

Visual



**COMMUNICATION
& Electronic Imagery**

Unit Introduction

As Public Affairs Officers, you will be the last line of defense when it comes to the content of your publication/Web site. When readers scan the pages of that publication/Web site, they will gravitate immediately to the photos or artwork. It is, therefore, imperative that you understand what makes a good photo and what constitutes a good cutline/caption (for this instruction, the terminology "cutline" will be used). With today's electronic imaging capabilities, you must also understand the ethics that govern images. Let's discuss these important capabilities.



Remember, there are pictures (photographs) that are - the good, the bad and the truly, really, really ugly. Take aim on the good, sometimes the bad is inevitable, but always stay away from the latter. We'll try to help.

Intermediate Training Objective (ITO)

Given the appropriate information and a group of photos, students will be able to select the best photo to run with a story and write a cutline that will go with that photo.

- Determine whether use or reproduction of a given photograph or image for public affairs purposes would be authorized.
- Determine whether a given DOD photograph or image may be altered.
- Determine whether a given DOD photograph or image should be included in a military publication.
- Write a photo caption for a given photograph or image.
- Identify and edit a photo caption containing stylebook errors.

Unit Overview

This unit will cover:

- Ethics
- Protocol
- Cutlines
- Edit/select photos

Electronic Imaging

Out with the old and in with the new. Technology keeps changing and nothing is as constant as change.

The definition of Electronic Imaging is nothing more than using electronic cameras and computers to replace film-based cameras and darkrooms.



Acquisition Systems



The use of the above images are examples only and do not constitute an endorsement of any particular product.

Still Video Cameras (analog) - Taking conventional video, inputting it into a computer and using a video frame grabber to select one frame.

Digitized conventional (scanner) - Using either a flat bed or slide/negative scanner to input a conventional photograph into the computer system.

Digital Cameras - The easiest and fastest way to get a digital image. The early cameras were very low resolution and caused images to appear pixilated and with too much contrast to be really usable. Newer camera systems such as the Nikon D-1 and Kodak 620 series cameras are of much higher quality and resolution.

Once you get the image, what do you do with it?

Software allows you to process it.

1. Click the link below. The Citizen Airman submissions.pdf file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
2. Click the Print button  to print the article
3. Close or minimize the window to return to the Visual Communications and Electronic Imagery unit.

[Citizen Airman submissions.pdf](#)

Advantages of Electronic Imaging

Saves Time – it is much faster to acquire an image digitally and print it than to shoot a roll of film, process the film and then print the film.

Saves Money – With a digital camera system once you buy the equipment you never need to purchase film or processing chemistry saving you a lot of money. You still need to buy printer ink and paper (after processing equipment) but the cost of these items is significantly cheaper.

Environmentally Sound – Using a digital camera system requires no hazardous photographic chemicals. Conventional photography requires the use of many chemicals that are, at best, hazardous to the environment and at worst may cause cancer.

Immediate viewing – The newest digital cameras have view screens on the back of the camera. After you take the shot you can look at it on the back of the camera. You can also connect the camera directly to a computer and have the image displayed there. To view conventional photography you have to develop the film first.

Instant transmission – transmitting digital images requires access to a Web or e-mail connection or use of a direct satellite link. Once those are established you can send images from anywhere to anywhere within seconds. Conventional photography requires the use of mail to get your images anywhere. If you are overseas it can take several days to get the images where you need them to go.

Random Access – In conventional photography you would need to process the whole roll of film to get the picture that you wanted. With digital you can pull just the image you want or need. Also, retrieval of stored files is much easier. Conventional photography required hunting through file cabinets of photographs to find the image you need. With digital and a proper archiving system you can run a search on the computer and quickly find the image that you want.

Disadvantages of Electronic Imaging

Image quality – great steps have been made in the quality of images that are produced by digital cameras from the early days. However, there still are some limits. You don't want to use a digital image to make a 20 in. by 24 in. print. The cameras just aren't that good yet.

Initial Cost – Digital is cheaper than conventional in the long run, but you must purchase all the equipment first, such as the camera, computer software and computer that can do the processing of the images. It can get very expensive.

Learning curve – Shooting with a digital camera is very similar to shooting with a conventional camera, but there are some subtle differences that will give you great headaches if you make a mistake. Also you have to learn to use the software. As more time passes this will be less of an issue.

