

Attribution & Quotes

Fundamentals of Journalism - JR 102
Emerson College - Fall 2012

Attribution

Attribution

- Giving credit to the source of the information or quote.
- ALL quotes need attribution directly attached to them.
- Most information needs attribution.
- Information that can be independently verified does not need attribution.
 - But make sure that you independently verify it yourself before you put it in your story.

Attribution

- When/why you need to attribute:
 - Opinion
 - Informing readers
 - Protecting newsmakers (subject)
 - Protecting journalist (yourself)
 - Adding credibility

Opinion

- Any opinion in a story must be attributed.
 - Journalists **do not** have opinions in their stories. Columnists do.
- Assertions without attribution are either opinion or speculation.
 - This includes thoughts, hopes, emotion, generalizations.

Informing Readers

- Transparency.
 - Readers should have an idea of where the information is coming from.
 - Readers can determine if the source is believable/credible.
- Also shows the scope of the reporting the journalist has done.
- Especially important when facts might not be nailed down/specific.
 - Let's the reader know where the information came from/gives some context.

Protecting Newsmakers

- Controversial information must be attributed to protect everyone involved.
 - Especially important regarding in allegations or crimes.
- Do NOT convict.
 - Run into issues of libel/defamation
 - You do not what your outlets sued because of something you put out there and did not attribute.
- People are arrested on “charges of,” for “allegedly,” suspicion
 - Also, once people are convicted, they are “convicted” and were found guilty.
 - i.e. convicted murder
 - i.e. He was found guilty of the murder of his neighbor.

Protecting Journalists

- One of the biggest - if not biggest reasons - you attribute.
 - To protect yourself.
- Make clear opinion/point of view is coming for a source, that it is not the reporter
- If you didn't see something, make sure your source who did.
- Make sure you source data/facts that can't be independently verified.

Protecting Journalists

- CYA: Cover Your Ass
 - Anything that runs under your byline is being reported by you.
 - Make sure you're sourcing where you're getting this information.
 - It's inevitable/acceptable to (unintentionally) report sourced information given by someone else that's incorrect
 - But if you don't attribute the source of that information, you're the source of incorrect information.
 - That will hurt your credibility.

Adding Credibility

- Attribution from experts and/or multiple sources that you have been thorough in your reporting.
 - That the journalist has looked to get the whole story.
- Information attributed to experts can carry more weight.
 - More credible sources=more credible story.

Guidelines

- Don't overattribute.
 - Some facts can be established. Those don't need attribution.
 - If you actually see it with your own eyes, your byline will establish you as the source.
- The more controversial, the more you want to attribute.

Guidelines

- Data/numbers likely to change should be sourced. Numbers unlikely to change (final figures) don't need to be - as long as you've verified.
- One attribution per fact is enough.
 - Something HIGHLY controversial might warrant double confirmation, but 99.9 percent of the time single attribution in the story is sufficient.
 - That doesn't mean you don't get the information verified by more than one person in your reporting process.

Indirect Attribution

- If you've already established a source, you can use indirect attribution for the sake of being concise.
 - “was identified,” “was reported,” “was scheduled.”
 - Be mindful allegedly, apparently, reportedly
 - Try to phrase with more direct attribution when possible.
- Allegedly only refers to crime.

Placement

- Attribution can be at the beginning, middle or end of information.
 - Avoid in middle as it can break up flow.
 - Exception: Quotes
- Strongest at the beginning because it immediately alerts reads to the source.
 - Exception: In the lede, when you want to start with who/what.
- Attribution must come at the beginning if you're switching sources.
 - This makes your reader completely aware of where/who information is coming from.

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Quotes

Quotes

- Quotes are exactly what a person said.
- Getting someone's "voice" into a story involves quoting them.
- Indicated by quotation marks.
- ALL quotes need attribution directly attached to them.
- Quotes should be attributed using **SAID**.
 - Occasionally acceptable, recalled.

Quotes

- More often than not, what a person says can be paraphrased and written more concisely by the writer.
- Quotes should say something unique.
- Quotes should be concise. One to two sentences
 - With everything, rare exceptions.
 - As rule, don't quote chunks of text.
 - Use news judgment to select the best part of the quote.

Direct Quotes

- Quotes at least one sentence long.
- Should be used when speaker's exact words are worth repeating -- AND relevant to your story.

Direct Quotes

- Colorful Statements
- Subjective Comments
- Eyewitness Reports
- Expert Knowledge
- Important Statements

* These are times when you might use direct quotes. It does not mean you use a direct quote every time.

Colorful Statements

- Unique quotes that jump out at the reader.
 - ORIGINAL
- Better than anything the writer could have said.
- Can often reflect and/or elicit emotion
 - Humorous, moving, sad, tragic, angry

Subjective Comments

- Goes back to attributing opinion.
 - The journalist should present information in a non-biased way.
 - That doesn't mean you won't have people presenting biased opinions in your piece.
 - But when you do, you want to make clear that is *their* opinions.
- When including subjective information, quotes can be best because the reader cannot confuse it as the writer's opinion.

