

from *The Photo Scribe*

## **How to Annotate Photographs in Your Albums**

Photographs are essential elements in your scrapbooks. They can help you tell your lifestories more effectively. But without proper annotation, photos can be confusing and even detrimental to your overall scrapbook. To ensure your photos are annotated properly, keep the following suggestions in mind.

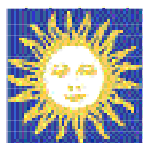
The very first thing you should do with your photos is to write down the following information about them (using a photo-safe pen/pencil):

- ✓ **Who** is in the photo. Include names and relationships to one another and to you: Aunt Mary Donatelli, my mother's sister.
- ✓ **What** is pictured in the photo. Include details about the occasion and any background description, such as the location: Mary's daughter Agatha's wedding reception / the Knights of Columbus Hall, Grand Rapids.
- ✓ **When** the event occurred. This refers to the time and should include the year, date, and day, if possible: Saturday, June 27, 1959.

Two observations need to be made about the above information.

- ✓ Because it was necessary to make obvious what who, what and when were, I wrote separate model annotations to highlight each of these question words. You can start writing annotations this way too to make obvious what you need to record. However, your final annotation will probably not be fragmented like this in an actual photo album. What you are more likely to write in your photo album is: Aunt Mary (O'Connell) Donatelli, my mother's sister, at her daughter Agatha's (Martin) wedding reception. Knights of Columbus Hall, Grand Rapids, Saturday, June 27, 1959.
- ✓ The above information is important and needs to be included someplace on the page but it obviously does not have to be featured with every photo or even every cluster of photos of that wedding.

Remember too that, on a page where you have already identified Aunt Mary, you do not need to identify her again. But you do need to do so if a number of years have elapsed since the last time she was photographed in a photo in your album. Your audience, not as familiar with Aunt Mary as you are, may not recognize her if she looks different with age.



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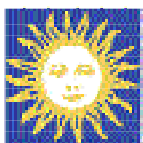
In addition to the above annotations, some of your photos or clusters of photos will need more information to make your album(s) more meaningful to other members of your family.

- ✓ **Why** reveals something about the person behind a photo. It can include the reason people were together or the background that led to the moment. It can serve as a broader statement about the family, etc.: Mary had only one child and was determined to make this into a big party. (Notice that the answer to why does not need to include a because phrase.)
- ✓ **How** tells a myriad of details that shaped or affected the event. It can include details about clothing, words, props, etc.

While the who, the what, and the when can easily be tucked in a line beneath or above a photo, an annotation with the why and the how may be too wordy to go anywhere but in a block of text between photos or in a white space elsewhere on the page.

Annotations are important. They are markers in your album. They help your viewer to establish:

- ✓ a “cast of characters”
- ✓ a setting: this city and not that city; this year and not that year
- ✓ an action: a wedding celebration and not a graduation (when the bride or the graduate is not in the photo, what is there to give the occasion away?)
- ✓ a reason/motivation
- ✓ a procedure/process.



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