

Tribune Code of Editorial Principles

Preamble

Public service through journalism is central to our mission. Our work as journalists must always center on meeting the needs and interests of readers, viewers and listeners, and we must provide them with journalism that is trustworthy, relevant and valuable. If they have reason to doubt the credibility of our work, quality won't matter—they will go elsewhere. That is especially important in the increasingly competitive multimedia world.

Those who turn to us must:

- know that our name signifies integrity and courage in gathering and presenting the news;
- be confident that the news we deliver—as text or photo, audio or video—is accurate and free of the influence of special interests, whether public or private, commercial or political, our own or that of our friends;
- believe we do not make news decisions in a self-interested manner, or needlessly damage or cause pain to those we cover;
- see that we respond to the needs and interests of our communities with journalism of high public purpose and broad individual appeal.

To earn and keep this public trust, we rely upon the professionalism and wisdom of the men and women in our newsrooms and their commitment to these ideals. Each of us, regardless of rank or job title, is responsible for safeguarding our legacy of public service and leaving it undiminished, if not enhanced. This applies to all Tribune journalists, whether they are working in print, broadcast or digital media.

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Truth and integrity

Breaking the law

Tribune editorial employees will not engage in illegal activities in pursuit of news, and editors or news directors will not encourage or tolerate illegal behavior.

Plagiarism, fabrication and deception

Plagiarism, the taking of another's wording, ideas or distinctive language without attribution, is a cardinal sin of journalism. When original information, quotes, ideas and distinctive language from other sources are used in our reports in print, online or on the air, they should be clearly attributed to those sources. In the online platform, if information from another website is used, the text must be attributed and should include a link to the original source whenever possible. The fabrication of stories, in whole or part, and presenting them as factual is forbidden. Neither plagiarism nor fabrication will be tolerated; any such practice will be subject to immediate disciplinary action.

Reporters who contact news sources with the intention of gathering material for a story should be candid about who they are and what they are doing. Misrepresenting one's identity to get information is generally unacceptable, although there may be some limited exceptions. (A restaurant critic, for example, may need to make reservations under an alias.) However, these exceptions must be pre-approved by a senior editor or news director.

Use and attribution of text from other websites, news articles

Tribune journalists should not rewrite an entire story from another publication, even with frequent attributions throughout the post. Copyright law permits a fair use of portions of others' work. What is fair use and how much can be used depend on the context. Generally, a safe and recommended practice online is that a Tribune journalist can republish, word for word, no more than two sentences of work that is more than four sentences long. Regardless of amount, Tribune journalists should not republish so much of the work as to make the original irrelevant. Almost always include a link to the original source when possible. To use a wire story in its entirety, the article must be prefaced with a label such as "From Associated Press." In this and all other areas, a supervisor should be consulted about concerns or questions.

Conflicts of interest

Opportunities for conflict of interest are many, varied and often complex. We invite public scrutiny of our activities, so special vigilance is required throughout our editorial and news departments to guard against not only actual conflict, but also the appearance of conflict.

In this and all other areas, a supervisor should be consulted if there are doubts about the appropriateness of an affiliation, a practice or a course of action.

To forestall questions about our independence and impartiality:

- Editorial departments should make full and timely disclosure, in published or broadcast reports, of potential conflicts of interest. When there is doubt about whether to disclose, remember that it is best to err on the side of openness and transparency. We should cover the Chicago Tribune, Tribune Publishing and other Tribune business units as we would any other company.
- Freelancers are independent; nevertheless, we should discuss with those journalists any issues that might result in conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts, such as third-party payment for expenses or outside employment. Editors and producers can then make decisions about disclosure and transparency or whether to use outside content.
- It is appropriate for editorial and advertising departments to work together to build audiences and therefore the company's financial strength, but never in a way that would give advertisers an opportunity to influence our news coverage. Editorial and news departments also may work with marketing, promotion, creative, circulation or other departments to improve readership and financial success, but they should never do anything that might jeopardize the integrity of the news report.
- Editorial employees should not accept any gift of material value, such as junkets, meals or other items, from news sources or news subjects. Any exceptions to this require the approval of the news director or the editor/managing editor.
- Editorial employees may not use their job titles or company connections for personal advantage, for example, to obtain tickets to a show, settle a disputed bill, gain preferential treatment in court or get a child into a special school.
- Editorial employees should not have membership in, any financial relationship with, or other ties to a business or institution if they have regular and continuing influence over any aspect of coverage of that organization. They should avoid situations in which their activities in connection with any group or cause could be perceived as influencing what Tribune publishes or broadcasts.
- Political organizations present particular challenges. Donor lists are public information, so there is no such thing as a "private" donation to a party or cause. For that reason and because it would be impractical to police exceptions, no editorial employee, whether involved in political coverage or not,