Reluctance to accept – A lot of people looked at the earliest digital camera images that were produced and determined that they would never use digital imagery. It will take a good selling job to get some people to accept digital. As more time passes and more people begin to use digital, more people will begin to accept it.

Definitions:

Enhancement

To make greater, (as in attractiveness), "intensify," i.e., density, contrast, etc. Repairing mechanical defects caused by the photographic process (dust, scratches, etc.), is authorized and considered enhancement. Enhancement does not alter the CONTENT or the INTENT of the photograph.

Manipulation

To change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's own purpose.

Electronic images are made up of pixels that can be rearranged, changed, duplicated or eliminated. We can alter an image in almost any way imaginable: retouching, adding or deleting visual elements, changing position of elements, and creating montages and creating entire imaginary scenes.

Pixels, unlike traditional photographic materials, can be radically altered with no evidence (to most observers) of alteration.

Once manipulated, photographs lose their "reality" and become no more informative than an advertisement or illustration.

Potential areas of abuse

Newspapers and magazines wishing to set ethical standards for their publications need to look at these five areas where abuse can occur and then decide what is the appropriate response for their circumstances.

Contrast

A traditionally accepted darkroom technique which should find no real dispute when done electronically - unless used to extremes.

Dodge and Burn

One of the most basic darkroom skills. Only becomes an ethical problem when dodging and/or burning changes the meaning of the photograph or misrepresents reality. Pixels can also be manipulated in this fashion.

Flopping

Flopping is always manipulation. We have always been able to put a negative in the enlarger backwards, but it was considered unethical to do this in the darkroom by most papers and will continue to be unethical when done electronically.

Cut and Paste or electronic cloning

To move or add an element to change the nature of the picture is unethical. The cloning tool may be used to remove dust spots, scratches or other mechanical imperfections caused by the photographic process.

Color Balance/Correction

Considered correct procedure in all color printing. It is unethical to change one color or one part of the picture all by itself, since the eye does not work this way.

Authorized Enhancements



This technique, using exclusive software that changes a photo into a line image, could be used in a lot of military training applications, e.g., parts of equipment.

Techniques common to traditional darkrooms – brightness, contrast, dodging burning, etc.

Enhanced photo does not misrepresent the original photograph

It is readily apparent that the image is not intended to be an accurate representation of an actual event. This can be either obvious by the photograph or through the credit line in the

caption.

DOD Directive 5040.5
"Alteration of Official DOD Imagery"
states...

Mission success and the protection of lives and property depends on official DOD imagery being complete, timely and, above all, highly accurate.

DOD policy prohibits altering DOD imagery in any way that could conceivably weaken or cast doubt on the credibility of that imagery, or the Department of Defense.

The Defense Visual Information Directorate (DVI), Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, is a proponent for Department of Defense imagery policy. For more information on the policy, e-mail DVI at dvi@hq.afis.osd.mil

Visit <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/text/d50405p.txt> to view the full text of the DOD Directive 5040.5.

The directive **prohibits alteration** but **permits enhancement** of DOD imagery.

Ethical Considerations/Credibility

We have been manipulating photographs since the dawn of photography. Image manipulation began in earnest during the Civil War era. Modern photojournalists consider themselves bound, like other news professionals, by journalistic codes of conduct. Unfortunately, ethical standards in the electronic imaging area are vague and are not followed by all in the publishing industry. Unlike our civilian counterparts, we in the military are bound by directives, instructions and regulations prohibiting image manipulation.

Note in the following examples that in most cases prohibited alterations create images that do not map with 100 percent fidelity to a single camera original.

Also note that in all cases, the kinds of alterations that DOD policy is intended to prohibit creates scenes that never existed. The alterations work hard to have us believe that they did. While often well intentioned, such alterations are nonetheless dishonest – and fully capable of casting doubt on the honesty of all DOD imagery, if not the department itself.

Altered imagery example A:

Image #1 is the camera original. Note in image #2 the two soldiers on the right in the image have been removed. **Altering Department of Defense imagery in this manner is prohibited.**



Altered imagery example B:

Image #1 is the camera original. In image #2, helicopters have been electronically added to the original.
Altering DOD imagery in this manner is prohibited.



Altered imagery example C:



Image #1 is the camera original. In image #2, a vehicle has been added to the left of the figure (circled in red), and the oil wells have been removed from the background. **Altering DOD imagery in this manner is prohibited.**

However, adding text and a flag to the camera original to create a poster **is not prohibited** because these clearly added elements do not have the effect of weakening or casting doubt on the credibility of the underlying image.

