

Sunday Times Staff Policy Guide

About the Sunday Times

- [Policy on gifts and freebies](#)
- [Code of Conduct on dealing with issues of race, religion and cultural difference](#)
- [Accuracy check](#)
- [Additional check: race checklist](#)

Sunday Times Staff Policy Guide Johannesburg, South Africa

About the Sunday Times

The Sunday Times is South Africa's biggest-selling newspaper. It is published in four centres in the country and is widely regarded as one of Africa's most influential newspapers. Since its founding in 1906 in the gold-mining city of Johannesburg the paper has been a mirror of the turbulent changes in Africa as country after country gained independence - sometimes after long and bloody battle? from their colonial rulers.

At home the Sunday Times found itself in a country ruled by the all-white National Party Government which, with its apartheid policies, kept the races apart and introduced draconian laws which muzzled the press and led to the jailing of editors and journalists. It was only with the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and democratic elections in 1994 that the media was once again free to report. Today, the press in South Africa, is among the freest in the world.

Unshackled and savouring its new-found freedom the Sunday Times wasted little time in exposing corruption, which threatens the hardwon freedom of the young democracy. These exposes brought the paper's intrepid reporters award after award. The paper also launched its own initiatives to uplift and support the new government's health and educational programmes, like the educational supplement readRIGHT, which was the winner of the World Association of Newspapers' Young Reader Prize in 1999.

The newspapers' giant characters Read and Right have visited more than 1 000 schools promoting the power of reading.

Ironically, the Sunday Times owes its early success to an old law which ensured that God-fearing South Africans did little else but attend their own segregated churches on Sunday. Since Sunday sport, entertainment and shopping were prohibited South Africans had little left to do except to curl up in bed with the Sunday Times.

The paper was launched by the Sunday Times Syndicate Ltd, which consisted of the paper's editor, George Kingswell, AV Lindberg and Ralph Ward Jackson. The main reason for launching the paper was to rescue the Rand Daily Mail (RDM), a daily newspaper, which was locked in a circulation war with the now defunct Transvaal Leader. The idea was that the Sunday Times would use the spare capacity on the RDM's press and pay for the privilege. In addition every reporter on the RDM was obliged to give one-sixth of their time to the Sunday Times.

With a full-time staff of only two, the paper was launched on 4 February 1906. Elsewhere in the world the first powered flight in Europe took place when Albertos Santos Dumont flew for 197 feet, at a height of 10 feet over the outskirts of Paris and San Francisco was hit by the most disastrous earthquake in America's history which killed over 1 000 people and left 250 000 homeless. The print order for the first edition of the Sunday Times was just over 10 000 but by 10am on Sunday it had sold out, and 5 000 extra copies had to be printed. Today the paper's print order stands in the region of 560 000 and the paper reaches several southern African countries and thousands of South Africans living abroad via its Internet web site.

As the country changed, so did the ownership of the Sunday Times. The paper is now owned by Johnnic Publishing, part of a black-controlled conglomerate which has interest in everything from mobile telephones to movie houses. The paper itself has also changed dramatically: it's newsrooms, senior staff, and editor now more closely reflect the multi-racial composition of the country. And today the paper truly lives up its slogan - carried on its masthead from the day of its birth: "The paper for the People". It was only with the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and democratic elections in 1994 that the media was once again free to report. Today, the press in South Africa is among the freest in the world.

- HOOSEN KOLIA

Policy on Gifts and Freebies

The basic policy of the Sunday Times is that **WE DO NOT ACCEPT ANYTHING FOR FREE**. We pay our own way, and we do not accept gifts, freebies, inducements, special offers, tickets, free trips, and so on that are not available to us as ordinary citizens.

Small gifts

The best option is not to accept a gift by courteously explaining our policy. However, where a small gift is given and the recipient feels it would be churlish to turn it down, it can be accepted, but it should be handed in to the Editor's secretary. No gifts should be kept by staff members - all gifts are to be handed in. They will be logged in a register held by the Editor's secretary and donated to a charity organisation or auctioned and the money donated to charity.