may donate to or be affiliated in any way with such groups. Like other citizens, journalists are free to exercise their right to vote.

- Editorial departments also should be careful to report immediately and fairly when a Tribune colleague has a newsworthy encounter with the legal authorities. There ought never to be the suggestion of a cover-up to keep the spotlight off ourselves when we would have focused it on others in similar circumstances.
- Tribune journalists may write books, do freelance work, write personal blogs and make paid appearances according to these guidelines, but any such activities must be approved in advance because of the potential for conflicts, competition or legal problems for Tribune. A personal website of almost any nature could be seen as competition to Tribune's various online offerings, so proposals must be examined closely before permission is granted. Also, personal blogs raise potential conflict-of-interest issues with work responsibilities. Do not use work material on a personal blog.

Manipulation of photography

Advances in digital technology have made possible the manipulation or outright fabrication of photographic images. Therefore the credibility of photojournalism requires that we rigorously adhere to strict standards in the presentation of these images.

News photos and video images should be faithful portrayals of events as seen through the eye of the photographer and the camera's lens. News photos and video should not be manipulated mechanically or digitally in any way that materially alters these images as authentic records of events.

In some features areas, such as entertainment, fashion or food, it is commonplace and acceptable to stage photos or manipulate images for illustrative effect. These images are fundamentally different from photographs of news events. Nevertheless, readers or viewers should always be alerted that such manipulation has occurred. Typically a small caption or credit that says "photo illustration" is sufficient.

Magazines often enhance or touch up feature photographs involving models or other staged shots. This is acceptable, but in no case is it permissible to make such alterations to photographs or video when hard news is involved.

Sourcing

Editorial departments should always be as candid as possible with readers and viewers about the sources of our reports. Our credibility is undermined if we cite unnamed sources excessively or unnecessarily.

Use of anonymous sources

When a reporter proposes to use an unnamed source, his or her editor or news director should discuss the case and proceed if satisfied that the information the source provides is of compelling importance to the public interest. Reporters and their supervisors should strive first to obtain information from sources that can be identified.

Reporters should not give guarantees of absolute anonymity, and any promise to withhold a source's identity must be discussed in advance with a supervisor before a story is aired or published. A source should be told that even if it is withheld from publication, his or her identity will be disclosed to a senior editor before a story is aired or published. Tribune recognizes that making and honoring such promises of confidentiality sometimes are necessary to do quality journalism, and we will vigorously defend our journalists acting within these guidelines. We must acknowledge that courts, as seen in recent events, may legally compel disclosure of sources. Everyone deserves to know from the start what they are undertaking and what is at stake.

Quoting an unnamed source to disparage an identified individual should be avoided. Exceptions to this guideline should be rare and made only with the approval of the editor or the news director.

If it is decided to publish or broadcast reports using unnamed sources, readers or viewers should be told why in a timely and meaningful way.

Single-source stories

Careful judgment should be exercised in publishing news stories that rely on a single source of information, particularly where the source is unnamed. The reasons and circumstances for relying on a single source, including the possible motives of the source, should be considered before publication. Editors and reporters may proceed if they believe the source is reliable, information is credible or there is either no need or no means for further confirmation.

Checking accuracy

We want our reporting to be as accurate as possible, but we must be careful. We do not circulate printed or electronic copies of stories outside the newsroom before publication. You may read back quotations to a source or check verbally with a source on selected passages for accuracy. Be clear with the source that any decision on revisions to a story will be made by the reporter and her or his editors.

