

# The Augusta Chronicle

## **Newsroom Ethics Policy**

## INTRODUCTION

Knowing that The Augusta Chronicle’s only enduring asset is its credibility, we offer this code of ethics as a promise to readers that we will do our best every day to present a fair and balanced news report. To preserve our credibility we must show the communities we serve that the news we present is gathered and presented impartially, without favor to any interests and without fear of the consequences of publishing the truth.

This code of ethics is a statement of our principles and a guide to behavior. No code can cover every situation. We encourage continued discussion about the values our journalists hold dear: truth, fairness, compassion, courage, balance, diversity and independence. This code is intended to offer ethical guidelines to help avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts that erode the public trust upon which we depend. Ultimately, our journalists must be guided by their conscience and common sense, especially when dealing with matters not specifically covered by this code.

If there is confusion about an issue, discuss it with your supervisor, the managing editor or the executive editor. This code covers all newsroom employees – full-time, part-time, correspondents, columnists and reviewers.

Note: Portions of ethics policies from several newspapers have been adopted and adapted for this code and are used with permission. They include The San Jose Mercury News, The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Orlando Sentinel, The Kansas City Star, The Chicago Tribune, and The Herald-Times (Bloomington, Ind.).

1. Fairness .....	Page 3	15. Political activities.....	Page 10
2. Plagiarism .....	Page 4	16. Memberships, volunteering .....	Page 10
3. Fabrication.....	Page 4	17. Free-lancing.....	Page 10
4. Veracity in photos.....	Page 4	18. Use of company property .....	Page 11
5. Unnamed sources .....	Page 5	19. Business, commercial activities ..	Page 11
6. Pseudonyms .....	Page 6	20. Use of position for personal gain.	Page 11
7. Opinion.....	Page 6	21. Advertising/news .....	Page 12
8. Meals .....	Page 7	22. Pre-publication review .....	Page 12
9. Alcohol .....	Page 7	23. Quotes .....	Page 13
10. Admission.....	Page 8	24. Relationships .....	Page 13
11. Books & music releases .....	Page 8	25. Media appearances.....	Page 13
12. Consumer products.....	Page 9	26. Misrepresentation.....	Page 14
13. Gifts.....	Page 9	27. Recording interviews .....	Page 14
14. Travel.....	Page 9	28. Corrections .....	Page 15

## 1. Fairness

We are committed to fairness. While no one can be completely objective, we can all strive for balance and fairness in sourcing, writing, editing, photo play, layout and headline writing.

Editors and reporters should make news decisions without regard to the connections or outside activities of newsroom employees, the publisher or employees of any other department.

We should treat everyone with respect, without regard for our own feelings.

We will always seek multiple points of view and try to get responses from those whose conduct is questioned in news stories. If the person cannot be reached, say so, but only after a serious effort to reach the person has been made. Never write or allow a story to say “Joe Smith was unavailable for comment.” Describe in the story what efforts were made to reach the person. Examples: No one answered the phone at Mr. Smith’s residence Monday night. Mr. Smith’s assistant said he was out of town Monday. Several phone messages left at Mr. Smith’s office on Monday were not returned.

Efforts should be made to include sources from a variety of racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds so our coverage reflects the communities we serve. This includes stories, photos and graphics.

We identify people by race only when it is essential to the story. Racial identification of criminal suspects is included only when the full description is detailed enough to help the public find the suspect. When in doubt, ask the ranking editor on duty.

If we report the arrest of someone, we must try to report the resolution of those charges. This is especially true when a person is cleared. When possible (depending on news of the day), place such follow-ups as prominently as the original report.

We do not identify victims of sex crimes unless they have agreed to be identified and we have a compelling reason to identify them.

We identify juveniles charged with a crime if the crime is important enough to report and we have the juveniles’ names.

Be cautious when identifying victims of crimes and people reporting crimes. There must be a compelling reason to include their names; avoid putting them in danger. Do not list their street address; use only block numbers. Example: Joe Smith of the 200 block of Broad St.

## **2. Plagiarism**

The daily newspaper should be an original work. Plagiarism is prohibited. It is a punishable offense that could result in termination.

For the purposes of this policy, plagiarism is defined as the duplication of another person's writing, passages that contain another's distinctively personal thoughts, uniquely stylized phraseology or exclusive news information. This prohibition refers to graphics as well as stories.

