

DELAWARE NEWSLINE

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DELAWARE
newsline **LIVE**



Freelance Journalists Reporting Guidelines

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TRUST IN ETHICAL JOURNALISM

The Key to Media Futures

www.delawarenewsline.com





Did you know...

Photojournalists, also referred to as news photographers, use still photography and other digital media in creating newsworthy stories for the public.

Photojournalists should be creative while possessing solid technical knowledge in the field of photography. In addition to still photography, photojournalists are often responsible for delivering information by using various social media outlets across the Internet.

A photojournalist might work with multimedia, such as video, sound and digital media.

While Reporting

- Ask sources to spell name and title; then verify what you wrote.
- Record or transcribe interviews.
- When someone cites numbers, ask for (and check) source.
- Ask "how do you know that?"
- Seek documentation.
- Verify claims with reliable sources.
- Save links and other research.
- Ask sources what other reports got wrong.
- Note facts that need further verification
- Cut and paste (with attribution) quotes from digital documents.

While Writing

- Numbers & math (have someone check your math)
- Names (check vs. notes and one other source)
- Titles (people, books etc.)
- Locations
- Compare quotes to notes/recording/transcript
- Check attribution (insert link if from the web)

Definitions

- Verify URLs (check them and check whether cited content is still there)
- Phone numbers (call them)
- Spelling & Grammar
- Spellchecker Errors
- Have you assumed anything? (If so, verify, hedge, or remove.)
- If you have any doubts, recheck with the original source.
- Where your understanding is weak, read the final copy to someone who does understand.

When Finished

- Correct any errors you found in your archives, databases, or other resources you control (but be certain you have verified the new information).

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Checklists are worth the time

The most common response when I posted this checklist in 2011 and as I have advocated checklists in discussions of journalism ethics standards is that no one has time these days to use a checklist. I don't buy it. Accuracy is more important in journalism than ever. Wherever we go in developing new business models for news, trust is always central to the value we want to provide. It always has been, and deadline pressure is nothing new to journalism.

Do not be daunted if my checklist (or Silverman's or yours or a student's) looks time-consuming. Some of these checks will take seconds. For most stories, running through a checklist takes only 10 to 15 minutes if that. You simply work the checks into the workflow of your reporting, writing, and fact-checking. The doctors and nurses checking my date of birth took only seconds, but ensured they were operating on the correct patient.

Ensuring accuracy is already part of a journalist's workflow, and many of the steps outlined are already followed on most stories; the checklist just makes it more consistent and rigorous.

If you are under deadline pressure, you can check the first few paragraphs and post that, saying the story will be updated. Then check the rest and update. Accuracy is worth a few minutes, because the damage an error causes lasts way longer than the delay a checklist causes.

Two newspapers published errors in stories about me in 1991. I remember those mistakes more than two decades later, and they were preventable. I don't want people remembering my errors that long.

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