Altered imagery example D:



Image #1 is the camera original. Note in image #2 that the position of the two subjects relative to one another has been changed. Something on the desk between them, as well as the football trophy and its shadow on the right, have been removed. **Altering DOD imagery in this manner is prohibited.**

Altered imagery example E:

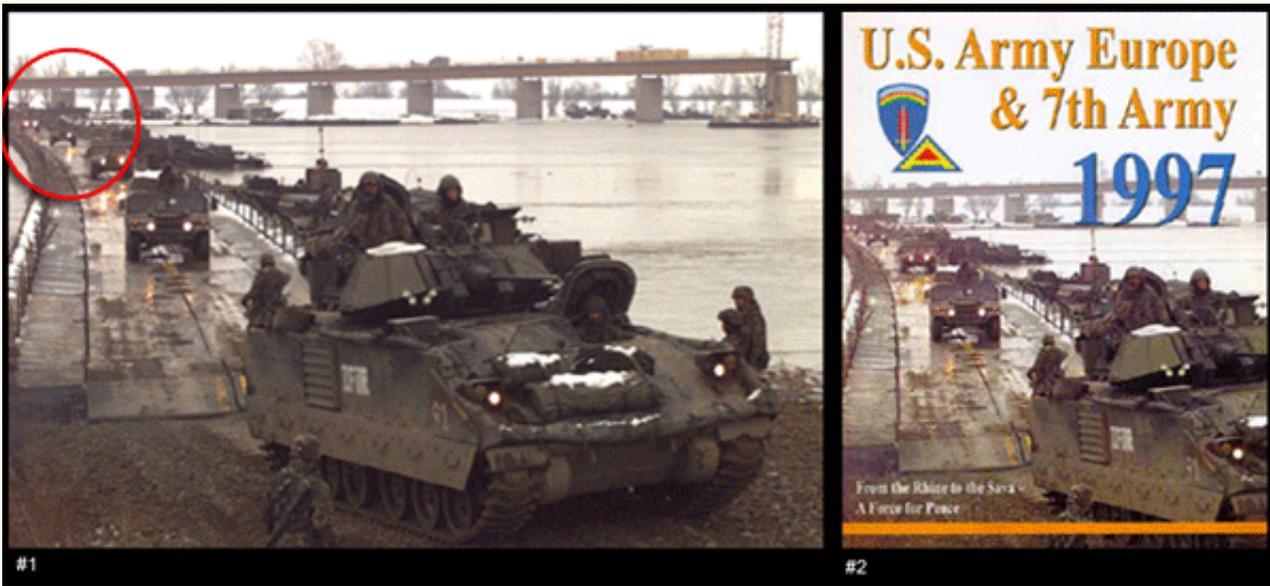


Image #1 is the camera original. Note in image #2 that the right headlight (the viewer's left) of the fourth vehicle in the convoy has been "replaced," and that only the left (viewer's right) headlight casts a beam on the bridge. **Altering DOD imagery in the manner is prohibited.**

Altered imagery example F:

Image #1 is the camera original. Note in image #2 that the soldiers in the center, on the steps, have been removed. **Altering DOD imagery in the manner is prohibited.**



Altered imagery example G:

Images #1 and #2 are both camera originals. Note in image #3 that they have been “merged” into a single image. **Altering DOD imagery in the manner is prohibited.**



Altered imagery example H:

This is an altered image. Note the matching figures inside and along the matching overlays, and the headless man inside the rectangle at the lower right. **Altering DOD imagery in the manner is prohibited.**



Protocol

Photographing Military Ceremonies

There are three basic types of military ceremonies, Medal/Award presentations, promotion ceremonies and reenlistment ceremonies.

Element precedence. No matter what type of ceremony, there is precedence to the elements that are in the photograph.

The **most important** element in the photograph is always the recipient.

The **second most important** element in the photograph is the item being presented (medal/certificate).

The **third most important** element is the family and co-workers of the recipient.

The **least important** element in the photo is the presenter.

But don't forget there are all types of ceremonies, and if shooting a photo essay also shoot some ambient illustrations.

'Grin and Gripper' Photos for Publication

Try to stay away from the "smile" and "handshake" for-the-camera photos that make up most of the ceremonies that a PAO shop is asked to shoot.

Rather than run a photo in the paper of the award ceremony, try to run a photo that is a little more interesting, a photo of what the person did to win the award (a feature photo).