We will never present information as our own unless we have independently verified it and given credit where credit is due. This policy also forbids lifting verbatim paragraphs from a wire service story without a contributing line pointing out that wire services were used in compiling the report. Even material previously published in The Chronicle should be attributed to the newspaper. In the interests of accuracy and credibility, information and quotes taken from intermediate sources – other stories, reports by a nonstaff writer, and news releases – should be sourced.

## **3. Fabrication**

It is obvious that we should not deceive readers by fabricating news or news events. The fabrication of quotations or invention of sources is not tolerated. Fabricated information has no place in journalism. Fictional and satirical writing should be clearly labeled if there could be a doubt in the readers' minds about whether such writing deals with real events and persons. Fabrications in non-news stories, such as columns or features, must be obvious to the reader. The writer should avoid using real news events as material for fabrications. Care must be taken in re-creating events so that it is clear to the reader that the event was not witnessed firsthand. Example: A writer might give detailed description of a profile subject starting his day by rolling out of bed and doing 100 pushups and 300 sit-ups. Because the writer didn't witness directly, a phrase such as "That's how Bill Jones says he starts each day," is appropriate.

## **4. Veracity in photos**

Photographs in The Chronicle must always reflect the truth. The content of a news photograph will never be altered in any way that turns the photo into something the photographer did not shoot.

Retouching will be limited to removal of normal scratches and dust spots. Standard printing techniques such as dodging, burning, contrast and brightness toning are acceptable.

Environmental portraits or other controlled situations should be photographed in a manner that makes the context of the image obvious to the reader.

Photo illustrations should be clearly labeled as such.

Altering a news image, by staging, directing or electronic change is a punishable offense that could result in termination.

When the subject is demonstrating or re-creating something for photo purposes, it should be noted in the outline. Example: Jane Smith shows the defensive tactic she used to thwart her attacker.

## 5. Unnamed sources

We will attribute information to unnamed sources sparingly, only when news value warrants. While using unnamed sources can be valuable, the practice also deprives the reader of important information. We must learn to draw a distinction between “legitimate” sources who can supply a reporter with important information or documents that are not public but may lead to legitimate news, and “frivolous” sources who just want to throw mud at someone without attaching their name to the mud.

When considering whether to use unnamed sources we should ask:

- Is the information vital?
- Is the information a matter of fact rather than opinion?

Before any information is accepted without full attribution, reporters must make every reasonable effort to get it on the record. If that is impossible, reporters should seek the information elsewhere. If that is impossible, reporters should request an on-the-record reason for concealing the source's identity and should include the reason in the story.

Avoid using the terms “source” and “anonymous source.” In every case, some kind of identification is almost always possible – by department or by position, for example – and should be reported.

Any use of an unnamed source must be approved by the executive editor or managing editor.

The full identity of the source must be disclosed to a supervising editor. The identity must also be revealed to the managing editor or executive editor at their request. These editors are bound by the same promise of confidentiality made by the reporter. The source’s anonymity compact is with the newspaper, not just the writer. These facts should be explained to the source requesting not to be identified. The newspaper will not disclose the identity of an unnamed source unless ordered to do so by a judge.

Unnamed sources should not be quoted elsewhere in the story, particularly in reference to – or support of – the information they themselves provided for the story.

Do not accept requests for anonymity after the interview. Make sure sources understand the ground rules for interviews before the interviews begin. Because there is not universal agreement about many of these terms, the reporter should reach agreement with the

source about what promise the source expects. Make sure both the reporter and the source are clear on the distinctions among the types of interviews.

Most interviews are **on the record**—meaning all information and the name of the source could be used in any story that follows the interview. **Background** information generally is given to educate the reporter and provide him or her with insights they might need to write an accurate story. The background information can be used, but the source generally is not identified. Interviews or portions of interviews that are **off the record** contain information that generally cannot be published. However, if the reporter can confirm the information from another source who talks on the record, then it can be published.

Reporters should not agree that an interview or conversation – or any portion of one – is off the record before having some indication of what subject will be discussed.

Take precaution when editing into briefs any wire stories that use unnamed sources. It is imperative to retain that the information being presented came from an anonymous source. The editor should also strive to keep as much context of who the source is as possible (example: a cabinet official or an Atlanta police officer) when provided in the original story. When possible, the originating agency who granted anonymity to the source should be mentioned. Example: *The Washington Post* reported xyz, citing an unnamed NASCAR official.

