

# SPLC MEDIA LAW PRESENTATION: LIBEL LAW

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[Note to Presenter: The notes that follow work as either a presentation script or as preparatory material for the presenter. If you're reading the notes as a script and allow for moderate discussion, the full presentation should last about 45 minutes.]

# Libel Law for High School Student Journalists

## An introduction to libel law for high school student journalists and their advisers

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This presentation provides a brief and basic overview of libel law. Allowing for a few questions or comments along the way, it should last about 45 minutes and is designed to help you identify and avoid some of the most common libel traps.

## Student Press Law Center

Provides free legal help and information on media law issues to student journalists and their advisers

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This presentation will not make you a libel law expert. What it will do, we hope, is help you make more informed decisions and give you a better sense of when you might have a problem that requires outside assistance. For those cases, you may want to keep the contact information for the Student Press Law Center handy. The SPLC is a nonprofit organization based just outside Washington, D.C., that since 1974 has provided free legal help and information to student journalists and their advisers on a variety of media law issues. Much more information about the topics we'll address today is available on the SPLC Web site and in various publications produced by the Center. In addition, "live" help is generally available from the SPLC staff Monday through Friday.

Well, there is a lot to cover, so let's get started.

# Libel Law

When good words go bad

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Libel is a topic that many journalists — be they student or commercial journalists — find complicated. While the law *can* get complicated for lawyers and judges trying to sort out the details *after* a libel lawsuit is filed, understanding the basics of libel — which is generally enough to keep most journalists out of legal hot water — is not especially difficult.

*“Sticks and stones can break your  
bones, but words can never hurt you.”*

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Whether conveying simple, straightforward information or urging others to action, words matter deeply. And when used carelessly, words — despite what the famous nursery rhyme says — can cause harm.

## Indiana Supreme Court Will Not Review \$235,000 Libel Verdict Against Local Paper

On July 20th, the Supreme Court of Indiana refused to review a \$235,000 jury award in favor of Clinton, Indiana Mayor Ron Shepard against the *The Daily Clintonian* and its publisher, George "Sonny" Carey, awarding \$235,000 in damages.

[Shepard] of the crime of abuse of office," the court quickly dismissed Carey's assertion that the advertisement had not in fact accused Shepard of a crime. The Court then recounted Carey's testimony on redirect:

## Illinois college trustee wins libel lawsuit

Jury awards \$400,000 verdict for column on college land deal

A jury awarded a South Suburban College trustee \$400,000 last week after he sued v-defunct Southland Community Newspaper for libel after it published a front alleging that SCC sold 50 acres of property to a developer in a closed bid-

**\$3 million libel verdict against Delaware newspaper upheld**  
*State high court rejects newspaper's legal arguments in case involving disputed surgery advice*  
*By Jon Doe, staff writer*  
*The state Supreme Court yesterday upheld an almost \$3 million jury verdict against The (Wilmington) News Journal, finding that the determination on liability was supported by the facts presented to the jury.*

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And when a journalist's inaccurate words cause harm, there can be consequences. Sometimes serious consequences. Each year, libel lawsuits cost news media organizations dollars, hours of extra work and big, big headaches.

Libel law allows those who have been injured by false and damaging statement published about them to sue for money damages.

And while libel lawsuits against student journalists are, thankfully, very rare, they are certainly possible.

Fortunately, there are a number of fairly straightforward things you can do to avoid being successfully sued for libel. And we'll talk about many of those today.

## Libel:

### *An Oversimplified Definition*

**Publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation**

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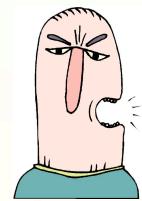
So, what is libel?

Here is a basic definition: Libel is the publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation.

# Defamation

**Libel:**

**Printed Defamation**  
**(More permanent)**



**Slander:**

**Spoken Defamation**  
**(More fleeting)**

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Together, libel and slander make up the larger area of law known as defamation.