Remember the basic requirements of a feature picture:

- ID
- Action
- props

Photograph the subject in a setting that reflects the award, if you can't run a photo from the award ceremony.



Some bad choices... shoot the photographer

Here are four examples – though civilian in nature – of common photos to avoid at all costs (also stay away from clichés like the one you just read). These have nothing to say to anybody unless they are in the photo and are samples of the cardinal sins of photojournalism (examples courtesy, “The Megaphone,” the official student newspaper of Southwestern University).



'The Execution at Dawn'

Any group of victims lined up against a wall to be shot, e.g., club members, sports teams, etc.

'The Grip and Grin'

If someone does something worthy of an award, take a picture of them doing it.



'The Person at Their Desk'

Person on the phone, person at the computer, person in the doorway, person leaning on sign. Find them something to do! Or just punch in for a tighter shot.



'The Bored Meeting'

A long table in a nondescript room. Take mug shots from each person and get a quote from them. Better yet, find out in advance what the meeting is about, then go shoot a photo of that. Illustrate the story topic – not a dull discussion about it.



Mug Shots

The primary use of a mug shot in a publication is to provide visual identification of the subject.

Mug shots do not run alone. They frequently accompany an article and always have either a name-line, tagline, quote or in some cases, a cutline. A prime example of their use would be in a hometown news release – an official photo – normally shot in studio situation.

Techniques for shooting mug shots:

- Keep photo tight; head and shoulders, vertical format, minimal headroom, uniform distance from camera for all mug shots
- Keep photo simple; normally there will be no physical action
- Shoot various facial expressions. Shoot at least eight to 10 frames for basic coverage
- Subject should look directly into the camera and/or slightly to the left/right for complete coverage
- Lighting should be simple. Bounced or diffused flash works best. Avoid heavy shadows by moving subject away from the wall.



Trivia break



In pursuit of the really trivial: The term originated, and is still used, in law enforcement. In that context, mug shots follow a standard format: On one side of a roughly 4 by 5 in. card are two photos, one frontal and one profile view of the wanted person or prisoner. On the reverse is the basic information on the individual: identification number, name, age, crime, sentence, criminal history and so on.

Found in post offices of the time is this wanted poster of John Dillinger. The illustrations were taken from his mug shot from the Indiana state prison records.

The other is a mug shot too.

WANTED



JOHN HERBERT DILLINGER

On June 27, 1934, JOHN S. CHASE, Attorney General of the United States, under the authority vested in him by an Act of Congress approved June 5, 1934, offered a reward of

\$10,000.00

for the capture of John Herbert Dillinger or a reward of

\$5,000.00

for information leading to the arrest of John Herbert Dillinger.

VIP Tours

Very important people (VIPs) frequently tour military facilities. Your job may be to document their visit, producing quality photos for publication, presentation and record purposes. As with all photo assignments you must be prepared, remain flexible and anticipate the action before it happens. Live events happen only once.

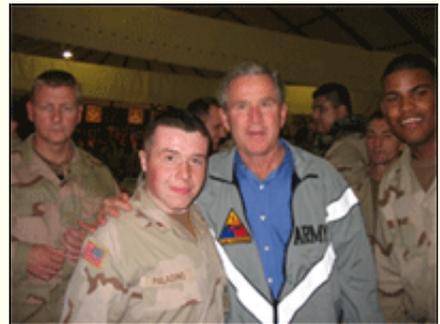
Planning and preparation:

- Check all equipment thoroughly and take extra film, batteries, etc.
- Arrange your own transportation.
- Coordinate use of cameras in classified areas.
- Review itinerary and determine highlights of tour. Stay flexible and be prepared for change.
- Get all information possible about VIP, members in tour, etc., for outline and story. This may be provided in the press pack.



During the tour:

- Photograph arrival of VIP. Anticipate the decisive moment by looking for it in the viewfinder.
- Get first salutes, handshakes and greetings.
- Do not try to cover the entire group; limit coverage to the two or three most important people.
- Never show an uncomplimentary pose.
- If VIP stops to talk with members of unit, get coverage. Look for formal and informal settings that show VIP interacting with members of the command.
- Remember, it is better to shoot too much than too little. Your editor will be looking for a variety of pictures to choose from. Therefore, provide lefts, rights, horizontals, verticals, high shots, low shots, profiles, group shots, and so on; in a word, provide **COVERAGE**.
- Completion of tour. Final coverage is made at the departure - coverage should be different from arrival. Many times a certificate, plaque or other unique memento is presented to a VIP. This offers a good ending shot.



