above,” “looks on” and “is shown.”
- Use present tense, active voice verbs when possible.
- Include pertinent details not found in the story.
- Write the caption to stand alone so reading the story is not required.
- Avoid editorializing and making judgments.
- Check the caption against the finished photo. People or objects may have been cropped out of the photo.
- Check the spelling between the caption and the story to ensure both are correct.

Audience and the Agriculture Industry

Agricultural photography reaches a diverse audience. Within this audience are those who have direct experience in agriculture but also included are those with no agricultural experience. A photographer’s knowledge of the audience for specific photos will direct the types of photos he or she captures, as well as the captions written for each published photo.

Photography plays an important role in agriculture, especially in the purebred livestock industry. Breeders across the world rely on photos to showcase their animals in marketing and sales publications. Additionally, photos provide information to agricultural producers concerning new equipment and related products, as well as examples of diseases and pests.
Photography in Ag Communications

Photos are an important element in agricultural communications because they give the reader or viewer a visual image of the story. They also help convey content and meaning while making a publication more pleasing to the eye. Photographs are used when realism is the goal. A photograph may show an item in its natural setting or in a studio. A series of photos can show the steps in a process.

One important characteristic of photography in agriculture is timeliness. Harvesting photos only can be taken during the harvest season. The photographer must decide what images he or she will need and prepare to capture those images during that season. For example, the harvesting photos taken this year may be used in pre-harvest news next year.

Another critical element in photography is the time of day for taking photos. The best, most appealing light appears at daybreak and sunset. The worst, harshest light occurs at midday. In addition, the photographer should keep the sun behind the camera and on the subject unless the desire is to create a silhouette.

Legal and Ethical Practices

Photographers should practice ethical standards when taking and publishing photographs. Because a photojournalist’s job is to take pictures that capture the viewer’s attention, he or she often takes pictures of people in emotional, embarrassing or revealing situations. In general, a photographer should get permission from anyone who appears in a photo.

**Legal guidelines** Contrary to popular belief, there is no “right to privacy” guaranteed to American citizens in the United States Constitution. There are, however, commonly recognized rights or principles of privacy that have resulted from years of court cases concerning the photographer’s rights versus the rights of the subject. The following provides legal guidelines for photojournalists regarding invasion of privacy.

**Taking photographs on private property** In cases where photographers have entered homes using false identities, taking pictures secretly, the courts have ruled in favor of the individuals being photographed. Photographers, however, frequently enter private property when covering spot news.

**Using a photograph of a person to sell a product without his/her permission** Publishing someone’s photograph in a magazine or newspaper is legal without obtaining permission from the subject, as long as the picture is obtained ethically. Using a person’s picture to sell a product without his permission, however, is not legal. To sell a picture for advertising purposes, the photographer must get written permission from the subject.
Harassment  Courts have placed restrictions on some photographers’ access to their subjects when they were judged to be overly intrusive into the lives of the people being photographed.

Using a photograph to give a false or negative impression of the person  Courts have ruled in favor of individuals who sued after their photograph was used in a way that they felt was unfair, false or misleading.

Taking photographs in a public place  A photographer can generally take pictures in any public place or on private property with permission. There are restrictions, however. Photographs, even taken in public places, should not embarrass or make a joke of a private person. A photographer may take pictures of children in schools and public parks, unless the picture could be considered embarrassing or demeaning. For example, in the case of special needs children, the parents may consider the photos too embarrassing or insensitive to the child. The photographer should, in this case, get permission from the parent or legal guardian before publishing the photo. IMPORTANT: Because newspapers, magazines and Web sites can be a source of information for child predators, never reveal detailed personal information about a child in a caption or story without expressed permission from a parent or guardian.

Ethical practices  Beyond legal considerations, photojournalists have a responsibility to make ethical decisions when choosing to photograph subjects and events. Although there are no strict rules for making these decisions, the photojournalist should be sensitive to human suffering and be careful not to create fraudulent photographs.

Posing photographs  A photojournalist should never pass off a posed photograph as being candid, especially a news photograph.

Distorting a photograph  A photojournalist should not distort a photograph to achieve a certain goal that conveys a personal bias. Computer software, which allows significant manipulation with digital photos, has raised ethical concerns for news photography. The National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) has stated:

“... it is wrong to alter the content of a photograph in any way that deceives the public ... altering the editorial content of a photograph, in any degree, is a breach of the ethical standards recognized by the NPPA.”

Taking photographs of tragedies  The photojournalist should be sensitive to those who are undergoing a tragic situation. He or she should keep a distance when people are grieving or suffering. To avoid being intrusive, a telephoto lens may be used.
Photography is a useful skill for today’s agricultural journalists. Beginning photographers learn about digital cameras and the characteristics of good photographs. Agricultural photographers take five different types of photos: formal and informal portraits, still-life, action and candid. After photos are taken, they must be cropped, or edited, for use in publications, and accompanying captions must be written. As agricultural photographers capture the essence of rural life, agricultural business and those involved in producing America’s food and fiber, they should act in an ethical and legal manner.

**Unit Review**

1. What is the difference between a point-and-shoot and SLR camera?
2. Name the elements of a good photograph.
3. Explain the Rule of Thirds guideline for photography.
4. What are the different types of photographs that can be taken?
5. Why are photo captions needed?
6. How does photography affect agriculture?
7. What are some unethical practices photographers should avoid?