The basics of libel and slander are essentially the same. A communication is defamatory if it tends to harm the reputation of another in the eyes of his or her community. If the defamatory communication takes the form of a written, printed or more permanent statement — such as statements published in a newspaper, yearbook or on a Website — it will be considered libelous. If the defamatory communication is a spoken, more fleeting statement — such as would occur during an oral argument or conversation — it is treated as slander.

Note, however, that defamatory statements made during a television or radio broadcast usually qualify as libel because, like writings, they have a broader, longer exposure than the fleeting spoken word that typifies slander.

**“Principal Jones stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer.”**



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Here is a simple example of libelous statement: If you publish a story that says, “Principal Jones stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer,” you’d better be right. If you’re wrong, you may have seriously harmed — libeled — Principal Jones’ reputation. Not too hard to understand, right? But we need to dig a bit deeper.

## Libel: *An Oversimplified Definition*

**Publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation**

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Again, libel is the publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation.

Within this one-line definition, however, are at least five things that the person suing — in our example, Principal Jones — must typically show before he can successfully sue for libel.

Let's take a quick look at each of them.

**Libel: Publication** of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation

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The first thing the person suing must show is that the libelous statement has been published.

That's usually pretty straightforward.

## Publication: broadly defined

- Articles
- Headlines
- Photo captions
- In-house advertisements
- Promotional material
- Cartoons

It's important to understand, however, that a published statement can occur almost anywhere. News articles are common sources of libel. But libelous statements can also appear in headlines, photo captions, restaurant reviews, promotional material and cartoons. Even a reporter's story drafts can be considered "published" if they are shared with sources or others not on the publication's staff.

## Libel Law MythBuster #1

You are not responsible for published statements or material made or created by others

**False:** In print-based media, you are responsible for *everything* you publish, even where it comes from a third-party.

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One thing that many journalists don't understand — at least until it's too late — is that a newspaper or other print-based publication is responsible for republishing libelous statements made by others.

Putting quotes around a libelous statement made by someone else or reprinting a libelous column or advertisement submitted by a third party will land you in legal hot water just the same as if you had said or written the libelous statement yourself.

## Publication: broadly defined

- Articles
- Headlines
- Photo captions
- In-house advertisements
- Promotional material
- Cartoons
- Letters to the editor
- Senior wills and epitaphs
- Quotes
- Guest columns
- Editorials
- Classified ads

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Material attributed to someone else that could contain potentially libelous “fact” statements — such as letters to the editor, senior wills or quotes in yearbooks, guest columns or editorials and classified ads — must be verified and should not be published unless you’re convinced their facts are accurate.

## Libel: Publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms **someone's** reputation

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In addition to showing that the statement was published, a person suing must also show that he or she has been individually identified. If a person is not identified, he or she cannot successfully claim their reputation has been damaged.

In many cases, identification is pretty easy to determine. If a person is named, he or she will almost certainly meet the “identification” requirement.

In other cases, however, it may not be so simple.

## Libel Law MythBuster #2

You have not identified a person if you don't use their name

**False:** You can identify a person by description

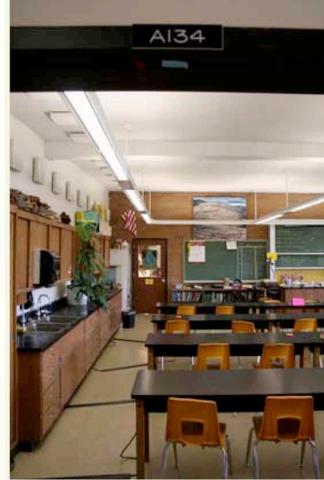
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While using a pseudonym or hiding or disguising the identity of the subject of a highly sensitive story can help you avoid libel, it must be done carefully. Precautions must be taken to ensure that the subject is disguised enough so that no one can reasonably make an accurate identification based on the information you provide even where the name is not used.

You must also be careful to ensure that the “disguised” subject does not misidentify someone else to whom you never intended to refer.