## 6. Pseudonyms

Do not use pseudonyms. Identify sources by their full names—not a first name only. A first-name only reference may be acceptable in sensitive cases, such as an HIV patient or sexual assault victim, but only with approval from the managing or executive editor.

## 7. Opinion

The separation of news pages from the editorial pages is complete. This separation is intended to serve the reader, who is entitled to the facts in the news columns and to opinions on the editorial and “op-ed” pages. But nothing in this separation of functions is intended to eliminate from the news columns honest, in-depth reporting, or analysis or commentary when plainly labeled. Writers who serve as columnists must be careful to maintain distinctly different tones in news stories and columns.

Employees may not appear on radio or TV without the permission of The Chronicle’s president (*See Item 25 for more discussion on media appearances*). When they do appear, **employees should be careful not to make a statement or express an opinion that they would not include in print in The Chronicle.**

These guidelines also apply to online forums such as blogs, message boards, and story comments that deal with Augusta-area issues whenever the writer is identified as a

Chronicle employee, is known to the public as a Chronicle employee or is an employee who frequently deals with the public.

## **8. Meals**

Employees should avoid the appearance of being wined and dined by any source or agency.

When it is necessary to dine with a source while pursuing legitimate news leads, employees should make every effort to pay or ensure that the bill is shared evenly. It is acceptable to let the source or sales representative pay as long as one expects to be able to return the favor and pick up the tab the next time around.

When covering a banquet or meeting that includes a meal, The Chronicle should attempt to pay whenever there is a per-person fee. The cost should be established in advance so a registration check can be requested. If that is not possible, pay out of pocket at the door and get a receipt to be reimbursed. The staffer also has the option of not dining while on assignment. If it is too difficult to determine the fee, it is permissible to eat the meal without paying.

At events where hors d'oeuvres, appetizers or other snacks are provided, it's best to abstain or consume in moderation. Keep in mind that you are working. You are there as a journalist, not as a participant.

Avoid food and drink offered to you for free because you are a member of the media.

Food provided at press events, sporting events and in press boxes should be consumed only when time or access make it difficult for the staffer to obtain and pay for their own food.

Staff members may encounter situations in which it is socially awkward or even impossible to pay for a meal. Obviously, common sense should prevail in such circumstances. But such situations should be rare and should not be entered into habitually.

## **9. Alcoholic beverages**

Employees may not consume or accept beer, wine or liquor while covering an event where alcoholic beverages are served. *(Morris Communications Corp. policy bans employees from working with alcohol, inhalants or illegal drugs in their system. Reporting to work under the influence of these substances or bringing them onto company property may result in discipline including suspension or discharge).*

## **10. Admission**

Chronicle staffers may not accept complimentary tickets or free admission to an event unless they are covering it. This includes concerts, sports events, theatrical productions, movies, recitals, museum openings, political fundraisers and charity benefits. Do not seek or accept free or reduced admission to nightclubs or other locations that charge a standard entry fee.

Staff members may not arrange for free admission to an event for their families or friends, even if the staff member is covering the event. Guests who accompany staff members on assignment shall pay for their admission.

Even if a staff member purchases tickets to an event, a conflict of interest arises if that staffer gained an advantage over the general public because he or she is a journalist. Staff members may not use their position as Chronicle employees to purchase tickets that are otherwise unavailable to them as members of the public.

Working employees may accept passes to events where there are special facilities such as press boxes or press tables—for which tickets are not sold. Press facilities or tickets may be used only by employees assigned to cover an event or by those attending for legitimate news purposes.

Participation in media days or other events open to the press that the staffer is not covering or writing about may be attended if deemed useful and appropriate by the managing or executive editor. We should still pay or reimburse the provider when possible. When it is socially awkward or even impossible to pay for admission or entertainment, a staff member should use good judgment in how far to go in insisting on paying.

## **11. Books and music releases**

Books and recordings sent to The Chronicle for review are considered news releases. Such material may be kept by the writers to whom they are assigned for possible review. Materials to use as reference works may be kept regardless of whether they are reviewed. Such materials become the property of The Chronicle. Books and recordings that are not reviewed or retained for reference may be made available to other Chronicle staffers, the teen board, or donated to charity. They may not be sold or exchanged for personal profit.

## **12. Consumer product samples**

Unsolicited samples of inexpensive products such as food will be treated as news releases and may be disposed of at the discretion of a supervising editor. Product samples worth \$10 or more should be returned with a letter explaining The Chronicle's policy.

