*Note:* Intended to be used with: https://www.spj.org/pdf/spj-code-of-ethics.pdf

**Analyzing the Society for Professional Journalists Code of Ethics**

**Directions:** **Explain** each principle in SPJ’s Code of Ethics, in your own words. Identify **one question** journalists can ask themselves to ensure they are following each principle. Identify **one consequence or one problem** for you as a reader that can result if a principle is not followed.

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| **Four Ethical Principles** | **Explain in your own words** | What is **one question** journalists can ask themselves to ensure each principle is being upheld? | What is **one consequence**, **for you as a reader,** if this principle is not followed? |
| 1. Seek Truth and Report It |  |  |  |
| 2. Minimize Harm |  |  |  |
| 3. Act Independently |  |  |  |
| 4. Be Accountable and Transparent |  |  |  |

**Ethical Dilemmas in Journalism**

**Directions:** Analyze each ethical dilemma introduced.

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| **Scenario 1: Anonymous Sourcing**  A source comes to you because the construction company, where they work, is using environmentally harmful materials. However, the company is defrauding their customers and government regulators by claiming that these materials are environmentally friendly. They are also charging their clients extra for these materials.  Your source wants to expose this wrong-doing but is asking to remain anonymous, when you publish the story. They want to be an anonymous source both because they were involved in this illegal construction and upselling customers and because they are afraid that if you use their name they will be fired and will be unable to find another job.  Should you grant your source anonymity when you report this story? | **Scenario 2: Information to Include When Reporting**  Your neighborhood had a devastating fire and your editor asks you to report on this. This fire is the third to occur in the same neighborhood. People say that the fire was caused by houses in the area being built with cheap, shoddy, and easily flammable, building materials.  When you get to the scene, you learn that the fire started because a child in the building was playing with matches, unsupervised. You know that reporting this information will impact the family’s ability to recover from the fire and receive insurance money for what happened.  Do you report this information? How would you “frame” your story? What would you focus on in your reporting? |
| **Scenario 3: Running a Story**  You are writing a story about a local politician running for elected office. The politician is also a business owner in the area. You have heard rumors that this politician is mistreating their employees by withholding tips and asking employees to work, even after they clock out.  The election is only a week away and you think these business practices are important for voters to know about. You are sure this story will garner a lot of interest.  In reporting this story, you’ve been able to talk to a manager at the politicians’ business who says some of the rumors are true, and others are not. You have not been able to reach any current or former employees. And you’re not sure you’ll be able to reach these employees in time for this story to make a difference ahead of the election.  Do you report what you know so far? Or do you wait to talk to more sources, even if this means not running the story until after the election? | **Scenario 4: Information on Social Media**  You are reporting on a story about a local business that is mistreating its employees. They are not allowing employees to take sick leave and their pay is docked if they make a mistake at work, even when this is only an accident. Employees are forced to work over-time or risk being fired.  You reach out to current employees for an interview but they all reply that they are not interested in participating in your story. They also ask you not to write the story as they could lose their jobs.  However, through your research, you find employees complains about their jobs on Facebook and other social media. It is publicly available and you are able to read it. It confirms the poor working conditions at their place of business that you suspected.  Do you write this story? Do you include employees’ social media posts in what you report? |

**Reasoning About Ethical Dilemmas in Journalism**

**Directions:** Please select an ethical dilemma and analyze it using the four principles of journalistic ethics.

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| **Ethical Dilemma Number:** | **Please explain which ethical principles involved or in conflict.**   * Seek Truth and Report It * Minimize Harm * Act Independently * Be Accountable and Transparent | **Who can be impacted by the dilemma and how?**   * Who benefits? * Who is harmed? | **What would you do in this situation and why?** |
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| **Exit Ticket: Which Ethical Principles Are Violated?**  **Directions:** Please match each example of journalistic misconduct to the SPJ’s Ethical Principle(s) that it violates. | |
| **Examples of Journalistic** | **SPJ’s Ethical Principles Violated** |
| 1. A journalist is profiling the CEO of a technology company. The CEO flies them in their private jet to their resort for an interview. The journalist spends an all-expenses-paid week with the CEO and does not disclose this when writing the profile. 2. A journalist is publishing a story about a politician accused of bribery. However, the politician is difficult to reach, so the journalist publishes the story without giving the politician an opportunity to respond to the accusations. 3. A journalist quotes a source in a story; however the source emails the journalist to say that their quote was inaccurate and that they had been misquoted. The journalist does not respond and does not tell their editor, pretending the mistake did not happen. 4. A journalist publishes a detailed story about an individual’s arrest for running naked through a public fountain. The individual is a private person and the story is embarrassing, but not very important to the public. The journalist thinks the story will receive a lot of attention because it is funny. | 1. **Seek Truth and Report It** 2. **Minimize Harm** 3. **Act Independently** 4. **Be Accountable and Transparent** |