

GBAMFS

Journalistic Style Guide

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This brief guide is intended to offer basic outlines and pointers on Journalistic Best Practices in the context of our new media landscape. As members of the gaming public presenting news, facts, and opinions online, we are responsible for informing people in ways not yet fully appreciated by the general public—or, I contend, even by ourselves.

Some of you have backgrounds in mainstream media; most do not. I graduated from the Connecticut School of Broadcasting some years ago. While it is only recently that I have chosen to put these skills more fully into practice, I have observed journalism for decades both before and after my time there.

I aim to share some basics that I believe will upgrade not only the quality of our coverage but also the respect that we are due according to our efforts. Standards distinguish us from our declining competitors in the Legacy Media and enhance the quality of the fresh, information-rich content we deliver. In summary, style matters, so let's kick it up a notch!

1. Verify Facts

Always check your facts against multiple reliable sources to ensure accuracy. Where this is not possible, be upfront with viewers. Lack of corroboration may hew closer to rumor. If it's not a strong source or the claim is not fully verifiable, frame it as unconfirmed. Do not overuse contingent coverage—it risks undermining credibility.

2. Use Credible Sources

Make clear when information comes from less reliable sources. Legacy reporting is rife with backtracking and quiet corrections, eroding trust. We can do better! Own your mistakes, but don't make them a habit.

3. Provide Context

Explain the background of a story so your audience understands its relevance without oversimplifying. Explain key details and provide relevant context to avoid misunderstanding.

4. Maintain Ethical Standards

Avoid sensationalism and distortion. Restraint ensures credibility in reporting. Be clear, concise, and truthful. Prioritize accuracy and fairness.

5. Ethical Conflicts - Gamergate 101!

Disclose conflicts of interest at the appearance level, not just the proven level. Examples include reporting on stories involving close associates or financial stakes. Independence from external pressures (advertisers, sponsors) is crucial. Transparency maintains trust.

6. Avoid Bias

Present all sides fairly and don't allow personal views to skew your framing. Entertainment-style presentations may differ, but note for new or casual viewers when content leans editorial or opinion-based.

7. Hard News vs. Soft News

Stick to verified facts in Hard News. For Soft News, clearly frame personal views or assumptions as opinions. Viewers deserve transparency about the nature of your content.

8. Minimize Confusion

Use precise language in Hard News to avoid ambiguity. For Soft News, hyperbole and exaggeration are acceptable, but clarify the intent of your program for new audiences.

9. Protect Privacy

Be mindful of how your reporting may affect people's privacy, especially when dealing with sensitive issues. Pay special attention to whether the people or persons you are reporting on are people with notable public profiles. Public figures are fair game if coverage is accurate. Be cautious when reporting on sensitive issues involving private citizens. Limit details to what is necessary for public understanding.

10. Fact-Check on the Fly

In real-time reporting, stay updated and ensure all facts are accurate as events unfold. It is crucial that you are willing and able to offer corrections for errors in your coverage if and when they are identified. In journalism, accountability is paramount. In pure entertainment contexts this would not matter. Where they're mixed, this is still the case.

11. Sensitivity to Vulnerable Populations

It is important to take some care in handling of coverage on vulnerable populations. Minors, the elderly, crime victims, disabled persons and/or others in sensitive circumstances. This is a customary thing no longer typically practiced or reciprocated by our Legacy [Gaming] media peers, but it would be poor form not to mention it. Ethical coverage here distinguishes professional reporting from tabloid behavior.

12. Legal Considerations

It pays to bone up on just what qualifies as libel or defamation where you live and where those you choose to cover live or work. There are risks from statements widely disseminated and potentially misinterpreted if they are not properly set out in your coverage. Also it's prudent to steer clear of directly commenting on pending litigation especially if there is an element of personal or potential involvement.

Final Note

If you follow these guidelines, you'll be ahead of much of what passes for coverage by the (unwatched, unwatchable) "mainstream media," particularly in the United States. It's called a style guide for a reason—it's up to you how you present. Practicing these points will protect you and elevate the quality of the information your viewers receive.