Eyewitness Reports

- They were there and saw it, you didn't.
- Good to include the actual voice of a witness/spectator.
- However, much of what a witness tells you will end up paraphrased (or not used).

Expert Knowledge

- Your subject may know more about the story/topic than you do.
 - When this is the case, allow him/her a voice in the story.
- Expert can be defined as an “expert in X field” or as someone who simply has more knowledge regarding your story than you do.

Important Statements

- From the book:
 - The views of some people ... are so important that readers deserve to know exactly what such persons have to say about certain issues.
- Here “some people” refers to VERY high level people and/or people whose perspective is of the utmost importance to your story.

Important Statements

- In these cases, you again will largely paraphrase, but will use a quote or two from these people even if it is not a stellar quote.
 - The purpose of this is to get that person's voice in your story.
- A related instance is if you personally interviewed an extremely high-profile person and want to get that voice in there.

Partial Quotes

- In most cases, if the person didn't say something strong enough to warrant a direct quote, don't quote them.
 - Partial quotes are **not acceptable** because you didn't get the whole direct quote.
- Partial quotes may be acceptable when:
 - The rest of the sentence is weak, but a small part is compelling.
 - Using key words or charged language
 - With a lede.
 - Again, you should be avoiding quote ledes at all costs.

Paraphrasing

- Quotes should be an exception, not a rule as far as what makes up your story.
- You're the writer. You should be doing most of the writing.
- Paraphrase what people tell you, the information you get, etc.
 - You still need to attribute.
 - You can likely say things more concise.

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrase when...
 - The speaker doesn't say anything compelling.
 - You can say it better/stronger/clearer
 - Usually the case
 - “Flat dull quotes are worse than no quotes at all.”
 - Complex explanations.
 - Make them easier to understand for your readers.

Format

- The format for quotes is as follows.
 - “This is what your person tells you,” Person said.
 - “This is the first sentence,” Person said. “This is the second.”
- Attribution comes at the end of the first sentence or first part in a compound sentence.
- Speakers name comes before said unless he/she has a lengthy title/descriptor necessary.

Format

- Quotes get their own grafs.
- First sentence ends like this:
 - ,” Person said.
- There is **ALWAYS** a period after said.
 - No comma after said.

Formats to Avoid

- The book uses an example with a colon :
 - That is not standard practice. You should not use this format.
- The book uses an example starting with
 - He said, “Quote.”
 - You should not use this as a standard format.

Formats to Avoid

- Do not stack quotes for different sources on top of each other.
 - “I hate pizza,” Jones said.
 - “I love peanut butter sandwiches,” Smith said.

- Use transitional sentences to set up next quote.

“I hate pizza,” Jones said.

Smith said, “I love peanut butter sandwiches.”

- **NOT ACCEPTABLE**

“I hate pizza,” Jones said.

But not everyone is adverse to the takeout staple.

“Pizza’s my favorite food,” Smith said.

Transitional Sentences

- Transitional sentences and/or grafs, transition your readers from one idea/quote to another.
 - So it's not jarring for your reader.
 - You want your writing to flow.
- Transitional sentences and the quotes follow may express similar ideas, but they should not say the same thing.
 - “I hate pizza,” Jones said.
 - But not everyone is adverse to the takeout staple.
 - “Pizza's my favorite food,” Smith said.
 - Transitional grafs that wouldn't work.
 - But pizza is some people's favorite food.

More on Quotes

- If you are changing voices/source of quotes, that must be made clear before the quote starts.
 - Otherwise, readers will think Person 1 is still speaking.
- Sources quoted must have been previously introduced or be introduced following the first sentence of the quote.

Length

- Quotes should ideally be 1-2 sentences.
 - Rarely more than three.
 - Use news judgment to pick the best part of the quote.
- If quotes are longer, attribution needed one in each graf.
 - When you have a quote, that's more than a graf, you do not close the quote at the end of the first graf.
 - Example,

“Tuesday was the first day of school,” Ortiz said. “That is the day we bought our books. It’s also the day we were assigned out seats.
[STILL A HARD RETURN HERE.]
“Then on Wednesday, we had lunch in the cafeteria for the first time,” Ortiz added.

Chorus

- Only one person can say a quote.
- You can include some descriptions for the purposes of color,
 “XXXXXX,” protesters shouted.

Ethics

- NEVER invent quotes.
 - Find someone to say it or it doesn't get in there.
- If you miss part of the quote, don't make any part of it up.
 - Paraphrase and do a better job next time.
- Remain true to the speaker's context/meaning.

Ethics/Editing

- Minor changes for grammar are generally accepted.
- When you make more than a MINOR grammatical change, you must indicate this by using brackets.
 - Usually this is only done when you add a word/words for context/clarity, almost always replacing a preposition.
- Almost always you will take out “throwaway words.”
 - Well, you know, like, um.
- When cutting words (beyond throwaway terms), use ellipsis so that is apparent that a deletion has been made.
 - Make sure that deletion does not change the context of the words.

Ethics/Editing

- Make sure that you do not drop any words that could significantly impact what the person that you are quoting is saying.
 - Example:
 - She said she did not take the man's wallet.
 - She said she did take the man's wallet.