

JOURNALISM ETHICS AND STANDARDS

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"Every news organization has only its credibility and reputation to rely on", - Tony Burman, editor-in-chief of CBC News.

Journalism ethics and standards comprise principles of ethics and of good practice as applicable to the specific challenges faced by professional journalists. Historically and currently, this subset of media ethics is widely known to journalists as their professional "code of ethics" or the "canons of journalism." The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast, and online news organizations.

While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of — truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability — as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent reportage to the public.

Like many broader ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of "limitation of harm." This often involves the withholding of certain details from reports such as the names of minor children, crime victims' names or information not materially related to particular news reports release of which might, for example, harm someone's reputation.

In countries without freedom of the press, the majority of people who report the news may not follow the above-described standards of journalism. Very often non-free media are prohibited from criticizing the national government, and in many cases are required to distribute propaganda as if it were news. Various other forms of censorship may restrict reporting on issues the government deems sensitive.

One of the primary functions of journalism ethics is to aid journalists in dealing with many ethical dilemmas they may encounter. From highly sensitive issues of national security to everyday questions such as accepting a dinner from a source, putting a bumper sticker on one's car, publishing a personal opinion bloc, a journalist must make decisions taking into account things such as the public's right to know, potential threats, reprisals and intimidations of all kinds, personal integrity, conflicts between editors, reporters and publishers or management, and many other such conundrums.

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