Decency, fairness, privacy

The professional behavior of Tribune reporters, photographers or camera operators should never become an issue. We must not lose sight of the responsibility we have to report the news as thoroughly and accurately as possible. But it also is important to weigh the public's need to know against the risk of causing unnecessary discomfort to an individual, especially a private person thrust into the limelight through no fault of his or her own.

- Our newspapers, television news programs and websites should be sensitive in the depiction of uncovered dead bodies, particularly faces of these individuals. Caution always is required before publicizing vivid images of dying and death.
- Reporting on children poses special challenges. Children often are eager to talk and be photographed, but they may have no idea of the potential consequences of having their names, pictures and words in the newspaper, on television or on the Internet. Before photographing, interviewing or filming a child, reporters and supervisors should weigh the subject's age and the nature of the story in considering whether to first ask permission of the parents or supervising adults. Whether we need permission or not, we always must be mindful that children are not responsible for their words or actions in the same way adults are.

To guard against intrusions upon decency, fairness and privacy:

- A "no comment" response from an individual in the news should be phrased neutrally.
- Efforts to reach news sources should allow them reasonable time to respond, even if it means delaying a report to include their comment. "Ambushing" news sources generally should be avoided.
- Quotes may be shortened through the use of ellipses and other generally understood and accepted editing devices. But editing should not change the essence of what the person said. If a quote includes a slur or a profanity, it should be used only when the news value of the story depends on it. The stylebook provides more guidelines on handling quotations.

- Surreptitious recording or use of hidden cameras in preparing reports should be cleared first with supervisors and legal advice sought before proceeding. It is illegal in some states.
- With rare exceptions, we do not publish or broadcast the names of sexual assault victims without the victim's consent.
- Generally, adult criminal suspects may be identified when charges have been filed or when editors are confident that a source is credible for identifying a suspect. Juveniles generally may be identified only if they have been charged as adults but editors may determine otherwise based upon the newsworthiness of the case.
- We ought to resist publishing or broadcasting uncorroborated reports about a person just because other news organizations have done so. The same applies to identifying sexual assault victims whose names have appeared elsewhere.
- In general, a person's race belongs in a story only if reporters and editors can articulate its relevance. The same applies to religion, ethnic origin and sexual orientation.

Individuals running for public office open themselves to particularly close media scrutiny. Reporters and their supervisors ought to consult regularly and often about which pieces of information about the candidate are of sufficient importance to the public to warrant publication.

Online journalism and social media

Integrity is a core value. Our ethical principles do not change, even as we work across multiple platforms and in differing media. Put another way, the standards that guide our behavior as journalists, including those listed elsewhere in the Tribune Code and in local guidelines, apply online as they do offline.

Social networks, blogs, instant messaging and online forums provide valuable links to the world around us; enable us to strengthen our relationships with users and sources; and serve as an outlet to promote and distribute our work. As journalists take part in this vibrant conversation, that may mean sharing personal information, revealing personality and otherwise connecting with the audience in a more direct manner.

With that in mind, please be aware of these general guidelines:

- Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them.
- Avoid writing or posting anything that would compromise the integrity of Tribune Publishing or the Chicago Tribune, or that would affect your ability to do your job or otherwise diminish users' or sources' trust in you and the organization. Just as political bumper stickers and lawn signs are to be avoided in the offline world, so, too, are partisan expressions online.
- Even if you use privacy tools (determining who can view your page or profile, for instance), assume that everything you write, receive or exchange on a social media site is public.
- Be aware of perceptions. "Friending" or "following" people is fine. But if you "friend" a source or join a group on one side of a debate, you should do so with those on the other side as well. Understand that users or sources may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you're looking for story ideas or collecting information.
- Be honest about who you are, identifying yourself as a Tribune employee online if you would do so in a similar situation offline. This applies to your Twitter and Facebook accounts, for example, as well as personal blogs and comments you post on other blogs or stories. Be cautious, for example, about online sites such as Yelp that enlist personal reviews or ratings. Do not assume an anonymous identity to respond to comments.
- If you wish to publish an interesting e-mail or other message you have received from a reader, you must be clear in your post that the e-mail or message is from another person and that the words are not your own. You must also check the accuracy of the comment because you are responsible for the accuracy of comments you personally republish.