## Identification

Too much information — in text or photos — can inadvertently identify a “disguised” subject



staff photo  
A CHS student, who asked that her name be withheld, reported that as she was leaving class, her teacher secretly pinched her from behind and gave her a wink, which she said really “creeped” her out.

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For instance, even if a person isn’t named, he or she might be identified by other details included in the story or photos that accompany it.

In this example, the caption — which describes the subject only as a Central High School “teacher” — contains nothing that would single out or identify a specific teacher. However, the photo is of a particular teacher’s classroom — and even includes the room number — something that obviously would identify the teacher who works there.

## Identification



staff photo

**This student, who asked that her identity not be revealed, claims that one of her teachers this semester asked if she would “like to party” with him.**

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Likewise, a subject might be identified by a detailed description of their unique political or religious beliefs, place of birth, dress, unusual skills or hobbies, identification of family members or — as here — a photo that includes a unique physical characteristic, such as a tattoo.

## Identification

**“The top official at Central High School is being investigated for stealing a school bus and using it for a family vacation this summer.”**



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Job titles or job descriptions can also identify an individual. In our bus example, for instance, a story that says, “The top official at Central High School is being investigated for stealing a school bus,” still clearly identifies the principal.

## Identification

“A top official at Central High School is being investigated for stealing a school bus and using it for a family vacation this summer.”

## Group Libel



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Another problem you can have when attempting to disguise a subject’s identity is that you may end up identifying or targeting individuals to whom you never intended to refer.

For example, if you change the statement from “*the* top official at Central High School” to the more obscure “*a* top official at Central High School” you have made it somewhat less likely that Principal Jones will be singled out. Unfortunately, however, you’ve also made it more likely that readers might now also look at the school’s assistant principals, counselors and other top school leaders as possible bus thieves.

In such cases, if the group to whom your statement refers is small enough, individual members of that group — in this case, anyone who might be considered a “top” Central High School official — might be able to successfully claim their personal reputations have been harmed.

## Identification

“School district officials are investigating a claim that a district employee stole a school bus over the summer and used it for a family vacation.”



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On the other hand, the much more vague statement, “School district officials are investigating a claim that *a district employee* stole a school bus over the summer...” would probably not identify Principal Jones. And assuming that the number of district employees is large enough — say, more than about 25 or 30 — it is very unlikely that any other district employees could claim that their individual reputations have been seriously harmed by such a broad statement.

Again, if there is no “identification,” a person cannot successfully sue for libel even if he or she believes that they are the one being targeted by a false accusation.

**Libel:** Publication of a **false** statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation

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On to the third part of the definition of libel — and it's very clear. Only false statements of fact can be libelous.

# Truth: An Absolute Defense

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There aren't too many black and white rules in the law, but this is one of them: Truth is an absolute defense to a libel claim.

## The Catch:

**Knowing something is true and proving it's true can be two different things**

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Unfortunately, knowing something is true and being able to prove in court that it's true are not *always* the same thing.

For example, even though you might *know* that Principal Jones stole a bus, do you have sufficient, reliable evidence — for example, verifiable documents, police reports, photographs, trustworthy, unbiased witnesses, a confession, etc. — to back your claim if Principal Jones denies it?

If you don't, you may not be able to rely on a truth defense to get you out of a libel jam.

In many cases, when writing about matters of public concern, the burden is on the person suing to show that the statements in question are false. But it is always wise to think about how you would prove the accuracy of the statements you publish if you were forced to do so.

**“Principal Jones stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer. He apologized to the school board Wednesday night, according to a written statement released today by school board president Eve Adams.”**



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On the other hand, if you know something is true — and you *can* prove it — you can never be successfully sued for libel no matter how much it might damage a person’s reputation or how angry they might be.

If Principal Jones stole a school bus and you can prove it — for example, by documenting his confession to the school board — you can report that fact even though Principal Jones’ reputation will certainly suffer.

A person has no right to a better reputation than they have earned.