Unsolicited products with a value exceeding \$10 may be kept and used if the staffer—with the approval of an editor—finds them newsworthy and files a report on them.

Staffers are only allowed to request product samples or goods that they are reviewing or reporting on. A supervisor must approve such a request.

### **13. Gifts and gratuities**

Gifts of insignificant value—pens, calendars, key chains, etc.—may be accepted if it would be awkward to refuse or return them. A gift that exceeds token value (\$10 or more) should be returned to the sender with a letter explaining The Chronicle's policy. If it is impossible to return the gift, it will be donated to charity.

Items such as food or flowers given to a staffer in thanks for coverage, may be accepted as long as they are not of excessive value. Use common sense and check with your supervisor.

Staff members should not accept special offers aimed at members of the news media. Employees may not accept discounts on merchandise unless such discounts are routinely available to the general public. Discounted subscriptions to journalism publications and news magazines are acceptable.

### **14. Travel**

The Chronicle pays its own way. We do not accept free trips or reduced-rate travel. The exception is when there is no other way to access a news event, such as when military transport is involved.

We do not participate in free press trips designed to lead to coverage. When news value warrants, staff members may travel on chartered planes or buses (with a sports team or political candidate or government official, for example). All such trips must be approved by the executive editor or managing editor. Whenever possible, The Chronicle will reimburse the organization or provider of the transportation for the value of the trip.

Staff members may not use Chronicle employment to solicit trips or obtain special rates from airlines, auto-rental companies, hotels, resorts, cruise lines and other travel organizations.

### **15. Political activities, advocacy**

Staff members are encouraged to take part in the democratic process by voting in referendums, primaries and general elections. But to avoid the appearance of partiality or bias, they should not be involved in political activity beyond that. Under no circumstances should an employee work for or volunteer for a political campaign or organization.

Staff members should avoid advertising or blatantly espousing viewpoints on public issues while at work, such as wearing an anti-nuclear button or placing bumper stickers on their automobiles. Reporters and editors should be aware that such blatant espousal casts doubt upon their impartiality.

## 16. Memberships, volunteering

The Chronicle encourages its employees to be active in non-partisan community affairs. Outside interests help keep the newspaper in touch with the community. Staff members are free to become involved with civic, religious and social organizations as long as the following standards are maintained:

- a) Employees should not belong to or be involved with organizations about which they must write or make editorial judgments. For example, an entertainment writer should not serve as a board member for an arts group. The religion reporter should not write about his or her own congregation.
- b) Employees involved in community affairs should not use their position at The Chronicle to influence news judgments about groups or events in which they are involved.
- c) Employees faced with the prospect of reporting or editing a story about an organization to which he or she belongs, or for which he or she volunteers time or money, must inform a supervisor and may be asked to relinquish the assignment.
- d) Staff members may not hold leadership positions in organizations that would be expected to make news. Basic membership is allowed.
- e) Staff members may not perform public-relations or publicity work for organizations to which they belong.

Membership and leadership in professional journalism groups are not a conflict.

## 17. Free-lancing

Staff members – reporters, editors and photographers – must have approval from the managing editor or executive editor **before** accepting a free-lance or stringing assignment.

Company property and time may not be used in the production of materials for which the staffer is being paid by an outside party. An exception is staff photographers shooting assignments for AP, which are arranged and approved by the Photo Director.

Under no circumstances should a staff member use for free-lance purposes unpublished stories, notes or other work in progress for The Chronicle. Nor should a staff member misrepresent himself or herself as working for The Chronicle while on a free-lance assignment. Staff members and correspondents should not use a pseudonym when writing for another publication.

Employees should neither pursue nor accept freelance assignments for publications produced by organizations that they cover.

The publication or organization seeking the services of the Chronicle employee may not be in direct competition with The Chronicle or other Morris Communications properties.

Staff members may not write opinion pieces for other publications, even if the publication is not a competitor.

The newspaper has the right to curtail free-lance and stringing activities of its employees if such work could conflict with the staffer's regular duties or those of a colleague, or if the newspaper deems the publication inappropriate.

Reprints of photographs may be obtained only through the Library.

All articles published in The Chronicle are copyrighted. Requests to reprint articles must be submitted to the Library and approved by the president.

## **18. Use of company property**

Staff members are forbidden to use any Chronicle supplies, equipment, content (including outtakes) or other materials for any outside employment or endeavor.