- If you have a personal blog or want to start one, clear the subject matter with your supervisor before proceeding. You must not mix work and personal material on a personal blog. The company expects you to exercise good judgment, including avoiding any posts about subjects that you cover for your newsroom; attempting to build a commercial enterprise that competes with subjects your newsroom covers; and avoiding controversial subjects.
- In reporting, be aware of inadvertent disclosures. “Friending” a professional contact may publicly identify that person as one of your sources. Authentication is essential: Interview sources by phone or in person or otherwise verify sourcing after collecting information online.
- Most readers understand that linking does not necessarily constitute endorsement. Still, you should avoid pointing to anything that is an affront to common decency. You may generally link to the websites of institutions and causes, but as with other forms of publishing, you should strive for balance when there are differing points of view.
- It is difficult to ask others to respect our copyrights if we don’t extend the same courtesy to them. Accordingly, we should use photographs from non-Tribune or non-Tribune Publishing websites only when (1) the image is in the public domain and is no longer subject to copyright protection, (2) the copyright holder has given explicit permission; or (3) if such use is “fair” under established fair use principles. If you think you should be able to use copyrighted text, images, video or audio files based on “fair use” principles, please consult your editor first.
- Using social media networks means that you (and the content you exchange) are subject to the networks’ terms of service. This can have legal implications, including the possibility that your interactions could be subject to a third-party subpoena. Any information might be turned over to law enforcement without your consent or even your knowledge.

Objectivity, opinion and accountability

Fair and impartial reporting is a goal toward which we should strive as journalists. Journalists should make every attempt to keep their stories free of any bias that would misrepresent the subject and thereby do a disservice to the subject, the readers or viewers. (For instance, some feature stories can be evocative and written from a point of view, sometimes the subject’s.)

When journalists appear on or report for other media or use social media, they generally should avoid offering opinions on the beats they cover unless this is otherwise permitted in their regular jobs. A reporter being interviewed about a story should confine comments to the specifics of the published article.

Finally, if we determine that we have made errors, we owe it to our readers and viewers to correct them. The nature and magnitude of what requires correction or clarification may vary from case to case and medium to medium. But we ought to be prepared to set the record straight.

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The Code of Editorial Principles supplements the Tribune Publishing Code of Ethics and Business Conduct that applies to all employees. That Code notes that editorial policies of individual newspapers may be more specific on certain issues and explains that such care is necessary to ensure that our company’s reputation and credibility are protected and remain above reproach. ***All employees should know and follow the Code of Business Conduct. Failure to do so would be poor judgment and can lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.***

CHICAGO TRIBUNE ADDENDUM

This section provides additional information about Chicago Tribune practices.

Outside Organizations/Financial Matters

We encourage editorial staff members to be involved in their local communities because there are many benefits of participation in public activities.

Disclose proposed activities with potential conflicts

Editorial staff must disclose annually to their supervisors any ongoing or proposed activities, relationships or investments that put Tribune credibility at risk or conflict with its interests. If an actual or potential conflict arises, the staff member must discuss it immediately with the supervisor, and should recuse himself or herself from editorial decisions that may involve the issue in conflict.

In today's media environment, nearly every source or provider of information could be a competitor, especially in digital media. Tribune is paying you for all of your expertise in your given field or assignment. **Therefore, any request for freelance assignments or outside employment must be reviewed and approved in advance.**

Staff may not sit on policy-making bodies of outside institutions without specific permission from masthead editors or the standards editor. Staff members should avoid leadership roles if:

- The staff member covers the organization or field of activity.
- The organization's activities make it the likely subject of Tribune news coverage.

However, leadership roles in professional journalism groups generally are not a conflict.

Conflicts, relationships, financial matters

Some potential conflicts are crystal clear: Business reporters should not hold stocks in companies they cover; insider trading based on knowledge of a story's possible impact is illegal. Sports journalists should not gamble on sporting events. Some potential conflicts are less obvious. Staffers may not use their position or the name of the Tribune for personal gain. However, it is normal, acceptable practice to say where you work, what you do and how much you are paid if you apply for a loan for a house or a car.