## Libel: Publication of a false **statement of fact** that seriously harms someone's reputation

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Next, the person suing must show that the libelous statement is an assertion of fact, not opinion.

If a statement contains only opinion, it cannot be libelous. As the Supreme Court has said “there is no such thing as a false idea.” Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish fact from opinion.

In our example involving Principal Jones, it is easy to tell that the statement is an assertion of fact. For one thing, facts are objective; they are either true or false. Either he unlawfully took the bus or he didn’t.

**CHS SoundOff**

*'I think Mr. Jones is a lousy principal.'*  
- Jessica Ally, '09

**“Pure”  
Statements of Opinion  
CANNOT be Libelous**

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However, if a student simply commented, “I think Mr. Jones is a lousy principal,” the statement — which can’t really be proven true or false — would be pure opinion and protected from a successful libel lawsuit.

## “Mixed” Statements Of Fact and Opinion CAN be Libelous

### CHS SoundOff



*“I think Mr. Jones is a lousy principal because he stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer.”*

-Josh Inn, ‘10

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Some statements, however, can contain both opinion and fact. For example, a statement made by another student that “I think Mr. Jones is a lousy principal because he stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer,” would be a mixed statement of fact and opinion that could support a libel claim if Jones didn’t actually steal a bus.

## Libel Law MythBuster #3

As long as you preface your statement with a qualifier such as “In my opinion,” or “allegedly,” or “I think,” you cannot be successfully sued for libel.

**False:** While such qualifiers have their place, there are no “magic words” that will always shield you from liability.

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How about this? As long as you preface your statement with a qualifier such as “In my opinion,” or “allegedly,” or “I think,” you cannot be successfully sued for libel. True or false?

That’s false. Simply prefacing a factual statement with “I think” or “I believe” or even “allegedly” — such as, “In my opinion, Principal Jones stole a school bus this summer” — won’t automatically prevent a successful libel lawsuit if the underlying claim is untrue and reasonable readers perceive your statements as assertions of fact.

Note also that simply publishing a story or column on the “Editorial” page or labeling it an “Opinion” will not protect you from a libel claim if it contains untrue factual assertions.

## Satire, Jokes and Cartoons



APRIL

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A close cousin of opinion is satire and humor. The publication of April Fool's issues, spoof articles and other humorous or satirical material occasionally prompts threats of libel or other lawsuits by individuals who find themselves the target of a student publication's ridicule.

Generally, it is not a defense to a libel suit to claim that you were "just trying to be funny" or meant it "only as a joke." Humor is not necessarily the same as "opinion" and does not enjoy blanket protection from lawsuits.

## Satire, Jokes and Cartoons



### The Test:

**Would a reasonable person understand  
that the statement is not intended to be  
taken seriously?**

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However, if a statement cannot reasonably be interpreted by readers to be one of express or implied fact, it cannot be libelous. In other words, as long as readers understand that a joke issue or cartoon, for example, is not meant to be taken seriously, its subject cannot successfully sue for libel.

## Asst. principal and Mr. Cole wed in secret ceremony last month

*Source says principal caught teacher and AP violating 'Public Display of Affection Policy' in teachers' lounge last week*

Cupid's arrows struck two of CHS's favorite staff members last month when Assistant Principal Mary Smith and science teacher Michael Cole tied the knot at a secret ceremony in Las Vegas, according to a source close to the couple.

Rumors have long circulated among students and staff at CHS that the two were an "item." Students in Cole's class reported see-

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Subtle humor can be dangerous. For example, while a "spoof" column reporting the secret wedding and a clandestine encounter between a teacher and school official might be funny to those who know it's a joke, it might also be fairly believable to those who don't — and possibly harm reputations.

To be safe, if you intend something as a joke, be sure that everyone will recognize it as such.

## Jones announces plans to hire Fuji Blimp, John Madden for next year's football season

*Some say principal's \$50 million plan to boost attendance goes too far; others say they would prefer Al Michaels to call play-by-play*

Principal Jones said last week that he is tired of declining attendance at Central High School football games and will take steps next year to shore up fan interest.

