

Source Fact-Checking FAQ

All stories submitted to *[[insert publication name]]* are fact-checked. Fact-checking typically means that a person other than the journalist verifies all of the information in an article before it is published.

Here are some common questions about the process:

Why do you fact-check?

It isn't because we don't trust our journalists — we do. Rather, in the course of reporting, writing, and editing, errors can inadvertently sneak into a draft. Fact-checking helps us confirm that we've got it right.

What do you fact-check?

- Spelling of names and places
- Dates
- Ages
- Titles and affiliations
- Genders and pronouns
- Quotes and paraphrases
- Physical descriptions of people, places, and things
- Eyewitness accounts
- Numbers, statistics, and calculations
- Measurements
- Geography
- Scientific or technical explanations
- Analogies and metaphors
- Product descriptions
- Quotes from movies, history, etc.
- Superlatives: First, biggest, etc.
- Anecdotes widely assumed to be true
- Illustrations and photos, including captions
- Word choices
- Factual assertions
- Individual facts and overarching truths
- Any other matter of fact that isn't included on this list

When will it happen?

Typically, fact-checking happens after a story is nearly complete but before publication. Because of this, the fact-checker may be working under a tight deadline. We appreciate all the time you have already spent with our journalists. Please also spend a little more to help make sure we understand your work or perspective.

A newspaper interviewed me and didn't fact-check. What gives?

Different outlets rely on different methods for verifying information.

What should I expect?

The fact-checker will confirm information that will appear in the story that came from the journalist's interviews with you. They may also check other information that you're in a position to confirm. You'll likely answer a list of questions by phone. If any questions are unclear or you are uncertain about context or caveats, please feel free to ask for clarification.

Why can't I just read the story?

It is vital for journalists to maintain editorial independence from their sources, even for the most innocuous stories. As such, it is against our publication's policy to send any story out to any source before it publishes. We can't make exceptions based on the story's topic: If we wouldn't send a politician an unpublished version of a story that criticized their policies, we can't send an unpublished story to you.

What happens if I want something in the story to be rewritten?

It depends. The fact-checker doesn't have the authority to promise a change, but they will take any potential changes or disputes to the editor, who will weigh the information against other sources.

What happens if I don't want to participate in the story any more?

In most cases, once you have talked to a journalist, the information you have provided is on the record and may be published. If something has changed — for example, if appearing in the story will endanger you — please discuss it with the fact-checker and/or journalist so that they can bring this information to the editor.

What happens if the story publishes and there is an error?

We strive for accuracy, but if a mistake still makes it into a piece — and there are corroborating accounts or sources confirming it is a mistake — we typically run a correction. Please also remember that our job is not to perfectly reflect your perspective, but to be fair and accurate with respect to all valid sides of a story. If you are unsatisfied with the story, you are also welcome to write a letter to the editor.