



Ethical constraints on journalists

SHINING A LIGHT ON SORING



Society of Professional Journalists

Improving and protecting journalism since 1909

Ethics Code

- Seek the truth and report it.
- Act independently.
- Minimize harm.
- Be accountable.

Seek the truth and report it.

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the chance to respond.
- Identify sources whenever possible.
- Always question sources' motives before promising confidentiality.
- Support the open exchange of views, even those you find repugnant.

Act independently.

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived; disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors and special treatment.
- Hold those with power accountable.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money

Minimize harm.

- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to privacy than public officials and those who seek power, influence or attention.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Be accountable.

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

Reporting on spying – Potential problems

- “Balanced” reporting on unbalanced issues
- Controversial reporting techniques
 - Deception
 - Use of confidential sources
- Libel concerns
- Cost of investigative reporting
- News industry financial crisis