

Worksheet 1.3: Journalism Ethics

Ethics- rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad ([Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#))

Journalism- the activity or job of collecting, writing, and editing news stories for newspapers, magazines, television, or radio ([Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#))

Journalism ethics- *(write your own original definition here)*

Jim Lehrer's 10 Rules of Journalism for Students

1. Do nothing I cannot defend.
2. Do not distort, lie, slant or hype
3. Do not falsify facts or make up quotes
4. Cover, write and present every story with the care I would want if the story were about me.
5. Assume there is at least one other side or version to every story.
6. Assume the viewer is as smart and as caring and as good a person as I am.
7. Assume the same about people on whom I report.
8. Carefully separate opinion and analysis from straight news stories, and clearly label everything.
9. Do not use anonymous sources or blind quotes, except on rare and monumental occasions. No one should ever be allowed to attack another anonymously.
10. Acknowledge that objectivity may be impossible but fairness never is.



What Would You Do?

Instructions: You are the editor of your school's newspaper. In each of the following scenarios, you are asked to consider a situation. Make an ethical decision about which stories you will publish and what you won't. Write yes or no and briefly defend your choice. When making your decision think about Jim's 10 Rules and write down the number of the rule(s) that apply in the scenario.

1. A student at your school is highlighted on the local TV news. A reporter for the school newspaper uses information from the TV newscast without giving credit to the station. It turns out that several facts from the news report are wrong. Do you admit the mistake? Do you tell how you got the incorrect information?

2. A well-known musician is filming an anti-smoking PSA (public service announcement) at your school. The school newspaper photographer gets pictures of him smoking a cigarette during a break. Your photo editor wants to run the photograph with the cutline "Rock Star Filmed Anti-Smoking PSA on Tuesday." Do you reword the caption?

3. The owner of a local business has refused to buy an advertisement in your newspaper. He graduated from your school, so you are really ticked that he won't support his alma mater. Later that day, as you look at the sports spread, you notice that the photo of the cross country track event that the sports editor plans to use has a billboard in the background with the local business's name prominently displayed. It would be easy to remove the billboard with photo-editing software. Do you alter the photograph?

4. The daughter of the principal at your rival high school has been arrested for a DUI (driving under the influence). Do you report it?

5. One of your best friends says she saw the new basketball coach smoking marijuana at a rock concert. You tell the newspaper adviser that someone told you about seeing him and that you plan to report it in your concert review. The coach tells you he wasn't even at the concert. Do you report the allegation?