How to create captions

With any document that includes photos—or any kind of image—you will likely want to include captions. Captions are short sentences or phrases that appear under photos to describe the content in a photo (**Figure 1**). They can increase a document's usefulness by explaining to readers what is in an image.
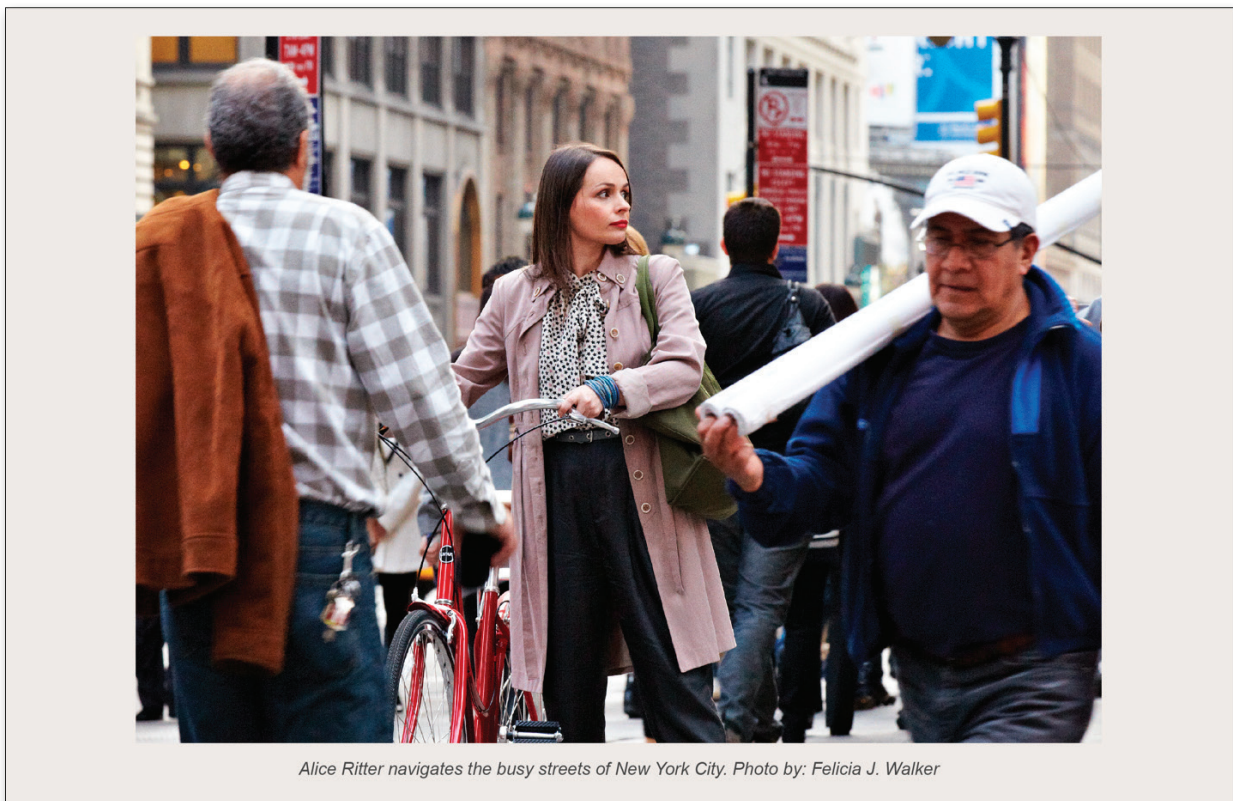

Alice Ritter navigates the busy streets of New York City. Photo by: Felicia J. Walker

Figure 1 *Image with descriptive caption and credit*

In this guide, you create an Adobe InDesign paragraph style for captions and use it to add captions to an image.

Creating a caption style

Creating a style for captions and applying it consistently ensures that all captions in your document look the same. This gives your document a uniform appearance and helps your readers quickly identify captions. (Some readers may only read the captions!)

To create a caption style:

1. Start InDesign and open a document (preferably a document that has images in it).

2. Choose **Window** > **Styles** > **Paragraph Styles** to display the **Paragraph Styles** panel (**Figure 2**).

3. Click the Create New Style button at the bottom of the **Paragraph Styles** panel.

   A new style appears in the **Paragraph Styles** panel. By default, this style is named "**Paragraph Style 1**."

4. Do one of the following:
   - Double-click the style name.
   - **Right-click** (Windows) or **Control-click** (Mac OS) the style name and choose Edit "**Paragraph Style 1**."

