

2.1

Ethics in Journalism

GOALS

- Understand the elements of ethical conduct in a news organization.
- Name and describe ethical violations in journalism.

KEY TERMS

- ethics
- accuracy
- credibility
- influence
- integrity
- anonymous sources
- transparency
- on the record
- impartial
- conflict of interest
- plagiarism
- fabrication

FOCUS

In the morning newspaper, you read a story about the good deeds of a high-ranking political figure. On the television network news that evening, you hear about how that same politician used public funds to travel to exotic vacation spots. There is no mention of the politician's good deeds. The next day you see a photo of the newspaper reporter with the politician. The caption reads: "News reporter and politician longtime friends." When you learn about the friendship between the reporter and the politician, what happens to your trust in the reporter and the accuracy of the story about the politician's good deeds?

Everyday Ethics

Ethics are the moral principles that govern the appropriate conduct for individuals and organizations. Journalists must always conduct themselves ethically. What are the elements of ethical conduct in journalism?

When you read an article in a newspaper or on a Web site, or when you see a story reported on your local television station, you most likely assume it is true. There's nothing more important to a news organization than **accuracy**, which means getting all the facts right and always seeking the truth. Consistent accuracy gives the journalist and the news organization **credibility**, a reputation for being right. Credible news organizations and their employees strive to be fair and independent; that is, free from the influence of government, businesses or individuals.

SCHEDULE

Block 45 minutes

Regular 1 class period

GOALS

Remind students to read the lesson goals to help focus their attention before reading the lesson.

KEY TERMS

Have students work together to write a newspaper article that uses each of the key terms. Articles should demonstrate knowledge of each term's definition.

FOCUS

Have one student read the Focus paragraphs aloud in class. Then lead a class discussion answering the question posed. Students' answers should include that their trust in both the newspaper reporter and the accuracy of the story is weakened.

TEACH

Introduce ethics by providing students with a one-page quiz on the last chapter. Tell students this is an important quiz and will contribute to their grade. Provide students with the answer sheet, and then leave the room for a few minutes. Have students check their own quizzes while you are absent. When you return, have students ask themselves if they were tempted to correct wrong answers. Discuss how doing so would be ethically wrong. Also discuss how sometimes doing the ethical thing is difficult.