

# Sample Policies

**Absence policy** Being a productive member of student publications is much like having a real-world job. Each day, others rely on your participation. Therefore, great care should be taken when planning pre-arranged absences and field trips. Students should be mindful of the deadline schedule when planning for other activities.

**Advertising policy** The editor-in-chief, with guidance from the adviser, shall determine if any advertisement is not acceptable. Ads for illegal products or services will be rejected.

**Anonymous source policy** At the discretion of the editor-in-chief, anonymous sources may be used. When anonymous sources are used, only the reporter and editor-in-chief should know the identity of the source. Of course, it is preferred to use sources who will go on the record, however the publications department understands there are instances when the use of an anonymous source is appropriate.

**Before publication approval policy** Stories, interviews or photographs will not be shared with non-staff members before publication unless the reporter and/or editor-in-chief determine the need to confirm information for clarification. Interviewed subjects have no right to approve a story they appear in.

**Byline & photo credit policy** All stories written by an individual will receive a byline with the exception of an editorial. Any photos that appear in the publication will receive a photo credit. Photographers are expected to write their own captions. If more than two people contributed to a story the byline will read, "staff."

**Class interruptions policy** Every effort should be taken to complete publications business in a manner which is not disruptive to another classroom. If a class must be interrupted, the staff member should introduce himself or herself to the teacher, mention why you are there and ask permission to conduct your business.

As a general rule there are several classes we always try to avoid interrupting. In addition, we attempt to make interruptions only toward the end of a class period. The best bet is to always plan ahead and take care of business during a passing period, lunch or before or after school.

**Class time work policy** It is expected you will stay active and engaged each class period. At no time should you line up at the door before the end of the period or work on assignments from other classes without the permission of the editor-in-chief or adviser.

**Communication regarding publications policy** Letters-to-the-editor are the most appropriate way to communicate with the staff, however the correspondence we receive takes a number of forms. E-mails, posts and calls will be shared

with appropriate staff members. Exceptions to this are unsigned letters, libelous comments or comments intended to cause harm.

**Conduct policy** It is expected that when you are conducting publications business you act professionally and courteously. You are not only representing yourself, but the staff, adviser and school. You should always do your best to leave a positive impression.

**Conflict of interest policy** There are several occasions when, as a student journalist, a conflict of interest might arise. For starters, a reporter should never quote him or herself, nor use his or her friends as sources. This is unprofessional.

Reporters should avoid writing stories about activities they participate in. A reporter who also plays basketball should not cover that sport.

Student journalists wishing to hold an editorial position such as editor-in-chief may not be president of student council or a class council. This is seen as a major conflict of interest. Publication students are encouraged to be active in school, however must understand that there are limits to the things an editor can be involved with.

**Content-decision policy** Content of student publications is determined by student editors. The adviser does not determine content. Student publications do not engage in prior review before publication.

**Controversial topics policy** Student publications may from time-to-time cover controversial topics. Student journalists should be responsible when covering such topics. While not under prior review, student editors may decide to give the principal a head's up on the controversial topic before the paper is distributed.

**Corrections policy** The goal of the publication is to have no errors; however, the goal is not easily accomplished. The staff apologizes for such errors and will run corrections when possible.

**Crime policy** If a student or faculty member at school commits a criminal act, or is alleged to have committed a criminal act, it is considered newsworthy and will be reported on appropriately.

**Deadline policy** Meeting deadlines is of the utmost importance to journalists. If you feel as though you will not be able to meet a deadline you should immediately discuss with an editor. The editor-in-chief may grant extensions at his or her pleasure. Failure to meet a deadline could result in (a) a failing grade and/or (b) dismissal from staff.

**Dismissal from staff policy** Being on a publication can be rewarding and a lot of fun. However, there are times when students might be re-

moved from staff. These infractions include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, fabricated work, breaking of school rules, breaking of the law or failure to meet deadlines.

**E-mail address policy** For the purposes of conducting publications business, students should have a professional e-mail address that is frequently checked.

**"Editorial" policy** Each issue of the newspaper will feature an editorial, which reflects the viewpoint of the majority of the editorial board (with contribution from the entire staff). Final decisions regarding the editorial will be made by the editor-in-chief, though the actual editorial might be written by a different member of the editorial staff.

**Editorial policy enforcement policy** The appointed editor(s)-in-chief shall interpret and enforce the editorial policy.

**Editor-in-chief as a leader policy** It is expected editors-in-chief will lead by example at all times during class time. It is also expected that editors will behave appropriately when representing their publication outside of the classroom.

While they cannot be monitored 24/7, editors are role models and should follow all school rules and laws. Failure to adhere to school rules or laws could result in (a) loss of position or (b) removal from staff.

**Equipment use policy** Any equipment borrowed from publications should be used responsibly and returned in the condition it was lent. Students are responsible for any damage to publications equipment.

**Faculty & staff name policy** In accordance with AP Style, faculty and staff will be referred to by full name on first reference and by last name on future references.

**Guest writers policy** The use of guest writers is at the discretion of the editor-in-chief.

**Hazing policy** New members to publications will be welcomed to the organization with no fear of hazing, intimidation or bullying.

**Holding of yearbooks policy** Publications will hold yearbooks for a guaranteed 45-day period after they are distributed. After that date, books might be available but the publications department will not guarantee books after this time. It is the responsibility of the purchaser to retrieve his or her book in a timely manner.