Staff members in bureaus should submit gifts to their bureau chiefs. Bureaus should ensure that these gifts are kept locked up and dispersed as per the Editor's instruction.

In certain cases, perishable goods will be distributed to staff, but this can be done only by the Editor or the Managing editor. A gift must be seen to be appropriate to the relationship concerned and accepted norms inherent in the department / publication. A gift should be an acknowledgement of good business relations and, by its nature, it should not be perceived as a bribe.

If you are offered a gift and feel embarrassed to return it, please advise whoever sent it to you that it is in no way an exchange for something favourable from the company, for example, placing an advertisement at no charge, an assurance that a story will be published or the unauthorised use of a company vehicle.

Tickets

Where season tickets are given to sports reporters for coverage purposes only, the sports editor should be notified. These will be listed in the Editor's register by the sports editor. All individual tickets to sports matches are to be paid for.

Movie reviewers can attend special press previews of movies, but all other tickets to cinemas will be paid for. Reviewers who have gold access cards issued by the cinemas groups but are not full-time staff can use them in their personal capacities, but this should be noted in the register. No full-time staff member is entitled to hold or use a cinema gold card or accept free tickets. All tickets for pop concerts, shows, theatre performances, and so on will be paid for. Media invitations to these shows can be accepted, but the tickets should always be paid for. In cases where reviewers are full-time staff members of the Sunday Times, the newspaper will pay for their partners to attend performances, but the staff members will not be paid for the reviews.

Staff members may accept invitations to sporting events and concerts from third parties who have bought tickets to the events, for example, Boland Bank can invite a financial journalist to the bank's private box at a cricket match or MTN can invite a journalist to attend a symphony concert. The journalist concerned must ensure that he/she is attending the event with his/her contact from the organisation to maintain these contacts. It is acceptable to take a partner along. This must be listed in the register (for example - April 27 2002: Adam Smith and partner accepted an invitation from Boland Bank to attend SA vs Pakistan cricket match at the Wanderers).

When a reviewer is a freelance writer, a partner will not be paid for by the Sunday Times, but the review will be paid for.

A gift should be an acknowledgement of good business relations and, by its nature, it should not be perceived as a bribe.

CDs, Tapes and Books

No CDs, music tapes, computer games, computer programs or books intended as promotions or for review purposes will be retained without payment. Where a book is reviewed, it can be retained by the reviewer. All books not reviewed will be handed to the Editor's secretary to be auctioned.

Freelancers

No freelance writer or contract worker is entitled to accept any gift or freebie that could in any way be seen as an inducement or likely to influence his/her work at the Sunday Times. Work by freelance writers or contract workers who accept gifts/freebies will not be used by the Sunday Times. Any media trip undertaken by a freelance or contract worker on behalf of the Sunday Times has to be cleared by the head of the department concerned. If a gift or free ticket is included, it will be noted in the register.

Freelance work

All freelance work has to be cleared by the head of department in writing. No staff member will be permitted to work for a rival publication.

Journalists may accept invitations to conferences, seminars, annual general meetings and exhibitions where the aim is to report on proceedings at the event. In the case of a commercial conference (where an entrance charge is waived for the journalist), this should be noted in the register (for example ? April 27 2002: Adam Smith accepted free entrance to the Law and Human Rights Conference from Systems Organisers).

We pay for meals at restaurants and do not accept free meals for reviews.

Where the Sunday Times has prearranged "space" - an office in Parliament or a media box at FNB Stadium with our own telephone line, this must be declared in the register annually.

Drinks and lunches with contacts are accepted as part of daily news-gathering and need not be declared. However, staff members should not continually accept free meals and drinks from one contact. Staff should be inviting contacts out for meals and drinks, which can be claimed on expense accounts.

In the case of motoring journalists, it is acceptable for a staff member to accept a car for test-drive purposes. These cars should not be kept for longer than three days. They must be returned with a full tank of petrol, for which the Sunday Times will pay.