   The **Paragraph Style Options** dialog box appears (**Figure 3**).

5. In the **Style Name** text box, type **Caption**.

   Next, you enter formatting for the caption. Captions are usually fairly small—9 or 10 points. Text that small often benefits from being in a sans serif font. You may also want to select a style that helps differentiate the caption from the other text on the page, such as an italic style.

6. Click **Basic Character Formats** in the left side of the dialog box.

   The **Basic Character Formats** category of the **Paragraph Style Options** dialog box appears (**Figure 4**).

7. Enter the following information:
   - **Font Family**: **Arial** (or another sans-serif font)
   - **Font Style**: **Italic**
   - **Size**: **9** pt

8. Click **OK**.

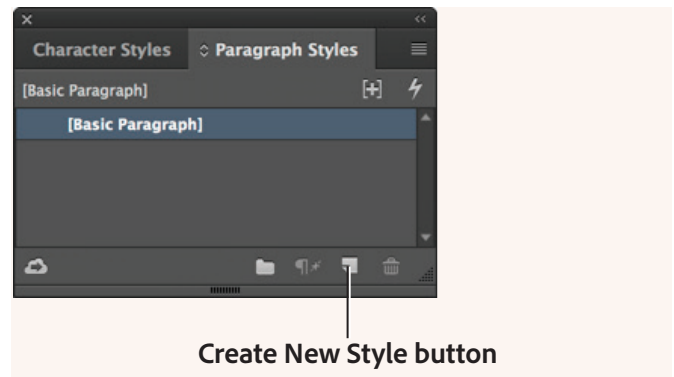   The caption style has been defined and is now ready to use.

Create New Style button

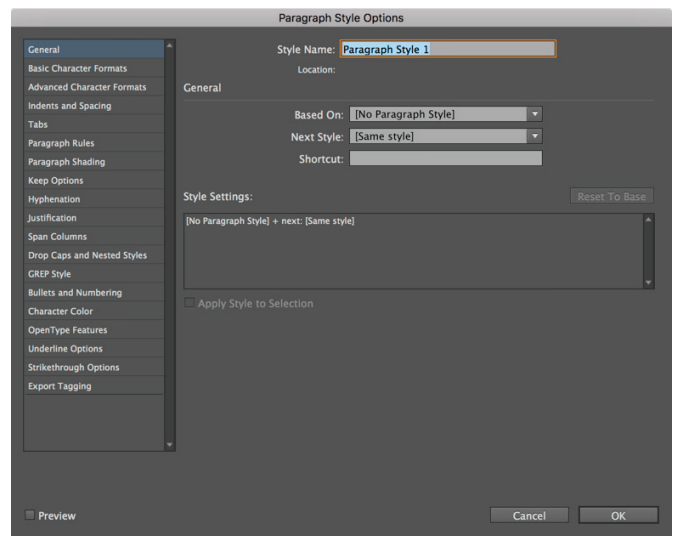**Figure 2** *Paragraph Styles panel*

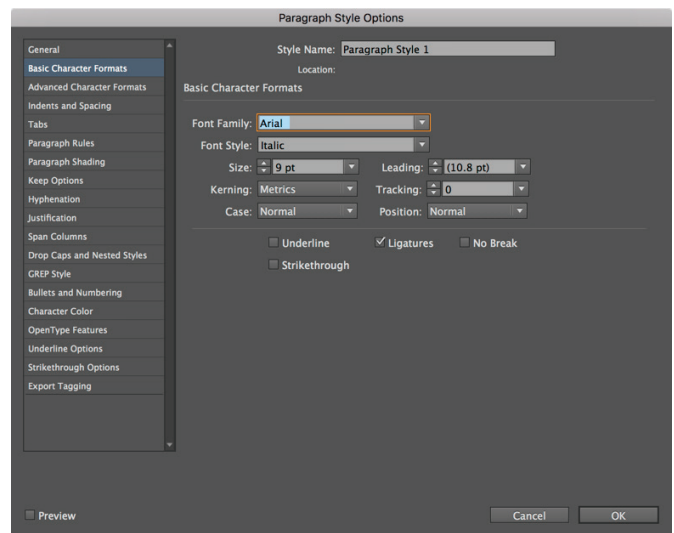**Figure 3** *Paragraph Style Options dialog box*

Figure 4 *Basic Character Formats category*

Adding captions to images

Now that you've defined a style for your captions, you can begin adding captions to your images. Start by creating a small text frame below an image. Ideally, you left room for a caption beneath each image in your original layout. If you didn't leave room, you'll have to move page elements around to make room for captions. Smart Guides are available to help with caption placement. These temporary snap-to guides help you create, align, edit, and transform objects relative to other objects. To activate Smart Guides, choose View > Smart Guides.

