

Fact-Checker Guidelines: Newspaper Model

All stories submitted to *[[insert publication name]]* go through a basic copy edit, which may include light fact-checking. But we rely on our journalists' reporting for the bulk of the facts. The journalist is responsible for double-checking their work and in particular quotes and other information that came from interviews.

Fact-checking is vital: It helps us keep reader trust, and it may also help prevent sources from suing over inaccurate claims.

[Note to editors: Adjust the below lists of what your team does / does not fact-check as needed.]

What We Fact-Check:

- Spelling of names and places
- Dates
- Ages
- Titles and affiliations
- Genders and pronouns
- And any other basic information checkable with published sources

What We Don't Fact-Check:

- Original quotes
- Any other information from an interview

What We Expect from You:

While the journalist is primarily responsible for the facts in their story, it is also helpful to have your input. Your editor or the journalist may send you an annotated story and back-up materials. For each story, please:

- Check basic facts in the story against the original source materials.
- Consider the truthfulness of the story's overarching themes, narrative arcs, or thesis arguments.
- Look for potential errors of omission (ex: key information that contradicts or complicates a story's angle or thesis).
- In cases where primary sources are impossible to find — and this should be rare — use at least three unrelated and reliable secondary sources per fact and alert your editor.

- Be aware of controversial or critical topics and pay special attention to word choice and fairness.
- If a writer leaves a TK in a story (i.e. a placeholder), feel free to follow up for more information and sourcing.
- Books are rarely fact-checked, so corroborate information and make sure the story includes appropriate caveats.
- Don't just mark a fact as wrong; provide an accurate replacement that fits in roughly the same amount of space. Provide context and sourcing on the change.
- If you see evidence of plagiarism or other misconduct by the journalist, alert your editor immediately.
- Be diplomatic with your colleagues.