It is unacceptable for a staff member to take a personal loan from an individual on whom that staff member may have to report or is involved with in a professional capacity.

Travel

Travel invitations should be directed at the publication department. It is up to the editor of LifeStyle to decide whether an invitation meets the criteria of this code of conduct. A trip is accepted on a clear understanding that there will be no exchange for something favourable for the company. No staff member may consistently accept an invitation from the same sponsor, client, business associate, and so on.

The gift may not take the form of a bribe. The trip must be appropriate to the objectives.

No staff member can accept any travel offer - free or reduced flights, accommodation or tours - on behalf of the Sunday Times. Travel offers will be considered only by the Editor or the editor of LifeStyle in consultation with the Editor for review purposes in the travel section. All trips accepted will be noted in the register. Where air tickets or special media flights have been arranged, these have to be authorised by the head of department and declared in the register (for example: Water Affairs has invited us to fly with the minister to the opening of a new scheme in a remote region on a Saturday, or: Department of Foreign Affairs arranges for journalists to accompany minister to Ghana for a state visit).

A trip is accepted on a clear understanding that there will be no exchange for something favourable for the company.

Stocks and shares

All staff members must inform the Editor of the names of any shares bought or investments

made. Anyone trading in shares must declare the names of the shares in which they traded at the end of every month. The amount traded need not be disclosed. At the end of every year, all staff have to declare the names of the shares and unit trusts in which they have holdings. Staff members with interests in businesses or whose spouses have interests in businesses must declare these to the Editor. Journalists may not accept offers of shares and stock options of any company prior to their listing on the stock exchange. They may not purchase any such shares below the market price prior to the listing.

Journalists may own stocks and shares of firms listed on the stock exchange and may report on their activities as long as the reports are accurate, fair and balanced. Journalists must declare any interest or ownership of shares they may have with companies or businesses affiliated with their news sources, which may result in a conflict of interest with the newspaper.

Lucky draws, etc

Journalists may not accept cash, cheques, shares or any valuables from sources of information, either directly or indirectly. Journalists may not participate in lucky draws or sweepstakes and receive prizes organised by sources of information. Journalists shall not use their positions to demand special discounts for goods and services or personal favours from sources. Invitations to meals or drinks or other kinds of entertainment with sources may be accepted with extreme caution and only if they are part of the legitimate news-gathering process. Journalists may not invite themselves to free meals or drinks or any other forms of entertainment.

Extracurricular Activities

Journalists may not serve as advisers to politicians, political parties, business executives, private companies, non-government organisations, civic action pressure groups, state enterprises or government agencies. However, journalists have the individual right to be members of any public service or civic action group or organisation and may report on their activities as long as the reports remain accurate, fair and balanced. Journalists may, but only with prior approval from their section editor and the Editor, become members of committees or subcommittees determining national policies which serve the public interest. However, their participation must be temporary.

Journalists may not invite themselves to free meals or drinks or any other forms of entertainment.

Conflict of Interest

Journalists may not work for business concerns in direct competition with the company. Journalists may not hold another full-time job. Any outside, paying work must be approved by the section editor and the Editor or, in his absence, the deputy editor. Any approved part-time or temporary work must not infringe on the company's resources or be disruptive to the journalist's responsibility to the company.

Intelligence Agencies

Any approach to journalists by intelligence agencies, local or foreign, should be immediately reported to the Editor. Journalists are forbidden to disclose any information pertaining to their work, the work of their colleagues or the day-to-day operations of the Sunday Times to any intelligence agency, operative or intelligence source.

Police Service

No information, other than that published in the paper, will be disclosed to any police officer without the permission of the Editor. No journalist will testify, or disclose the name of a source, without the permission of the Editor.

Ask if you are in doubt

The policy is intended to establish clear, ethical principles for the Sunday Times to ensure that our actions are always above reproach. If you have the slightest doubt, ask your head of department or the Editor. Any contravention of this Sunday Times policy could result in disciplinary action.