There may be some exceptions when Tribune employees are given discount offers through a Tribune business arrangement. The standards editor reviews such offers and alerts newsroom employees when there are issues or potential conflicts.

Staff members should not participate in news coverage about any individual related by blood or marriage or others with whom they have close personal or financial relationships unless a supervisor has confirmed there is no cause for concern about a conflict or the perception of one.

- Avoid writing or posting anything that would compromise the integrity of Tribune Publishing or the Chicago Tribune, affect your ability to do your job or otherwise diminish users' or sources' trust in you and the organization. Just as political bumper stickers and lawn signs are to be avoided in the offline world, so, too, are partisan expressions online.

Fundraising

Taking the collection at church or selling cookies for the PTA is fine. Otherwise, it's best not to get involved in fundraising for organizations. It has the potential to create a conflict of interest or the appearance of one. An exception is made for the Tribune's annual holiday fund appeal, because it is made to the readership in general and not to specific individuals or companies.

Endorsements

Staff members may not make endorsements or participate in broadcast commercials, digital promotions or print advertisements for products or enterprises other than those owned or controlled by Tribune Publishing. Do not permit even a hint of an implied endorsement if there is a situation in which a staff member may be perceived to have been influenced by a favor.

Seminars, honorariums and complimentary tickets

Staff members invited to speak or participate in seminars may accept travel, lodging expenses and honorariums if senior newsroom management approves in advance and if the sponsor is not a governmental or tax-supported entity or a private or special-interest group with publicity interest.

Senior management may make an exception for staffers to accept expenses and honorariums for appearances at educational events at public schools and colleges. Appearances at journalistic or private academic convocations are acceptable. Common sense should be the guideline. If an organization is a subject of Tribune coverage, there may be an issue of conflict of interest – or the perception of a conflict. For instance, staff members should not accept expense money or fees from business or labor groups.

Complimentary tickets

Media-only events such as concerts, screenings or public relations receptions are for media on assignment or for staffers whose jobs are directly related. Otherwise, journalists must not take advantage of Tribune employment to get free tickets to such events, especially since most are not open to the general public.

A staff member who is covering an event may accept complimentary tickets to an event such as a concert, sports event, political fundraiser or charity benefit. The Tribune also may pay for other staff to attend, because of a staff member's job responsibilities. This should be approved in advance by a supervising editor.

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 where feasible. Subject to advance approval from a supervising editor, the Tribune may reimburse the expense for these individuals in appropriate circumstances.

Contests, judging

The Tribune submits staff entries in contests whose central interest is recognition of journalistic excellence. It avoids those that exist primarily to publicize or further the cause of the organization sponsoring the contest.

When asked to judge a contest, staffers should determine who sponsors an award and identify any possible conflicts or whether there is potential overlap with advertising interests. A person writing about music or food, for example, would face potential conflicts with work assignments if asked to judge contests about the topics. Judging contests is encouraged if there is no conflict. It can be helpful to see other news organizations' high-quality work.

Similarly, any staff member offered an award – monetary or otherwise – should get the supervisor's approval before accepting. We seek to avoid playing along with those groups that, cynically, offer awards in hopes of winning favor with the media. Some have legitimate journalistic and community purpose; we should evaluate them.

Gifts, merchandise and review copies

The editorial staff should not accept gifts of anything of value. Unsolicited merchandise will be returned or donated to charity. Please send any such merchandise to Elaine Varvatos or her assistant, Melody Vasquez, for processing. Staff members will be notified of the donation.

Merchandise used for a story or its illustration should be purchased by the Chicago Tribune or returned to its source immediately. If return is impractical, the merchandise should be disposed of by the Tribune. Merchandise should not be kept for personal enjoyment. Exception: A staff member may keep a book or recording reviewed in the Tribune. Staffers may also keep unsolicited books sent to them as individuals by publishers or authors seeking attention for the work. In either case, such items may not be sold.

Books or recordings sent to staffers strictly as gifts must be dealt with like any other gifts of significant value. There are federal regulations about unsolicited merchandise that is reviewed or evaluated in blogs, so journalists should be prepared to discuss such cases with supervisors to be sure transparency is adequately addressed.