**Internet photos policy** Staff members should never use photographs from the Internet unless they are for reviews or of legitimate news-value. Even then, a staff member should seek approval from the editor-in-chief regarding the appropri-

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ateness of such use. As a general rule, Internet photos are not ours to use and the quality of such photos is not good enough to use in print.

**Interviewing policy** Every attempt should be made to conduct in-person at a neutral location or location comfortable for the interview subject. Should an in-person interview not be possible, a phone interview is an appropriate back-up solution. Instant-messaging, Facebook chat and Q&A sheets are never acceptable interviewing techniques. E-mail interviews are discouraged and should only be done at the approval of the editor-in-chief. If an interview is done via e-mail, it should be documented in the story.

In the state of Indiana it is legal to record a conversation as long as one person involved knows the recording is taking place. That being said, it is appropriate to let a person know if you are planning to record your conversation.

**Letter to the editor policy** Letters to the editor are welcomed and encouraged, but will only be published if they are signed. Editors-in-chief reserve the right to edit letters for length, grammar and unacceptable content. Letters to the editor should be delivered to the classroom.

**No harm policy** It is possible that in the act of reporting a story, a reporter will come upon a troubled source who may need outside help. In addition to being a reporter, you are a human being. Adhering to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics edict to “do no harm,” a reporter should notify an adult if they believe a source is going to injure themselves or take their own life immediately.

**Obituary policy** In the occurrence of the death of a faculty member or student, the newspaper will print a recent photo of the deceased with his or her name, a list of survivors, school activities list and student quotes.

All obituaries will be handled in the same, fair manner.

If a student or faculty member die during the school year and the yearbook deadline allows, a photo of the deceased will appear in the advertising section of the book with their date of birth and date of death.

**Outside-of-school behavior policy** While you may not be an on-duty student journalist 24/7, it is important to understand how you conduct yourself outside of school will reflect upon you when you are working as a student journalist. It is strongly encouraged that you always behave appropriately, being mindful of how you conduct yourself in public and on social media. Should inappropriate behavior interfere with your responsibilities as a student journalist you could be removed from staff.

When attending a school field trip all school rules are to be followed at all times.

**Ownership policy** Assignments completed as part of a publications class will become the exclusive property of publications for the entire school year. At the conclusion of the year, publications will share rights with the owner of the work.

**Photography policy** It is expected that students who have signed up to be photographers will provide their own cameras. Occasionally the publications department will have cameras available for staff use, but this is inconsistent and cannot be guaranteed. Photographers who cannot provide their own camera will be reassigned or removed from staff.

**Photo manipulation policy** Electronic manipulations changing the essential truth of a photo or illustration will be clearly labeled as a “photo illustration.”

**Plagiarism & lying policy** Plagiarism and/or the use of writer-created quotes or information in any form will result in the immediate dismissal from staff and a F for the class. We do not tolerate or condone plagiarism, misquoting or misinformation of any kind.

**Press pass policy** Having a press pass is a privilege. Passes should be used responsibly at all times. Any time you leave the room you should have your press pass out and visible. Press passes can get you into special events you are covering, however you should plan ahead when using your press pass at an athletic event or school program.

Students who abuse their press pass will be (a) required to surrender their pass and/or (b) be removed from staff.

**Profanity policy** Profanity may appear in a publication, but only in cases of direct quotes or if the profanity is necessary to the content of the story. In questionable cases, the editor-in-chief will determine whether the use of profanity is vital to the story.

Please do not confuse profanity with obscenity. No articles or pictures of an obscene nature will be published. Definitions and examples for the above instances can be found at [splc.org](http://splc.org).

**Publication-driven complaints** Readers with concerns or complaints regarding publications will be directed to speak with the editor-in-chief initially. The adviser will become involved when deemed appropriate by the editor-in-chief or should the adviser determine the need to become involved sooner.

**Reporting policy** Reporting is at the heart of journalism. Therefore, there are several expect-

tations when it comes to reporting. First and foremost, reporting should be authentic, fair and accurate. A reporter should always keep all his or her notes from a story, including, but not limited to: research, interviews and observations.

**Senior photo policy** To appear in the senior album section of the yearbook, seniors must take their official portrait at the official yearbook photography studio. The deadline is typically around late November. Photos taken at other studios will not be used.

**Staff conflict policy** Occasionally, staff members will have disagreements that can get out-of-hand. Staff members should always try to remain calm and respectful and deal with issues before they become large-scale problems. Should a conflict arise, the editor-in-chief will devise a resolution plan. Should further assistance be needed, the adviser will determine the appropriate course of action to end any conflicts.

**Staff manual policy** Every staff member is required to purchase a staff manual each year. It is expected students will become familiar with the manual and use it as a constant resource throughout the year.

**Staff position policy** Each year, new editors are chosen for each publication. This happens through a combination of application, interviews and recommendations. Any staff member is welcome to apply for editorial positions.

A student wishing to be editor-in-chief, however, must commit to attending a summer journalism workshop. Students who prefer to be orientation leaders or attend different camps and not attend a workshop will not be considered for the position. A student who says they will attend and does not will have their position revoked.

**Use of minors' names policy** There is no law regarding the use of the name of a minor involved with a criminal activity in the media. The editor-in-chief will determine when it is appropriate to withhold the name of a minor in a publication. Victims of sex crimes are generally not named. The editor-in-chief will determine if and when any names should be printed or withheld.

**Yearbook distribution policy** It is expected current and future yearbook editors-in-chief will participate in the distribution of the yearbook each spring. Student editors should plan accordingly.