Group Photography

Ground breaking, class photos, formal gatherings and social events routinely require group photos.

Emphasis is on uniformity and simplicity. Military courtesy requires senior members to be on the extreme left (from camera position), others in descending order. A second option is to have the senior in the center with descending rank on either side.



If more than one row:

- Higher ranking members in first row.
- Stagger rows, use hillside, bleachers or chairs and have front row kneel or sit.
- If rank is not important use height with the tallest individual in center, descending to either side.

When posing:

- All faces should be visible. Makes sure all members can see the photographer.
- All members of the group should adopt the same pose. Try shooting both informal and formal poses for selection. Make sure the subject's hands are held down by their side or parade rest. Avoid having them clasp their hands in front of the groin area.
- Have members of group turn slightly toward center of group, then direct their attention back to the camera.
- Photographer must ensure uniforms are proper and worn correctly. Check for unbuttoned jackets, pens in pockets, hats not squared, etc.

Responsibilities and Limitations

Talk to the local command representative in charge of the ceremony. The more you know about an event the better equipped you are to produce publishable results.

Find a suitable position to get maximum coverage with minimum movement and disruption. Remember, you are neither part of the audience or the event. Still, you are required to provide complete coverage of the event, often in full view of a dozen or more high ranking officials and an audience. Poise, confidence, adaptability, military bearing and solid photo skills are the qualities that ensure mission success.

When possible, attend rehearsals of the event. This allows you to check out lighting conditions, choose shooting positions and become familiar with the schedule of events.



Poise
Confidence
Adaptability
Military bearing
and **Solid photo skills**
are the qualities that ensure mission success.

Cutlines

Definition

A cutline is a brief written summary that explains the “who,” “what,” “where” and sometimes the “when,” “why” and “how” of an event.

Format

Cutlines are always written in block style, meaning they are right-left justified on the photograph.

Style

Cutlines always heed the AP Stylebook.

Cutline Types and Components

- **Normal:** Used with stand-alone photos for internal publications or external release.
- **Skeleton:** A one-line explanation used with an accompanying story, used only with internal publications.
- **Nameline/tagline:** Generally used with head and shoulder photographs for internal use.

Normal Cutlines

The normal cutline is a one-paragraph explanation having two to four sentences and written in block style (no indentation). External release cutlines always begin with a dateline; however, datelines are not needed for internal use. Normal cutlines are written for every external release photo because from them the skeleton and nameline/tagline cutlines can be derived. Also, the normal cutline contains all the essential information the reader needs to know. It contains four parts: identification, action, background and credit.

Components of a Normal Cutline:

1. Dateline:

Used on external release only, gives the location where the photo was taken.

2. Methods of identification:

Identification satisfies the reader's demand to know who is in the picture. In most cases, tell the reader the person's complete name, rank, unit and title. Do not use courtesy titles such as Mr. or Mrs. In cutlines about sporting events, do not include a service member's rank, or title, but use the player's team position, nickname or jersey number. In non-military related activities, such as Boy Scouts, rank, unit and title are not always needed.

Identification

There are three ways of identifying people: action, obviousness and position.

- The best way to identify is to point out who is performing the action.
- Another method of identifying people in a photograph is to look for the obvious contrast in action, sex or dress.
- Detailing a person's position in a photograph is the least desirable method of identification because it presents the reader with a "laundry list" of names. If no other method is effective and it can be done smoothly, write "from left" and name the people in order. Even if the position method is used for some people, switch back to one of the other methods as soon as possible for others in the photograph.

The writer should describe who is doing what in the photograph in the first sentence without repeating the obvious. The first sentence is the picture to caption link and uses strong, active, voice verbs that accurately describes what is happening. Because a photo freezes a moment in time, the verb in the first sentence must be in the present tense. Do not include the time element in the first sentence. Background: The cutline writer should provide the reader the pertinent and interesting information not evident in the photograph. The first sentence tells the reader who is doing what. Background copy follows and relates to the action being performed. Often, background sentences answer the questions of when, where or how, and in some cases, why. Study the picture and describe the detail not readily seen or easily misinterpreted. Tell the outcome of sporting events or contests.

Credit Line

It is the photographer's byline. On an external release it credits the photographer and his military service. The credit line comes immediately after the last sentence of the cutline, on the same line if space permits. On an internal release use: photo by, rank and full name. This will be run flush right with the photo.

