

How To Sell Your Editorial Photos To Stock Photo Agencies

By Andrea Gingerich

In stock photography, there are three main ways that photos can be used. These three are: royalty-free stock photography, rights-managed stock photography, and editorial photography.

In the past couple of years, more and more online stock agencies have started accepting photos for “editorial use.” Let’s take a look at what it means to sell your editorial photos as stock.

What is Editorial Photography?

Editorial photography refers to the market where your image will ultimately be used: books, magazines, newspapers, and news blogs. The term is used to distinguish it from other markets such as corporate, advertising, and commercial photography.

In that sense, editorial stock photography and the licenses that accompany it are much different than the commercial stock photography that most people are familiar with.

Editorial images are meant to support printed material, such as an article or a news story. But good editorial images should stand to tell a story on their own. They are used as a visual reference to show a specific person, place, thing, or event.

The photographer is an “observer,” recording an event from the outside. Being the person behind the lens, you are given the opportunity to share interesting views with the world. These may include events, people, and places that others may not have the opportunity to witness on their own.

Editorial doesn't need to be "breaking news" photography. In fact, some microstock agencies may not even accept breaking news images. If you don't have a complete photo story, but instead have many "one off" or individual shots, editorial stock is definitely a good market for that.

Also, if you have a backlog of images from years past, you could possibly use them as editorial stock photography, provided that they meet the photo quality requirements and guidelines set forth by the stock site where you plan to submit.



Editorial Photo Guidelines

The caption: All editorial images must include a caption that tells when and where the photo was taken, along with a brief summary of what is happening in the image. This is an essential part of any editorial image.

A good editorial image shouldn't need much more than a short caption to explain the image. It should answer the questions of who, what, where, when, and why. The information provided in the caption will often be used in conjunction with the image.



Therefore, the information that you, as the photographer, provide, must be true and accurate.

No influence on the image: The photographer should have no influence on the subject matter of his image. Editorial images of people should not be staged or posed. Of course, images of products and other objects shot within the studio can be placed or posed.

Model releases: You don't usually need a model release for editorial images, but it's always good to have them on hand if you can acquire them when shooting. Some agencies may require them if the images include children or only one child in the image.



Some microstock sites will also refuse images of celebrities. There are stock houses that specialize in this field of editorial photography.

Property releases: You won't need a property release for most editorial images, either. There are many buildings and landmarks that are not acceptable as commercial stock photography due to copyright and trademark issues. Because editorial photography doesn't include commercial or advertising usage, images of this subject matter may be used as editorial content. However, the interior of some locations may still be off limits and a property release would be required in this scenario.

Minimal Processing: Keep the post-processing to a minimum. Your editorial images should be as true to life as possible. This includes editing the people in the photos, removing or adding elements in the photos, or making any changes that affect the context of the image.

Digital Images: As with commercial stock, agencies prefer digital jpeg images at the highest quality for editorial images.

Editorial Photos as Stock

The best editorial photographers are always ready to capture the image and will do whatever it takes to get the shot. But use your best judgment so that you don't put yourself or your gear in danger.

The best suggestion that I can offer is to carry your camera with you at all times. Of course, I am the pot calling the kettle black because I definitely don't carry my camera with me all the time. However, it's often those times when I don't have my camera when I miss amazing photo ops.

You don't need to travel to exotic locations or even out of your town to capture great editorial content. Sometimes shooting unique subject matter in your own town can be better than shooting in locations and subjects that have been photographed many times. In many instances, images captured in small neighborhoods are often useful and ultimately, may even sell better.

Some stock photo sites may accept product photography into their editorial collection. This may encompass products that contain logos that would otherwise not be acceptable as stock photography in the main collection.



Most of the editorial topics vary from site to site. Check the requirements and guidelines for editorial on the site where you plan to submit. There may be particular subject matter that is prohibited from being used as any type of stock photography (both editorial and commercial) on the site.

What Equipment Do I Need?

Simplify your gear. Rather than getting caught up in what equipment you choose to shoot with, get more involved with the subject. It's hard to go unnoticed when you have a camera.

When you point a camera, people usually either look away or smile and pose for you. With editorial, you don't usually want either of these situations in your photo. I have found that carrying simple, small gear when you plan to do editorial street photography is often best.

In fact, I've found that the less professional I look, the better images I can capture. I'd advise staying away from large lenses, because they draw too much attention and you can't include much of the scene with them anyway.

I also try to minimize the amount of gear that I carry. I generally carry my camera with two lenses at the most. A wide-angle zoom is often my go-to lens and always in my bag. With this lens, I can often include the surrounding environment, which I mentioned is an essential part of editorial photography.

I also prefer to carry my camera without the attached battery pack, because it makes the camera smaller and also lighter for me to carry.

Of course, if you're shooting an event where you are the designated photographer, carrying all of your gear may be necessary. But for general everyday editorial and street photography, you don't need to carry much — or even own much — gear.



Here are a few essential items that I always carry in my bag when I'm preparing to shoot editorial photography:

- 1) Extra memory cards: Even if you have particular plans for what you are going to shoot, that may always change. You may find yourself stumbling across an interesting event or photo op. You don't want to run out of space to hold the images in those instances.
- 2) Spare battery: I always carry a spare, fully charged battery. Sometimes my camera battery dies shortly after I'm out.
- 3) Lens cloth: Whether shooting editorial or not, this is always a handy item to carry. You never know when you will need it!
- 4) Business cards: It's always good to carry contact information or business cards with you. You never know when another opportunity could arise.

Shooting Tips

Know your gear. Whether you're shooting editorial or any other type of photography, it's good to be familiar with your gear. You don't want to miss a shot because you were fumbling around trying to figure out how to change the settings on your camera. Nor do you want to capture the image incorrectly because you didn't have the correct settings.

Read the news to find out about current and trending topics. Related imagery may be great editorial stock photography.



If I find myself struggling for editorial photography inspiration, I like to look at magazines and websites that feature some of my favorite editorial images. I also often turn to some of the historical editorial photographers whose work I admire.

Here are some places where I like to look for inspiration:

Magazines and Newspapers:

- *National Geographic*
- *Time Magazine*
- *New York Times*

Websites:

- [The Big Picture](#)
- [Flickr](#)
- Blogs for major magazines and newspapers such as those listed above
- Local news websites

Photographers:

- Richard Avedon
- Dorothea Lange
- Annie Leibovitz

As with all stock photography, quality is of the utmost importance. Be sure to produce images that are properly exposed, clean, and sharp. Mediocre images do not intrigue the viewer.

In most cases, the composition is what will separate an amazing editorial image from the rest. If you find yourself too far away from your subject, move closer. If you are too close, take a step back. But always remember that it is important to include the surrounding environment in your shot!



The more you shoot, the easier it will get to step out of your comfort zone and photograph strangers. On the other hand, if you aren't comfortable with doing posed portraits or working with models, but find it easier to photograph people on the street, editorial photography may be just perfect for you!

It's really helpful if you are knowledgeable about your subject. The more comfortable you are with shooting your subject, the more likely you'll be to produce high-quality editorial images!