



MUSTANG DAILY

Source Rights

The following is a list of rights that all sources have when being interviewed for any news story. Here at MD, we strive to uphold these rights at all times. In the event that any of these rights are not upheld, we encourage sources to contact the editor-in-chief or managing editor directly so that we can rectify the situation in a timely manner.

1. **Sources may decline to be interviewed at any time.** A Mustang Daily reporter cannot badger a source into being interviewed against their will. The decision to answer a reporter's questions lies entirely on the source, and if at any point a source feels they are being unfairly forced to comment, they should notify Mustang Daily editors of the situation immediately.
2. **Sources may request to preview their quotes before the story is published.** To ensure the validity of a quote, a source may request to look over their quotes before the story has been run, to check for factual errors or misquotations. This does not mean that a source can refuse to have a quote published if they feel the quote makes them look less intelligent or they don't like how it sounds. In no cases will a reporter send a source the completed story before publication for their approval.
3. **Sources may choose to "go off the record" or be an anonymous source.** Because of the sensitive nature of some stories, sources have the right to request to not have their name published in conjunction with some information, but they must tell the reporter they wish to not be quoted before sharing the sensitive information — this is to prevent a source from completing an interview with a reporter and then say they don't want any of the information shared to be included in the article. They must clearly inform the reporter of their desire to stay off the record, at which point the reporter should contact an editor to determine a course of action. For more information on Mustang Daily policy regarding anonymous sources, review our policy page.
4. **Sources may end an interview prematurely if the reporter displays any inappropriate behavior.** Reporters are expected to behave with the utmost decorum and respect at all times when employed with the Mustang Daily. Any inappropriate behavior, such as lateness, profanity, intoxication or aggression, are grounds for dismissal, and should be reported to Mustang Daily editors immediately.
5. **Sources may check with the Mustang Daily if they receive an interview request, to ensure that the reporter is actually working on an article for the Mustang Daily.** Mustang Daily reporters do not have badges or cards stating they work for the paper, so if any questions arise regarding the validity of a reporter, sources are encouraged to call the Mustang Daily at (805) 756-1796 or email mustangdaily@gmail.com to confirm.
6. **Sources may also check with the Mustang Daily to see when an article in which they have been quoted will be published.** Although some stories do not have set publication dates, an editor would be happy to take a source's contact information and inform them when it will appear in the paper. If a source would like to have a copy of the article, and could not obtain one throughout campus, they may request a copy be sent to them.
7. **Sources may request a correction if factual errors or misquotations are present in an article.** If a source feels they have been misquoted, they should contact the Mustang Daily editor-in-chief immediately. Before a correction is issued, the editor-in-chief will speak with the reporter, as well as the section editor, to determine whether the source was misquoted. This can generally be easily confirmed by reviewing a reporter's notes or recordings. Once confirmation (or non-confirmation) has occurred, the editors will determine the following course of action. Although factual errors and misquotations are frowned upon at the Mustang Daily, we cannot remove papers from the stands or completely take an article offline unless the article has been proven to be patently false and/or plagiarized.

Source Expectations

What to expect when being interviewed:

- Reporters will usually contact you initially by email or phone. Because they work on a deadline (usually 5 p.m. that day), a speedy response is appreciated.
- Reporters may be a paid staff writer or a student writing for a class (either the Advanced Reporting or the Introduction to News Reporting classes). Both are required to inform sources before they are interviewed that their work is being submitted to and may appear in the Mustang Daily. Failure to do so results in firing for staff reporters and a failing grade on the assignment for student writers. If a reporter fails to identify themselves as a Mustang Daily reporter, please contact the Mustang Daily editors.
- In-person interviews are preferred, with phone interviews as an acceptable alternative. Email interviews are heavily discouraged, and are only allowed if it is the only way in which a reporter may contact their source due to distance or time constraints.
- Due to personal preference, a reporter may choose to either transcribe by hand or record an interview with a source. Recording increases the accuracy of quotes and is encouraged for all reporters. Though a reporter is legally allowed to record an interview without source consent as long as the recorder is out in the open and the reporter clearly identified him/herself as a reporter, Mustang Daily encourages reporters to inform sources before recording out of respect.
- Interviews can range anywhere between five minutes to an hour depending on the topics being discussed. If you are under time constraints, inform the reporter from the start so they can organize their questions to fit. If a reporter says an interview will last a certain amount of time, and you realize during the interview that it is lasting longer, you have the right to inform the reporter you only have time for one more question. We respect your time, and appreciate you taking the time out of your day to speak with us, so any special time requirements you have should be taken into account.
- Reporters will generally ask for specific details regarding the topic of the article. If you are unclear on exact details, feel free to let the reporter know you do not have that information at that time. If possible, assure the reporter you will call or email them with the correct information as soon as you can, and then make sure to follow up.
- Reporters might also be in contact after the initial interview to fact-check information they obtained from you. This is to ensure that all information in the article is accurate. Please respond in a timely fashion because most days the reporter is on a deadline and needs to have that information in before the story goes to print. This is also the time when reporters will send you quotes to check if you requested this (a reasonable request).
- Once the article is published, if you notice any errors or misquotations, please contact Mustang Daily so we can address the problem quickly.

Code of Ethics

The following is a code of ethics upheld by the Society of Professional Journalists — a national journalism organization. Here at Mustang Daily, we strive to uphold this code at every juncture. The code is available on the SPJs website.

Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Code of Ethics, contd.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
 - Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
 - Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
 - Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
 - Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
 - Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
 - Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
 - Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.
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Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Code of Ethics, contd.

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.