## **19. Business, commercial activities**

The business and commercial activities of staff members and their families shall not influence news decisions. Employees shall not benefit monetarily from news decisions they make, nor shall they make news decisions with the intent of creating a financial gain or loss for someone else.

## **20. Use of position for personal gain**

Employees shall not use their positions with The Chronicle to get any benefit or advantage in commercial transactions or personal business for themselves, their families, friends or acquaintances. Chronicle business cards and stationery should only be used for company business. Staffers should not refer to their newspaper connections to try to resolve consumer grievances, to get quicker service or to seek discounts or deals.

## **21. Advertising/news**

*“No newspaper would call itself respectable if its editorial columns were dominated by its advertisers and it published advertising, information, and discussion so mixed together that the reader could not tell them apart. The importance and validity of this recommendation seem so obvious as not to require argument.”* (From the Hutchins Commission Report, entitled A Free and Responsible Press, 1947)

Maintain a clear line between advertising and news. Business considerations should not influence news judgment. All newsroom employees should alert their supervisors when advertisers and /or employees from the business side of the newspaper attempt to exert influence over their work. Editors shall exercise sole judgment over all news content, including special sections. However, we will not shy away from writing about advertisers when they have newsworthy information. We will not show favor to advertisers in our news content, nor will we punish them by excluding them from news stories or favor non-advertisers because they do not advertise.

News stories should be published without regard to the timing of ads or advertising special sections. Editors use their best judgment to decide when stories should run. Although stories about a particular topic may run on the same day as an advertising section about the same topic, we should attempt to avoid the appearance of advertisers buying news.

## **22. Pre-publication review**

It is against Chronicle policy to show a story to a source before publication. Avoid any agreement implying a subject may clear a story for publication. If someone wants a story read back before publication, politely refuse. Also do not agree to such a request as a condition for an interview. If your story deals with complex, technical information you are not sure of, however, feel free to call the person to make certain the information was correctly understood, even if that means reading passages back. Changes in the material should only be made in the interest of accuracy.

Similarly, it is permissible to show portions of a graphic or photo to a source to help ensure accuracy.

Reporters may also read quotes back to a source, particularly to people who are not used to being interviewed or quoted in the news media.

Avoid disclosing to people outside The Chronicle when stories of a sensitive or financial nature will be published.

## **23. Quotes**

What appears within quote marks should be exactly what the source said. Leaving out “uh,” “you know,” and other nonessential phrases of the spoken word is acceptable in moderation for clarity or brevity’s sake. But it’s better to paraphrase when you find yourself having to omit numerous words or long phrases to make a quote usable. Avoid correcting grammar and cleaning up quotes, particularly the language of public officials or those who spoke in public. It compromises our credibility if what appears in print is noticeably different from how someone is known to talk or how they were heard speaking

by others. However, when quoting “non-official” subjects who use particularly poor grammar, avoid quotes that would hold them up to ridicule. Paraphrasing could help in such a situation. If the meaning of a quote is unclear every attempt should be made to get the speaker to clarify what he or she meant.

## 24. Relationships

Staffers must declare conflicts and avoid involvement in stories dealing with members of their own families, the staffer's business and personal interests such as clubs, schools and other organizations.

Employees must not cover—in words, photographs or artwork—or make news judgments about family members or people with whom they have a financial, adversarial or close relationship.

Employees must inform their supervisors of personal relationships that may conflict with their job responsibilities.

Staffers may engage in occasional social contacts with sources and potential sources outside working hours, but should be cautious about developing friendships outside the newsperson/source relationship. When friendships are present or develop between sources and reporters or editors, the employee should inform management and can expect possible removal from regular coverage of that source. Similarly, if a story develops on a beat involving a close friend, the staffer should declare the friendship, with a possible outcome of removal from the story. Reporters should be particularly aware that the reporter-source relationship is fertile ground for growth of friendships and should work to maintain as strictly professional a relationship as possible with regular sources. If such relationships become deeper, the reporter should declare that relationship and expect to change beats, subject to the judgment of the reporter's supervisor.

## 25. Appearance in other media

The president of The Augusta Chronicle is the only person authorized to speak to other media on behalf of The Chronicle. If you are contacted by a member of the media seeking a comment or an interview about news or a newspaper issue, **do not comment**. Inform your editor of the request. The managing editor or executive editor will either refer the outside media to the president or obtain his permission for you to be interviewed.