I have read and understood the attached Sunday Times policy document on freebies and gifts and commit myself to abiding by them.

SIGNATURE

NAME:.....

PLACE:

DATE:

Code of Conduct for Sunday Times staff in dealing with issues of race, religion and cultural difference

Introduction

The guidelines that follow address aspects of how we at the Sunday Times practise journalism - our treatment of the subjects of news stories, our responsibilities to our society and our responsibility for the effect of what we publish. It is important that we acknowledge that, while South Africa enjoys a democratic government, its past still lives with us, especially as far as race and racism are concerned.

We have to acknowledge, too, that South Africa is a multiracial and multicultural society, and we have to portray different practices and beliefs in a fair and honest manner in our reporting, gathering, editing and presentation of information.

Sunday Times staff

- Will act independently when reporting issues of race but will take note of sensitivities regarding race, or other issues, in their work;
- Will report on these issues where there is a demonstrable public interest; when race is the central issue of a story, racial identifications should be used only when they are important to readers' understanding of what has happened and why it has happened;
- Will not unjustifiably offend others in reporting on sensitive issues relating to race, religion or cultural difference;
- Will not use language or pictures that are offensive, reinforce stereotypes or fuel prejudice or xenophobia;
- Will actively seek diversity in sources, which should represent the entire community;

- Will be sensitive to cultural differences and values and will actively seek to ensure that reporting takes these considerations into account;
- Will not, in crime reporting, make mention of the race or religion of the victim or the alleged perpetrator unless that information is meaningful and in the public interest;
- Will uphold the newspaper's principals of fairness, especially when dealing with issues of race; and
- Will, in dealing with the public, be sensitive to cultural differences and not conduct themselves in any way that may unnecessarily offend.
- South Africa is a multiracial and multicultural society, and we have to portray different practices and beliefs in a fair and honest manner in our reporting, gathering, editing and presentation of information.

Extracts from the Press Ombudsman 's Code of Conduct

Preamble

The basic principle to be upheld is that the freedom of the press is indivisible from and subject to the same rights and duties as that of the individual and rests on the public's fundamental right to be informed and freely to receive and to disseminate opinions.

In considering complaints the Press Ombudsman and Appeal Panel will be guided by the following:

1. Reporting of News
 1. The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.
 2. News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without an intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:
 1. Distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;
 2. Material omissions; or
 3. Summarisation.
 3. Only what may reasonably be true having regard to the sources of the news may be presented as facts, and such facts shall be published fairly with due regard to context and importance. Where a report is not based on facts or is founded on opinions, allegation, rumour or supposition, it shall be presented in such manner as to indicate this clearly.
 4. Where there is reason to doubt the accuracy of a report and it is practicable to verify the accuracy thereof, it shall be verified. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of a report, this shall be mentioned in such report.
 5. A newspaper should usually seek the views of the subject of serious critical reportage in advance of publication; provided that this need not be done where the newspaper has reasonable grounds for believing that by doing so it would be prevented from publishing the report or where evidence might be destroyed or witnesses intimidated.
 6. A publication should make amends for publishing information or comment that is found to be harmfully inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, a retraction, correction of explanation.

7. Reports, photographs or sketches relative to matters involving indecency or obscenity shall be presented with due sensitivity towards the prevailing moral climate.
8. The identity of rape victims and other victims of sexual violence shall not be published without the consent of the victim.
9. News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless there is an overriding public interest.
10. In both news and comment, the press shall exercise exceptional care and consideration in matters involving the private lives and concerns bearing in mind that any right to privacy may be overridden by a legitimate public interest.
11. A newspaper has wide discretion in matters of taste but this does not justify lapses of taste so repugnant as to bring the freedom of the press into disrepute or be extremely offensive to the public.

News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless there is an overriding public interest of individuals.

2. Discrimination

A newspaper should not place gratuitous emphasis on the race, nationality, religion, colour, country of origin, gender, sexual preferences, marital status, political views or intellectual or physical disability of either individuals or groups, unless the fact is relevant.

