

Change Begins at School

Quick Guide for Students: How to Create Your Photovoice

What is a photovoice?

It's a way of researching reality through photography. Using your camera or phone, you'll observe your school environment and use an image and a short text to show how you see coexistence, conflicts, inclusion, mental health, or the culture of peace at your school. It's not just about "taking photos": each photograph helps identify a problem, make an experience visible, raise a question, and propose a change. You are the researchers here: nobody knows your reality better than you do.

A **photo-narrative** = a **photograph** taken by you + a **title** + a **text** (100–250 words).

The text doesn't have to describe the photo: it can tell what you feel, what worries you, or what you want to change.

Before You Start (Info Pills)

We recommend watching these short informational videos before you start, created by Barbara Biglia and Aloe Cubero¹, available in French, English, and Spanish.

- [Training video playlist](#) – the complete list of project videos.
- [Photovoice: definition, theoretical framework, and steps](#) – what a photovoice is and how to make one.
- [Photovoice: theory and examples](#) – real examples for inspiration.
- [Ethical recommendations for working with photovoice](#) – essential reading before taking photos.
- Read the project information and sign the informed consent (template in Appendix II): [formulario](#)
- Keep the three golden rules firmly in mind (see below) and the full ethical recommendations in Appendix I.

The Three Golden Rules

- **1. Your own photos.** Use only photographs taken by you or your group. No images from the internet or generated with artificial intelligence.
- **2. Respect and consent.** If someone recognizable appears in the photo, they need to give their permission (and their family's, if a minor). Tip: symbolic, abstract, or from-behind photos are often the most powerful.
- **3. Confidentiality.** What is shared in the group stays in the group. We respect other people's opinions and experiences.

¹ Biglia, Barbara and Cubero, Aloe (eds.) (2022), Addressing gender related violence at university through photovoice, Publicacions de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona.

The Plan, Step by Step

Step	What we'll do	Where / when
0. Info pills	Watch a few short videos about what photovoice is and its ethical rules, and sign the informed consent.	At home, before starting
Session 1. Getting started	Learn the technique, form the groups, agree on the ground rules, and choose the group's subtopic.	All together (1h 40)
Task A. Your photo-narrative	Create one or two photo-narratives (photo + title + short text) and share them in the group's private space.	Individual (≈1 h)
Session 2. Sharing	Present the photo-narratives to the group and discuss what they tell us.	All together (≈2 h)
Session 3. Interpreting	Tag the photo-narratives, group them, and create our own categories to understand the topic in depth.	All together (≈2 h)
Task B. Preparing the presentation	Finish the analysis, put together the final photovoice (video or photos with narrative), and submit it online.	Individually or together · Submission by October 31
Session 4. Bringing it together Public presentation!	Present to the other groups, evaluate the experience, and vote for the best photovoices. Display the photovoices in an interactive-museum format, with a dialogue panel, certificate and award ceremony, and a campus tour. If your photovoice is in photo format, bring it printed!	UCM Faculty of Social Work · Science Week · November 18, 2026

Session 1 · Getting started

We'll learn what photovoice is and its ethical issues, do an icebreaker activity with photographs, agree on the group's ground rules, and together choose the subtopic that interests us most within the general theme (for example: rumors, peer pressure, exam stress, exclusion in the playground...).

Task A · Make your photo-narrative

- Make one or two photo-narratives about the chosen subtopic: photo + title + short text.
- The photo can show people, or be abstract or symbolic; what matters is that it has meaning for you.
- Share it with the group before Session 2, either in a meeting or using a collaborative work tool. We recommend using Padlet.

Session 2 · Sharing

Each person presents and explains their photo-narrative to the group. Then we discuss using questions such as: what do we see here?, what's really going on?, how does this relate to our lives?, why does this situation exist?, what can we do?

Session 3 · Interpreting

We put all the photo-narratives up on the wall, add a note next to each one with a word that describes it, group the images by theme or emotion, and name each group. This way we build, together, our own categories for understanding the topic.

Task B · Preparing the presentation

As a group, we finish organizing the analysis from Session 3 and put together the group's final photovoice, which can take one of two formats:

- **Photo-with-narrative format:** your photo-narratives (in PowerPoint, Canva, or similar format). They are submitted online, and you must also bring them printed on presentation day for the exhibition (display boards and poster boards will be provided). Send a link where the presentation can be viewed.
- **Video format:** a video of no more than 3 minutes that brings together your images and narrative. Send the link where the video can be viewed.
- **Language:** you can make the photovoice in Spanish or English, but with subtitles (if it's a video) or a translation of the texts (if they're photo-narratives) into the other language.

Submission deadline: October 31, 2026, via the [form](#) or drlab@ucm.es. Showing your own photo-narrative to the rest is always voluntary.