Due to convergence, reporters and editors are appearing on radio and TV regularly. Appearances that are not part of The Chronicle's regular convergence arrangements (i.e. *First at 5, Football Friday Night*) must be approved in advance by the president or general manager. Staff members may not appear for pay on television or radio shows.

Staff members should maintain their commitment to fairness and impartiality on the air. Reporters should refrain from expressing opinions that would compromise their impartiality in covering the news. We shouldn't say anything on the air or online that we would not write in the paper.

Participation in television or radio should be for the purpose of enlightening the public or advancing the interests of The Chronicle.

## **26. Misrepresentation, deception**

Reporters and editors should identify themselves as employees of The Chronicle when gathering news and doing interviews so people will know their comments may be published. There are two exceptions to this rule:

- a) When you are contacting an organization or business to request basic information that is readily provided to the public, such as hours, prices, etc. Many businesses have banned employees from speaking to the media. This exception is designed to keep our request from being referred to "the corporate office."
- b) When identifying ourselves as Chronicle employees would prevent us from getting information that is of vital public interest. You must have approval from the managing editor or executive editor before acting in this regard. When deception is used in newsgathering, it must be revealed in the story (for example, in a "How-we-did-the story" sidebar). The subject of the deception should be informed before publication for an opportunity to respond.

## **27. Recording interviews**

We strongly encourage reporters to disclose to sources when they are recording phone interviews. Informing sources that we are recording conversations covers us legally with regard to interstate interviews. It makes our work transparent and avoids the appearance of surreptitiousness.

In special cases, where emphasis on recording could present an obstacle to getting news, we will allow reporters to use discretion. Exceptions to recording disclosure should be rare.

It is legal in Georgia and South Carolina to record a phone conversation as long as one party has given consent. If the source is out of state, you must know the law in that state.

Twelve states have laws requiring varying degrees of consent from the parties involved. They are: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Washington. In Florida, the consent of all parties involved in a recorded conversation must be granted. (See the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press Web site for a guide to taping <http://www.rcfp.org/taping/>)

You must disclose that you are recording if we plan to post any part of the interview online. If you decide after the interview to post an excerpt, you must get the source's permission. No portion of an interview will be posted without the source's consent.

If the interview is likely to be used online, consider starting your recorder and opening with a statement such as: “I’m writing for the print and online editions. Do you mind if I record our conversation for use on our web site?”

If interview is unlikely to be used online, a simple “I’m recording our conversation to help ensure accuracy” will do.

Reporters who are gathering multimedia content in person should inform subjects that the material is for use on our Web site.

## **28. Corrections**

When errors occur, the newspaper has an ethical obligation to correct the record and minimize harm.

Errors should be corrected promptly. But first, a determination must be made that the fact indeed was in error and that the correction itself is fully accurate.

When an error has been made, it shall be acknowledged in a straightforward correction, not disguised or glossed over in a follow-up story. Print corrections and clarifications shall appear on Page 2A under the heading CORRECTIONS.

On our Web site, posted content will be changed to make a correction as soon as possible once we learn a mistake has been made. A note will be added to the top of the content explaining that the originally-posted version contained an error and that we have corrected it. We will include the date when the correction was made, and will highlight the corrected text within the article.

If the story is online only, the same correction procedure (a note at the top) will apply.

We will not post correction notes for online changes made to correct typos, grammatical errors, etc. – only for errors of fact.

If it is a serious error that appeared in a breaking news alert that was e-mailed, we will re-email the corrected story to breaking-news subscribers.

Newsroom staffers should be receptive to complaints about inaccuracies and follow up on them. Newsroom staffers have a responsibility to alert the appropriate editor when they become aware of a possible error in the newspaper.

Errors should be corrected whether or not they are called to the attention of the newspaper by someone outside the newsroom.

Factual errors should be corrected in most cases even if the subject of the error does not want it to be corrected. It is the newspaper's duty to provide accurate information to readers. An exception may be made—at the behest of the subject—when the correction of a relatively minor mistake would result in public ridicule or greater harm than the original error.

When possible, the reporter, photographer or editor who made the error should write the correction.

Although it is wise to avoid repeating the error in the correction, the correction should have sufficient context that readers will understand exactly what is being corrected.

Corrections must be approved by the managing or executive editor. The note should include an explanation of how the error occurred.