3. Advocacy

A newspaper is justified in strongly advocating its own views on controversial topics provided that it treats its readers fairly by:

1. Making fact and opinion clearly distinguishable;
2. Not misrepresenting or suppressing relevant facts;
3. Not distorting the facts in text or headlines

4. Comment

1. The press shall be entitled to comment upon or criticise any actions or events of public importance provided such comments or criticisms are fairly and honestly made.
2. Comment by the press shall be presented in such manner that it appears clearly that it is comment, and shall be made on facts truly stated or fairly indicated and referred to.
3. Comment by the press shall be an honest expression of opinion, without malice or dishonest motives, and shall take fair account of all available facts which are material to the matter commented upon.

Comment by the press shall be an honest expression of opinion, without malice or dishonest motives, and shall take fair account of all available facts which are material to the matter commented upon.

5. Headlines, posters, pictures and captions

1. Headlines and captions to pictures shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the report or picture in question.
2. Posters shall not mislead the public and shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the reports in question.
3. Pictures shall not misrepresent or mislead nor be manipulated to do so.
6. Confidential sources
A newspaper has an obligation to protect confidential sources of information.
7. Payment for articles
No payment shall be made for feature articles to persons engaged in crime or other notorious misbehaviour, or to convicted persons or their associates, including family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and the payment is necessary for this to be done.
8. Violence

Due care and responsibility shall be exercised by the press with regard to the presentation of brutality, violence and atrocities.

Sunday Times Accuracy Check

REPORTER:

NEWS EDITOR:

CHECKER:

SLUG:

SYNOPSIS OF STORY:

.....

.....

.....

CHECKLIST

Are all names correct and spelt correctly?

Are all figures, including percentages, correct?

Are all dates and ages correct?

Are the facts correct (Are there two sources)?

Are quotations correct (check against notebook)?

CONTENT

Are you satisfied that the story is accurate?

Are you satisfied that it is angled correctly?

Are you satisfied that it is fair to all parties?
Did you contact all parties involved?
If not, what steps did you take to contact them?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Have you put the subject's comments/denial
high up
in the report, or have you simply added them/it
at
the bottom of the report?
Are we being fair to the subject?

LEGALS

What legal problems do you foresee?
Were you threatened with legal action?
Does this report need to be checked by
lawyers?
Is this a pending case?

Is this report based on documents merely
filled filed
in court or based on documents referred to in
open court?

Do you have all the necessary documents to
back up
your report? C Are they authentic?

If you are investigating the directors of a
company,
have you checked the facts with the Registrar
of
Companies?

If so, can you produce the documents?

ADDITIONAL CHECKING

Do you object to us contacting your source/s for checking?

Do you object to them receiving a questionnaire?

DATABASE

Have you entered all your contacts into the Sunday Times database?

SIGNED:

REPORTER:

CHECKER:

DATE:

Addendum to reporting checklist

Race checklist for reporters and editors

What is the public interest in this report?

Has this report been treated differently because of race? If so, why? Is this justified?

Is the report ? even if factually correct ? likely to fuel xenophobia or prejudice? If so, is this justified? Is there any way around this?

Is the report likely to offend people? If so, why? Is this justified?

What about the language used in the report? Does it unnecessarily reinforce stereotypes? If so, change it!

What about the voices in the story? Have we actively sought out diverse opinion from ordinary people and experts alike?

Are there quotes in the story that are racist or possibly offensive? Are these comments balanced by others? Are we justified in using these comments? If so, why?

Is the report sensitive to possible cultural differences or values? How do we know? Should anything be changed to be sensitive to these differences? If so, why?

In crime reporting, have we mentioned the race of perpetrators and victims? Why? If so, is it information that is meaningful and in the public interest? Why?

Has any pressure been brought to bear in reporting this story? Has the issue of race been mentioned? If so, what and why? Do any of these arguments have any bearing on the reporting of the story? Why?

Have we been fair in the report to all parties?