It's a good idea to be consistent in your use of captions. If a reader sees a caption under one image, they may expect to see captions for all images.

To add a caption to an image:

1. Choose the Type tool in the Tools panel (**Figure 5**).

2. Drag the Type tool in the space below an image to create a text frame that is the width of the image and approximately ¼-inch high (**Figure 6**).

   Use your judgment in placing the text frame; you may want to leave some space between the image and the caption's text frame to avoid crowding the caption and to increase the caption's legibility.

   InDesign provides Smart Guides and width and height coordinates to help accurately place the caption.

3. Using the Type tool, click in the text frame.

4. Type a caption for your image.

5. If it is not already visible, choose **Window** > **Styles** > **Paragraph Styles** to display the **Paragraph Styles** panel.

6. In the previous section, you created a style called **Caption**. Click this style to select it.

Type tool
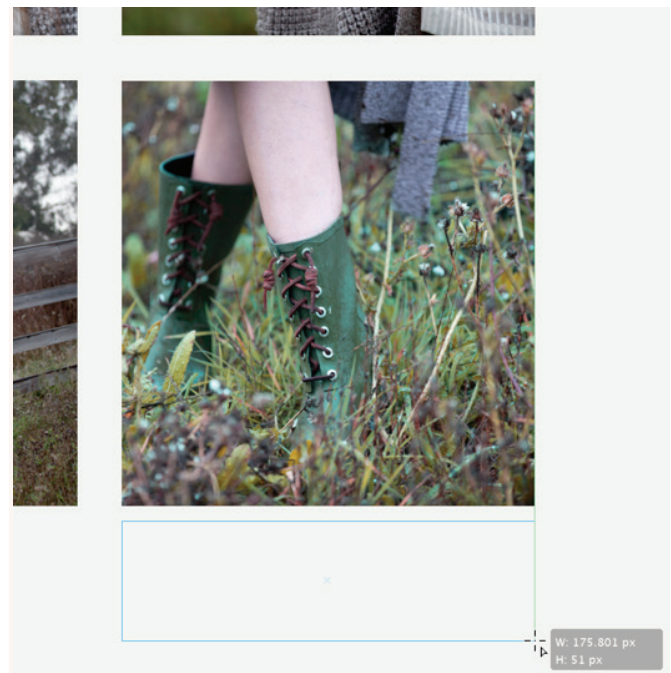
Figure 5 Tools panel

Figure 6 Caption text frame added below image

7. Continue adding captions to the other images in your document by using the caption style (**Figure 7**).
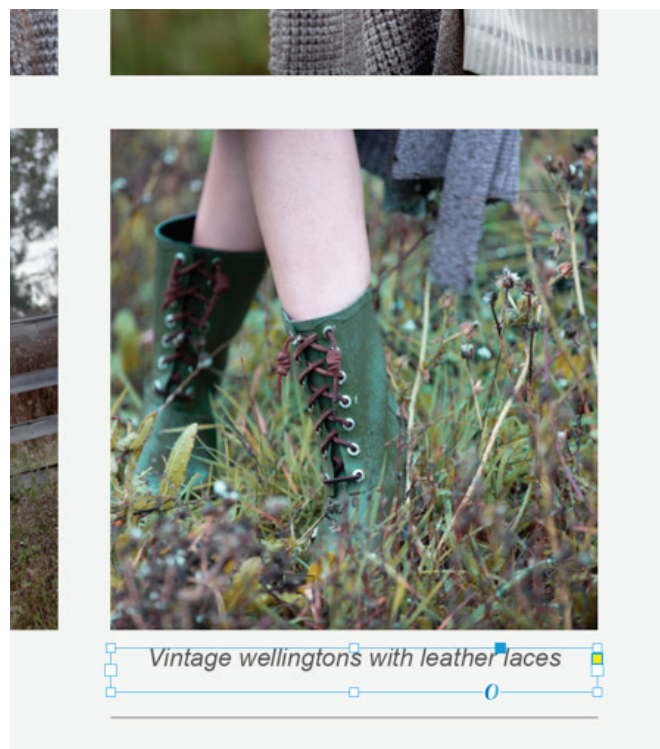

Figure 7 *Caption added below image*

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