Jones laid out his five-point action plan during a press conference last week that featured Dallas Cowboys cheerleader Brooke Lynn Bridge and a full barbecue buffet for local football boosters.



Among the key points, Jones said he has negotiated a deal with the Fuji Company to fly their blimp over Memorial Stadium during home games and is talking with

Parody — Not to be taken seriously.

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Here is a spoof story, for example, that is unlikely to leave anyone guessing. A reasonable reader would quickly understand that neither the Fuji Blimp nor football announcer John Madden would agree to cover your school's high school football games next year. Still, the bogus news story effectively makes the point that school officials and others may be taking football a bit too seriously, which is the goal of effective satire.

In addition to outlandish facts and obvious jokes, parody issues should be clearly labeled as such. Inserting spoof columns between genuine news stories or editorials is only asking for trouble and can hurt the credibility of your publication as a place where readers can turn for reliable information. The Student Press Law Center advises against replacing one issue of your regular student newspaper with a parody or April Fool's Day issue because of the risk of confusion among readers. A better alternative: including a regular and clearly labeled humor or satire column in your newspaper or creating a separate publication devoted exclusively to humor.

While a prominent disclaimer (for example, "Parody — Not to be taken seriously") may not provide *absolute* protection from liability, it can be an important safeguard if it helps readers understand the statements are not intended to be read as factual.

The bottom line: good satire is difficult and bad satire is just embarrassing.

**Libel:** Publication of a false statement of fact that **seriously harms** someone's **reputation**

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Next up: In order to successfully sue for libel, the person suing must also show that the false statement about them caused serious harm to their reputation. Being mildly offended or embarrassed is not enough.



## Red Flag Statements

- Accusations of illegal conduct or involvement with the criminal justice system or criminals
- Charges of sexual misconduct or promiscuity
- Statements that attack a person's honesty or integrity

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Some statements about a person — “Red Flag Statements” — if false — will almost always be sufficiently harmful to a person’s reputation to support a libel claim.

For example, if you publish a statement that accuses a person of having committed a crime — such as stealing a school bus — your facts must be accurate because such an accusation will almost always seriously harm a person’s reputation.

The same goes for accusing a person of serious sexual misconduct or promiscuity or publishing a story that claims or implies a person is lying.



## Red Flag Statements

- Negative statements about grades or academic ability
- Statements of racial, religious or ethnic bigotry
- Charges that question a person's financial stability, creditworthiness or economic status
- Statements that negatively affect a person's ability to engage in his business, trade or profession

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Other “red flag” categories include accusing a person of serious academic failure, racial or religious bigotry or having serious money problems.

One broad and especially troublesome area are stories that claim a person is professionally incompetent or has engaged in serious misconduct on the job. For example, a story that claims a specific administrator comes to school smelling of alcohol or that alleges a teacher failed his licensing exam could cast serious doubt on their ability to properly perform their jobs and are certainly charges that could do substantial damage to their reputations.

While journalists can and should cover these topics if they determine they are newsworthy, they must do everything they can to ensure the information is reported fairly and accurately.

**Libel:** Publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone's reputation

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Once it's shown that a statement: (1) has been published, (2) identifies a specific individual, (3) is false, (4) asserts a fact and (5) causes serious harm to a reputation, the person claiming libel must still show one more thing when suing in an American court.

## Fault Required



*N.Y. Times v. Sullivan (1964)*

The First Amendment requires that in order for media defendants to be held responsible for libel, the person suing must show — at a minimum — that the reporter/editor acted unreasonably

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The U.S. Supreme Court has said that in order to successfully sue for libel, the First Amendment requires that the person suing must also show — at a minimum — that a journalist messed up, that he or she was somehow at fault.

In other words, before you can be successfully sued you still must have done something a reasonable reporter or editor would not have done *or* failed to do something a reasonable reporter or editor should have done. This remains the case even if the information you published later turns out to be false and harmful.