Session 4 · Bringing it together. Public presentation · Science Week · November 18, 2026

The photovoices will be displayed in an interactive-museum format at an event at the Faculty of Social Work of Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Somosaguas Campus), on the morning of November 18, 2026, as part of Science and Innovation Week. Each group will present its work to the rest of the group (exhibition/presentation format chosen by the students), there will be a dialogue between Bachillerato and university students, an award and certificate ceremony, and a guided tour of the campus. Remember: if your photovoice is in photo format, you must bring the photo-narratives printed that day.

Tips for a good photo-narrative

- Less is more: a simple image with a clear message works better than a complicated photo.
- Think of the message first, then look for the image — not the other way around.
- Play with light, angles, details, and symbols (an empty chair, a closed door, a pair of hands...).
- The title matters: it can completely change how the photo is understood.
- Be honest: the best photo-narratives come from real experiences and emotions.

Checklist before submitting

- ☐ I have watched the info pills.
- ☐ I have signed the informed consent.
- ☐ My photo is original and follows the three golden rules.
- ☐ My photo-narrative has a photo + title + text (100–250 words).
- ☐ I have uploaded it to the group's space before Session 2.
- ☐ I have decided how I want to sign it: with my name, a pseudonym, or anonymously.
- ☐ We have submitted the group's photovoice (photos or a video of max. 3 min) before October 31.
- ☐ It is in Spanish or English, with subtitles or a translation into the other language.
- ☐ If it's in photo format: we bring the photo-narratives printed to the November 18 event.

Questions? Ask your teacher or write to drlab@ucm.es

Appendix I. Ethical Considerations for the Use of Photovoice

Since participants may share sensitive personal experiences as part of this work, it is essential that all group members (including teachers) agree to follow a set of rules. Some basic rules are non-negotiable and must be made clear from the outset, both regarding the photographs and the classroom dynamics.

Regarding the photographs

- You must have the explicit consent of the people who appear in the photograph you wish to show.
- The faces of unknown people must not appear, unless they are blurred.
- Use extreme caution when photographing minors: it is essential to have the explicit consent of their mothers, fathers, or legal guardians.
- No one has the right to share other classmates' photovoices, whether in large or small groups, without the explicit consent of the author.
- When photovoices are displayed outside the classroom (for example, at the Science Week exhibition on November 18, 2026, on the website, or on social media), written consent must be obtained (Appendix II).

Regarding the classroom dynamics

- Privacy must be safeguarded: no information, narrative, or experience of any participant may be shared outside the immediate group.
- The language used must not be offensive to other participants.
- Respect must be shown for other people's experiences and perceptions, so that everyone feels part of a safe space for dialogue.
- The identity of the photovoice authors may not be revealed, unless they have explicitly decided to share them under their own name (they may also sign with a pseudonym or anonymously).
- If the materials are to be used for research purposes, participants must give their explicit consent. The project's informed consent form is available at [form](#)

These recommendations cover the minimum requirements. It is important for the group to meet and agree on whether additional rules are needed to make the experience enjoyable and safe for everyone, and to commit to following them.

Appendix II. Consent for Taking and Using My Photograph

I, Mr./Ms. _____, with National ID/Foreign ID No. _____, give my consent to be photographed and for the use of that photograph as part of the photovoice for the teaching innovation project "Change Begins at School," developed by the Dispute Resolution Lab (DRLab) at Universidad Complutense de Madrid together with educational institutions in the Community of Madrid.

By agreeing to participate, I understand and accept the following:

Project purpose. I understand that the main goal of this project is to allow people to share their experiences, perspectives, and concerns through photography, in order to promote dialogue, a culture of peace, and social change.

Use of the photographs. I authorize the project team and its collaborators to take photographs of me as part of the Photovoice activities. I agree that these photographs may be used in the exhibition at the Science and Innovation Week 2026 event (November 18, 2026, UCM Faculty of Social Work), as well as in presentations, academic publications, websites, social media, and other project-related materials. My anonymity will be guaranteed and my identity will not be revealed without my explicit consent.

Confidentiality. I understand that all information collected during the project will be kept confidential and used solely for purposes related to the project and its research. Measures will be taken to protect my privacy and the confidentiality of my personal data, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Spanish Organic Law 3/2018 on the Protection of Personal Data and the Guarantee of Digital Rights.

Rights of participants. I acknowledge that I have the right to ask questions about the project, clarify any doubts, and request additional information at any time. I also understand that I have the right to review and approve any material in which I appear before it is used publicly, and to withdraw my consent at any time without needing to justify it.

Contact. I have been provided with the project team's contact information (drlab@ucm.es) and understand that I may contact them at any time if I have further questions or concerns about my participation.

I declare that I have received a full explanation of the objectives, procedures, and possible risks associated with my participation in this photovoice. By signing this document, I consent to participate under the terms described.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If the participant is a minor: as mother/father/legal guardian, I authorize their participation under the terms described.

Full name: _____ National/Foreign ID No.: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____