

Trespassing

Under NO circumstances are any Wikinews reporters, or not, to step on the property of ANY Church of Scientology. By doing so, press or not, if unwelcome, they can have you arrested for trespassing.

Interviewing Guidelines

A good article will have multiple sources quoted, but *every* article must have multiple sources contacted behind-the-scenes. It is not enough that the subject of the article told you that he or she is "the first Canadian to do a certain action", that he or she "operates the largest website of its genre" or "was fired from his or her job because of comments he or she made about the President". The onus is on *you* as the reporter, to make sure those facts are correct.

Our articles should not advance an agenda, they are here to *inform, not influence*. If Person A says that Person B was fired due to theft, go talk to Person B and get the other side of the story as well. *Do not* judge which side of the story "seems more believable" and then only tell that side - present both sides in a neutral light and let the reader make up their own mind.

Laws vary between nations, but it is typically *required* that you identify yourself as a reporter to the person with whom you are speaking. You don't need to make this an awkward formality, just work it into your introductions.

"Hi, I'm Jeff Davies, a local reporter who's covering the arrest outside your restaurant yesterday. I was wondering if I could ask you a couple questions?"

Again, you must inform the subject if you are going to taperecord them during the interview. It is best to present it to them as a precaution *for their sake*. If they ask why you're recording, don't say "So that I have proof of what you said" - simply explain that "I'd like to have it as a reference when writing up the story tonight, because I would hate to accidentally misquote you on anything or leave out one of your salient points". If they're a public figure you can always use a search engine to determine the proper spelling of their name once you get home...but if it's not somebody likely to have already been in a number of news stories, *double-check* that you have all the names/spellings correct.

As a general legal principle, everything a source tells you *before* you've identified yourself is "off the record" and cannot be published unless you get them to repeat it for you later. Similarly, if a source tells you anything is "off the record", *do not print it*. On the other hand, people will often allow you to speak to them for "background material", where they do not wish to be identified in your article - but may still provide you with information nonetheless. Sometimes they will allow this information to be credited to "a police officer on the scene said that...", other times they will demand *no* reference in the article. Respect their wishes.

Often a source will give you a photograph of their imprisoned brother, their father during the war or some similar family 'photograph' to be used for your story. Ask them if they'd be willing to release the licensing to the image, so that other media outlets can use the photograph in the future if the subject returns in

another news story - if you can do it without seeming awkward, direct them towards permissions@wikimedia.org to confirm the release of their image.

When you are unsure of anything, clarify it.

If you speak to someone who deals with the press often, you should be mindful of the fact that such people often become expert at manipulating the impressions of reporters. Your ability to see through manipulation techniques will improve with practice. If your source has more experience in interviews than you do, then it is important to consider what slant the person may want to give your final story, and to make sure that you, rather than the source, decide which details are relevant.

Interviews are best the closer they are to the source: for example, at their workplace instead of over the phone. Information from news releases, phone or e-mail interviews, etc., should be noted as such in the article.

You should normally prepare for interviews by learning some background information. For example, if you profile a mayor, you shouldn't ask him when he was elected. You should be able to learn that elsewhere beforehand.

As long as you have advised your source that you are a reporter, anything they say is presumptively "on the record" and can be quoted. However, sources may expect that only the formal "interview" part of your interaction is going to be used in your story, and may be surprised if you choose to use other material.

Since Wikinews has no formal approval process for authors, when contacting sources, you must represent yourself as an *independent* author/researcher, not as a 'representative' of Wikinews. This remains the case if you are an accredited reporter: then, you must introduce yourself as an independent or freelance reporter. You may of course inform the source where you are planning to publish, but please ensure they understand in this case that your own views and activities are not representative of anyone else who uses Wikinews, nor does the reputation of Wikinews, or lack of reputation of Wikinews, reflect on yourself. **It is an open, public news forum, with transitory quality control, at best.**

Be polite and act without bias.

NPOV

The **neutral point of view policy** states that one should write articles without [bias](#), representing all views fairly.

Neutral point of view means that an article should *fairly represent* all sides in a news story, and not make an article state, imply, or insinuate that any one side is correct. (Of course, there are limits to which points of view are worth mentioning, and this can be an area of conflict.)

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It is crucial that [Wikinewsies](#) work together to make articles unbiased. This comprises one of the great merits of Wikinews.

The basic concept of neutrality

At Wikinews, we use the terms "unbiased" and "neutral point of view" in a precise way:

Articles without bias *describe* debates fairly rather than *advocating* any side of the debate. Since all articles are edited by people, this is difficult, as people are inherently biased.

The original formulation of NPOV

The neutral point of view attempts to present [ideas](#) and [facts](#) in such a fashion that both supporters and opponents can agree. Of course, 100% agreement is not possible; there are ideologues in the world who will not concede to any presentation other than a forceful statement of their own point of view. We can only seek a type of writing that is agreeable to essentially rational people who may differ on particular points. -- [Jimbo Wales](#), Wikimedia founder.