When writing about public officials or public figures, the person who claims he has been libeled may even have to show that you knew what you wrote was false or acted with reckless disregard for the truth. This is what the U.S. Supreme Court referred to in the 1964 case *New York Times v. Sullivan* as “actual malice.” (Note that this legal term does not have the same definition as our common usage of the word “malice.”)

## The Lesson:

If you always do what a reasonable reporter should do (and don't do what a reasonable reporter wouldn't do), you will never be successfully sued for libel

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But it's fair to say that if you always do what a reasonable reporter should do (and don't do what a reasonable reporter wouldn't do) you will never be *successfully* sued for libel.

So, of course, the obvious next question is: What does a reasonable reporter or editor do?

None of the following suggestions should come as big surprises.

## Acting Reasonably

- Use trustworthy sources — in quality and number
  - Evaluate your sources
  - Do not overstate their credibility

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For example, being a reasonable reporter means using good sources.

While it helps to have multiple sources confirm your story, keep in mind that one exceptionally credible source is generally worth more than a half-dozen semi-credible ones.

When interviewing a source, ask yourself if you think she's telling the truth. Does she have a reputation as a liar? Does she have any reason to harm the subject?

And if you are relying on statistical data or some other published report — particularly from Internet-based sources — you must first do your homework to establish the source's reliability.

## Acting Reasonably

- Take accurate notes
- Documents, documents, documents

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Of course, taking accurate notes as a reporter is the “Golden Oldie” for avoiding a libel problem. Record facts and interviews scrupulously, including who said what and when. If you know you are a weak note taker, invest in a tape recorder.

Also, whenever possible, a reasonable journalist will obtain documents to back up their reporting. For example, if your source tells you during an interview that she acquired her information from an internal memo, ask for a copy of the memo. And then read it to make sure that what your source told you jibes with what’s in it. Also, whenever possible, cite a public record as your source for information. In many cases, doing so fairly and accurately will protect you from liability even if it later turns out the information contained in the public record was wrong.

## Acting Reasonably

- Be rigorous in your choice of language
- Talk to all sides — including the subject

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Choose your words carefully. One forgotten or carelessly used word is all it takes to land you in court. This is especially true when covering crime stories. For example, if a person has only been “charged” with a crime, it would be inaccurate — and probably libelous — to report that he or she has been “convicted” of that crime.

You should also always give the subject of your story an opportunity to present his or her side. Not only does this give a story an essential element of fairness, it also provides you with an opportunity to catch — or at least confirm — parts of a story that may be subject to debate or question.

“According to police records, Tom Jones, a principal at Central High School, stole a school bus and used it for a family vacation this summer. Jones declined to comment.”



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For example, before publishing your story about Principal Jones, you should provide him with a chance to respond. Even if he refuses to comment, showing that you gave him an opportunity to do so goes a long way towards demonstrating that you acted reasonably.

## Acting Reasonably

- Report — don't “sell”
- Be open-minded
- Do the work required — or don't do the story

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Always remember that you are a reporter not a salesman. Get rid of the “bigger is better” mentality. Your football coach who can't account for \$1,000 of the team's budget does not need to be labeled “corrupt” or the “ring-leader of the largest financial scandal in school history.” “Two sources” is not “many sources” or “a number of sources” — it is “two sources.” And it is perfectly okay for a problem to just be a “problem” and not a “crisis.”

In the same way, your job is to accurately relate the facts of a story to your readers. Go into a story with an open mind and not just looking for information that supports any preconceived version of the story that you might have. Your job is to find and report the facts as they exist. Do not be content with anything less. Good reporting is hard work. Be prepared to invest the time and energy necessary to get the story right. No excuses. If you're not willing or can't do so, leave the story for someone else. The law is not kind to lazy reporters.

