

# TUBER EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

*Adapted from the Associated Press, the BBC, The Guardian and the American Society of Magazine Editors.*

## INTERVIEWS

**Identity:** Introduce yourself as a writer for Tuber (freelance or staff), and the publication you are writing for.

**Recordings and notes:** Inform the interviewee that you will be taking an audio recording and notes for your personal reference, which might be shared with the editors. This includes recordings for phone interviews.

**Asking questions:** While there's no need to be overly combative with interviewees, be sure to ask important questions that address the "elephant in the room" issues.

**Going off the record:** Try to understand the reasons for the interviewee to go off the record. Be clear about which parts are off and on record.

The AP's definitions of going off the record:

- On the record: The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.
- Off the record: The information cannot be used for publication.
- Background: The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position.
- Deep background: The information can be used, but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity

If sending transcripts to the editors, indicate which portions are off the record (or indicate if parts are left out / not transcribed).

### **Interviewees' requests to see the text before print or get photos:**

Inform interviewees that the Tuber editors will liaise with them directly on this. We generally allow interviewees to see text or quotes for fact checking but we are not required to alter the text.

## SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

### > Factual information

Always cross-reference facts and other information beyond **more than just one source** (look for press releases, official websites, news reports from established news outlets, etc)

Blogs and Wikipedia do not count as primary sources.

### > Studies

Go beyond the headline. Take note of sample sizes, the date of the study, the number of citations, and check whether the results have been debunked or questioned more recently.

## WRITING

### > Quotes

**Direct and partial quotes:** Should not be changed to alter their meaning or context. Use all quotes in the correct context.

**Quotes from the same interviewee, but provided to another publication:** Should be attributed correctly to avoid misleading that they come from Tuber's interviews.

### **Paraphrasing quotes:**

If a quotation is too long, has grammar flaws, or lacks clarity, the writer must be able to paraphrase in a way that is completely true to the original quote. If a quote's meaning is too murky to be paraphrased accurately, it should not be used.

- **Do not invent quotes** for any interviewees – we do not write press releases.
- Use square brackets to show edits, or paraphrase entirely if there are major changes. Do not paraphrase quotes and write them as direct speech/quotes.
- Unmarked edits for minor grammatical mistakes are acceptable, if the quote is used for factual information (and not for colour).

### > Anonymous sources

Only acceptable if the identity of the source is disclosed to the editor, can be traced, and the use of anonymous quotes has been agreed beforehand with the source and editor.

### > Statistics

**Put statistics in context;** a number used on its own is rarely meaningful.

Weigh and interpret statistics to help readers to judge their importance. Are the results statistically significant or due to chance? Consider if a statistically significant figure is of practical significance to readers.

## WRITING STYLE

Write sensibly with a balance: avoid sensationalising or using over-the-top prose, but there is also no need to self-censor and write without personality.

## PLAGIARISM

**Integrity:** Do not pass off the work of others as your own. Except for generally accepted facts, give the appropriate credit to the source when reporting and doing research.

**Press releases:** Do not lift text wholesale from press releases or from official information sources such as gov.sg websites. Writers should rewrite all information significantly using original language and phrasing.

**Transferring mistakes:** Lifting and copying text wholesale increases the risk that you repeat factual mistakes made by others, or perpetuate out-dated information.

**Copyright issues:** Plagiarising others' work puts you and the organisation at the risk of breaching others' copyright.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS and FULL DISCLOSURE**

**Interview sources:** Personal relationships that could influence editorial coverage should be disclosed to the editors and to the reader.

## **BYLINES**

**Bylines will be carried only** on writing that is substantially the work of the credited writer. If the article contains a significant amount of agency copy, then the agency will be credited.

## **REFERENCES / FURTHER READING:**

- Associated Press: <https://www.ap.org/about/our-story/news-values>
- ASME: <http://www.magazine.org/asme/editorial-guidelines>
- The BBC on reporting statistics: <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/guidelines/editorialguidelines/pdfs/ReportingStatistics.pdf>
- The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/info/2015/aug/05/the-guardians-editorial-code>