Catchlines

A word or phrase that is used at the beginning of a normal cutline to “catch” the reader’s attention much like a headline. Catchlines are normally boldfaced, and are sometimes called captions. Catchlines are often used with stand-alone photos. They should be short in length and don’t need a verb like headlines do.

Skeleton Cutline

Normally used when a photograph accompanies a story, the skeleton caption contains identification, action and credit. It is a one-line summary of who is doing what. On picture page layouts, it is not necessary to fully identify the subject in each skeleton after the subject has been completely identified in the lead or dominant photo. Likewise, identification of the person is not necessary in skeleton captions for close-up or extreme close-up of hands. It is the bare bones of cutline creation.

Nameline/tagline

Almost always used with a head and shoulders (mug shot) photograph accompanying a story. Rather than just running the person's name under the photograph, a second line called a tagline is added. The tagline may describe the person, tell what the person has done or provide the person's thoughts on a certain subject.

Writing Outline Guidelines

1. Write a normal outline for external releases, even if they accompany a story. Use block style and begin the normal caption with a dateline in case the editor decides to run the photograph by itself.
2. Avoid the use of military jargon and use the Associated Press Stylebook for military ranks and titles.
3. Never write a outline unless the cropped photograph is in front of you. Don't guess or write from memory. Write outlines from cropped prints to avoid including information that would refer to someone or something being eliminated.
4. Captions should be simple and direct, often conversational. Make them short, but do not write telegrams. Use articles (the, an, etc.), prepositions and conjunctions as you would in writing a good, flowing sentence. Use complete sentences with a subject, verb and object.
5. Don't always start normal outlines with the person's name. Begin the caption with a colorful word or phrase. Try to recreate conversations, colors, smells or sounds associated with the picture and the situation you are describing.
6. Don't editorialize. Stick to the facts and get them straight.
7. Don't exaggerate; stick to the truth. Avoid clichés.
8. Avoid duplication. A frequent sin of outline writers is stressing the obvious or repeating information contained in the accompanying story.

Picture Editing and Preparation

A lot can be learned from looking at the writing/photo submission policies put up by publications you are looking at for article placement. Their Web sites normally have instructions like this, from "Citizen Airman."

1. Click the PDF link below. The file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window
2. Click the Print button  to print the article.
Close or minimize the window to return to the Visual Communications and Electronic Imagery unit.

[Citizen Airman submissions.pdf](#)

And here's how you prep your photos.

1. Click the PDF link below. The file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
Click the Print button  to print the article.
Close or minimize the window to return to the Visual Communications and Electronic Imagery unit.

[Digital Images Preparation.pdf](#)

Editing

1. An initial objective review needs to be made, along with elimination of photographs not suitable for publication.

2. Editing Guidelines

- **Appropriate:** (SAPP) Selected photos must have no SAPP (security, accuracy, policy or propriety) violations
- **Relate:** Photos must relate to the story being told
- **Enhance:** The photos should enhance the story being told
- **Communicate:** The photos should communicate the intended message
- **Clear:** The photos should not mislead the reader and should be easily understood

3. **Quality:** The photos should be of high quality with no technical (focus, exposure, etc.) defects

The final selection of the best photograph

Selection Guidelines:

Impact: Photographs having the greatest impact contain stopping power, emotional response, and readability. Pictures with impact flag the reader's attention.

Stopping Power: involves strong visual elements, strong color and/or strong graphic elements that immediately attract the reader's attention.

Emotional Response: is the photograph's ability to touch the reader and evoke a reaction.

Readability: is the mechanical process of seeing and recognizing the image and the psychological process of accepting or rejecting the image as believable. Is the message clear and direct?

Design Possibilities: A photo should be so strong, it demands to be used regardless of format or lines of force. However, we must always consider that after the editing and selection process is complete, all photos become one graphic package, which makes up the total page. Ask yourself the following; What can this photo do to enhance the overall visual presentation of the page? What shapes can I make a photo into and still keep the impact of the photo? Has the editor predetermined the position of the photo? Will the photo be used as a cover?



Connect the dots between your imaginative eye and your creative brain and you can certainly meet the ethical standards, protocol procedures, outline criteria and select the right photos.

Unit Summary

As PAOs, you need to understand what makes a good photo so that you can evaluate it. And you need to understand the ramifications of digital imaging.

The right photos can help sell your command's image and message.

The wrong photos can, at best, embarrass you.

At worst, they can get you fired.