## Acting Reasonably

- Develop — and stick to — an effective and proven editing policy
- Never publish a story if **you** doubt its truth

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Careful editing is essential for catching mistakes. Prior to publication, allow others to look at your story and offer their criticisms or suggestions. After working hours on a story, “fresh eyes” are essential for catching gaps, inconsistencies, confusing phrases, mistaken attributions and all of the other small traps that are hidden to one who has already read the copy twenty times. And don’t forget to look at headlines, photo captions, teasers and graphics. Do they make sense? Are they fair, accurate and not misleading? This is also the time to talk with your adviser, an attorney, the Student Press Law Center or someone else well-versed in media law if you have specific questions about the legality of a story.

Finally, a golden rule of journalism — and one that will generally keep you out of legal hot water — is to report only what you know and explain to your readers how you know it. Publishing a story when you have significant doubts about its accuracy is a recipe for libel disaster. If you can prove that what you published is the truth, fault will never even be an issue in a libel lawsuit.

## Post-Publication

- Respond to all complaints in a timely and courteous fashion
- Seek legal help when necessary

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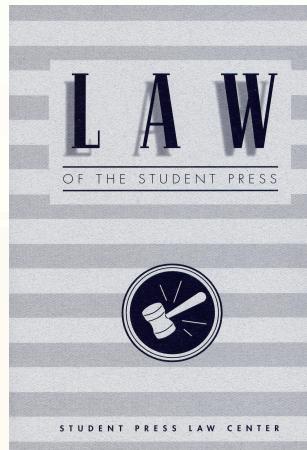
Unfortunately, while the advice just given should help you avoid most libel problems, it is still no guarantee that those you cover will be happy with your reporting.

If the subject of a story complains, treat him with respect. Studies have shown that a person who perceives that he or she has been treated rudely or arrogantly by a media organization is far more likely to sue than one who believes that they have been treated fairly. Select one person — preferably a “people person” — to whom all complaints should be referred. While that person should not admit fault or provide information about specific newsgathering practices, he or she should listen carefully to the caller’s complaints, promise to investigate the matter — and then do so. Where a correction or retraction is appropriate, publish it in a timely fashion.

Finally, if a libel suit is threatened, seek legal advice. Select an attorney with media law experience and an understanding of the role of the press in a free society. The Student Press Law Center can help as well.

## Other Student Media Law Resources

Student media newsroom  
“Must Have” resource



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Well, that's it.

Hopefully, you now feel a little more confident in being able to recognize and safely navigate some of the most common libel traps for student media. Because if you can spot a potential problem, you can always seek additional help in avoiding or fixing it.

One of the most important resources for additional help is the Student Press Law Center's book, *Law of the Student Press*, which every student newsroom in the country should have on hand. The book includes much more information about libel — and many, many other media law topics. It is the only media law book available geared specifically to student journalists and the unique problems they face.

Purchase information is available on the SPLC Web site.

## Other Student Media Law Resources

Student media newsroom  
“Helpful” resources



VIRTUAL LAWYER



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Other helpful resources — all of which are free and online — include SPLC News Flashes (which can be sent to your e-mail account or read on the Web site), the SPLC’s magazine, the *SPLC Report*, and *News Media and the Law*, a magazine published by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. All of these can help you stay up to date on the very latest developments affecting America’s student and professional news media.

Finally, as noted earlier, the SPLC Web site is packed full of resources and information on student press law issues. Of particular interest is the site’s Virtual Lawyer, which is available at any time and ready to conduct a short, online interview to answer your questions and help get you pointed in the right direction.

On behalf of the Student Press Law Center and the Newspaper Association of America Foundation, thank you for taking the time to watch this presentation. We hope you have found it helpful. Enjoy your time as a student journalist — and good luck!

Seek help when you need it!

Student Press Law Center

[www.splc.org](http://www.splc.org)

(703) 807-1904

Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day the SPLC closes at 4:30 p.m. on Fridays

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While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in *Libel Law for High School Student Journalists* it provides *general guidance and information only*. It is neither intended nor represented as a substitute for obtaining case-specific advice from a licensed and experienced media law attorney in your state.

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