Why should Wikinews be unbiased?

Wikinews is a general news source, which means it is a representation of facts about events. But we (humans) sometimes disagree about specific cases. For any topic on which there are competing views, each view represents a different theory of what the truth is, and its adherents believe that the other views are *false*. Where there is disagreement about what is true, there's disagreement about what constitutes knowledge. Wikinews works because it's a collaborative effort; but, whilst collaborating, how can we solve the problem of endless "[edit wars](#)" in which one person asserts that *p*, whereupon the next person changes the text so that it asserts that *not-p*?

A solution is that we accept, for purposes of working on Wikinews, that "human knowledge" includes *all different* significant theories on all different topics. We could sum up facts (in this sense) in a biased way: we'd state a series of theories about topic T, and then claim that the truth about T is such-and-such. But again, consider that Wikinews is an international, collaborative project. Nearly every view on every subject will be found among our authors and readers. To write from a neutral point of view, one presents controversial views without asserting them; to do *that*, it generally suffices to present competing views in a way that is more or less acceptable to their adherents, and also to *attribute* the views to their adherents.

There is further reason to commit ourselves to this policy. Namely, when it is clear to readers that we do not expect them to adopt any particular opinion, this leaves them free to make up their minds for themselves, and thus to encourage in them *intellectual independence*. Totalitarian governments and dogmatic institutions everywhere might find reason to be opposed to Wikinews, if we succeed in adhering to our

non-bias policy: the presentation of many competing theories on a wide variety of subjects suggests that we, the creators of Wikinews, trust readers' competence to form their own opinions themselves. Texts that present multiple viewpoints fairly, without demanding that the reader accept any one of them, are liberating. Neutrality subverts dogmatism, and nearly everyone working on Wikinews can agree this is a good thing.

Eyewitness accounts

When reporting as a witness of an event, explain briefly in the *Original reporting notes* section of the Talk subpage (described above) who you are and why you were present, in relation to the event, in addition to the usual features of the story. In this circumstance **you** are the source, and others may wish to contact you for verification, interview, or for other details.

Ethical Conduct

THIS PART OF THE DOCUMENT IS ONLY A DRAFT

As journalists and reporters we have the power of the interpretation and delivery of truth. We have duties to both our readers and our sources.

To our readers we have the duty to be:

- Independent
- Neutral
- Truthful
- Accountable

To our sources and subjects we have the duty to:

- Minimise harm
- Not misrepresent
- Get all sides of a story
- Respect copyrights
- Respect anonymity

To our readers we have the duty to be:

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Independent

Wikinews is not owned by a corporate entity. It is a project that is under the banner of the Wikimedia Foundation, a non-profit organization.

Neutral

All Wikimedia Foundation projects must conform to the policy of [Neutral point of view](#). Wikinews is no exception. Our responsibility to our readers is to provide news that contains no bias. This includes removing and re-editing stories that have been determined to advocate a particular point of view to the exclusion of others.

Truthful

Wikinews wants to be truthful. We want to bring the real information. We work hard to do that. We make sure what is being reported is truthful. We remove and re-edit stories that contain unverified sources and thus may be untruthful.

Accountable

In relation to being truthful, Wikinews wants to be accountable also. We make sure that what we are reporting to the public can be accounted for. We make sure sources are conforming to NPOV. We take blame for stories that contain untruthful information.

To our sources and subjects we have the duty to:

Minimise harm

It is essential that all risks of being inflammatory, misleading, or inconsiderate to subjects and sources be minimised. This is especially relevant to those engaging in original reporting. To minimise possible harm, we encourage our writers to do the following:

- Ensure facts are correct by getting verification from multiple sources.
- Try to contact the subject of the article whenever possible.
- Not publish an article based solely on speculation, hunches or wild guesses.
- Before publishing, make a mental list of all parties involved in the article and think about how each will feel about the article.

Avoid misrepresentation

Do not publish any sort of interview story without ensuring that the interviewee is absolutely happy with the article's final text. Even if this means giving up the interview - Wikinews will only lose out if it offends interviewees - remember to respect that they have taken the time to talk to us.

Get all sides of a story

Ensure sources and quotes from both sides of an argument are included in articles to avoid being biased towards either side. Ideally, all opinions expressed in an article should be direct quotes. Wikinews has no official opinion on anything; however, sources often do.

Respect anonymity

Any source that requests to remain anonymous is fully entitled to this. You are not obliged to bring up the possibility of anonymity, but you are obliged to honor requests for it. It is important not to apply undue pressure to the source if they do not wish to be named. At the same time, anonymous sources can make stories less credible, so it is important to make some effort to persuade reluctant sources to volunteer to go on the record. Explaining to a source why you would prefer them to go on the record is a gentle and often effective way of persuading them to do so. In any case, the decision rests with the source.

It is likely that members of Anonymous will not want to be identified. Please respect these wishes.

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