

# **THE SIGNAL NEWSROOM PROCEDURES & RULES**

1. Remember this is a working newsroom – please limit visitors and phone conversations to The Signal business.
2. Food and drinks are allowed in the newsroom as long as you clean up after yourself. Please recycle your cans and bottles.
3. For accurate reporting you should have your own tape recorder. Inexpensive recorders (under \$30) are sold at Target or Wal-Mart. However, there is an office tape recorder available for reporter use if needed.
4. Answer the telephone: "Student Publications, this is (your name.)"  
Take accurate messages if you cannot answer the caller's question yourself.

Staffers answering the telephone in the office represent the The Signal and their actions and attitudes affect its image. It is the policy of the paper to be courteous to all people, both in telephone conversations and personal visits.

5. You may use the The Signal e-mail to send or receive messages pertaining to The Signal business.
6. Reference materials are located above the morgue. These include newsroom copies of the The Signal Stylebook, the Associated Press Stylebook, the UH-Clear Lake Official Directory and Telephone Directory, the University of Houston System Factbook, Clear Lake area and Houston telephone books, dictionaries, a thesaurus, The Complete Reporter and other useful material. These are not to leave the newsroom.
7. While a staff member of The Signal, you may consider the newsroom your home base while on campus. While I will not be held responsible for items left in the newsroom, the security doors should keep items safe should you like to drop-off backpacks, lunch, etc. Do be aware that access can be limited during the lunch hour.

# GENERAL EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

Material published in The Signal, including advertising, should be factually correct and in accordance with generally accepted guidelines of good taste. It must be remembered that in addition to being a journalistic publication, The Signal represents UH-Clear Lake and the entire University of Houston System to the general public.

The Signal is a student publication, which reaches faculty and staff, advertisers, residents of the university community area, alumni, and a considerable number of business people and public officials.

The Signal will at all times, through its editorials, contributed letters, guest articles and assigned stories, attempt to present a wide spectrum of opinion. The policies of The Signal are in no way subject to university administrative policy or influence. The editorial staff of The Signal is committed to fair and accurate reportage. Any stances taken by The Signal editorial staff will be done in the proper manner and labeled as such.

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Excerpted from UH-Clear Lake Student Rights and Responsibilities:

*“Student Publications.* Student publications may deal with issues of interest and importance to the university community. At the same time, the editorial freedom of student editors and managers entails corollary responsibilities to be governed by the canons of responsible journalism, such as the avoidance of libel, indecency, undocumented allegations, attacks on personal integrity, and the techniques of harassment and innuendo.”

## **THE SIGNAL’S POLICY ON “UNPUBLISHING”**

The Signal is guided by a newsroom policy that says it is inappropriate to remove published content from our Website. If an article is inaccurate we will correct it and tell readers it has been altered. If relevant new information emerges, we will update the article or do a follow-up story.

As with our newsprint version, our online published content is a matter of public record and is part of our contract with our readers. To simply remove published content from the archive diminishes transparency and trust with our readers and in effect, erases history. This is not a practice engaged in by credible news organizations or in line with ethical journalism.

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Exceptions to the unpublishing rule:

- The material is found to be libelous.
- The material puts someone's safety at risk.
- The material involves someone who was a minor at the time of publication.

These exceptions will be evaluated on an individual basis. Even when these exceptions are met, The Signal staff will publish a note explaining why material was removed.

In cases where postings are discovered to be libelous:

- We may choose to consult with legal counsel. Most likely, the information will be removed, and we will publish a note explaining why it was removed.

In cases where postings are discovered to be wrong, but not libelous:

- The material will not be removed, but an UPDATE will be placed at the top of the post stating the report below is erroneous. Even though the post is wrong, unpublishing it and pretending it never existed could cause more harm because the information has already been circulated. It's better to admit our mistakes honestly and make amends.

In cases where significant corrections to online material is necessary:

- Errors will be noted at the top of the story, blog or graphic.

In cases where criminal proceedings are ongoing:

- Whenever possible an UPDATE will be provided at the top of the story, especially if someone is found not guilty.

These procedures are based on the APME Online Journalism Credibility Project suggested script and unpublishing policies developed by the New York Times and The Washington Post. September 2013.

# THE SIGNAL'S CODE OF ADVERTISING ACCEPTABILITY

Advertising must have consumer confidence if it is to perform its communication job effectively. To instill this confidence in the Buyer, advertising must “**tell the truth.**” It is assumed that the consumer will not take every advertising statement literally, yet the consumer expects that demonstrations and claims of the product or service will provide an honest picture of that product or service. Thus the question of literal truth is irrelevant; the important question is the impression the advertising makes on people’s minds.

Advertising that is offensive or in bad taste is even more difficult to define in a university community, which tends to be more liberal and, consequently, less easily offended. However, all consumers and users of the media can expect the writers of advertising and of the media which run the advertising to abide by the accepted rules of decency and taste of the audience they expect their advertising to reach.

The Association of [Better Business Bureaus, Inc.’s](#) “Fair Trade Code for Advertising and Selling” provides a useful guide for setting standards of advertising acceptability. This code and the considerations mentioned above have been considered in establishing the following standards of acceptability for advertising in The Signal.

The Signal will strive to ensure that the advertising in its publications:

- Serves the public with honest values.
- Tells the truth about what is offered.
- Makes good as promised on any guarantee offered.
- Promotes and sells merchandise on its merits and refrains from reflecting unfairly upon competitors, their products, services or methods of doing business.
- Supports claims made for the product or service within the advertisement.
- Is made available to all members of class of advertisers.
- Will only allow testimonials by competent witnesses who are sincere and honest in what they say about the product or service.
- Avoids tricky devices and schemes such as deceit, fictitious list prices, bait advertising, misleading free offers and fake sales.

**NOTE:** According to the [Student Press Law Center](#), which offers free legal services to student publications, we are not legally required to accept an ad. Although the First Amendment protects free speech, *it does not create a right of access to media.*

# THE SIGNAL'S RULES OF CONDUCT FOR MESSAGE BOARD POSTINGS

*(For any of The Signal's online sites)*

The Signal newspaper is a public forum for the constituents of the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The editorial freedom of student editors and managers entails corollary responsibilities to be governed by the canons of responsible journalism, such as the avoidance of libel, indecency, undocumented allegations, attacks on personal integrity, and the techniques of harassment and innuendo. All postings on this website are moderated by The Signal editorial staff in accordance with these canons.

1. We encourage community members to have open and candid discussions and debates. We will not censor members for expressing an opinion within the limits of these Rules of Conduct. However, all communications should be civil and polite. Community members should treat each other with respect and consideration for all points of view. Please remember that this is a public venue read by many people of all ages, from around the world, spanning all walks of life.
2. Comments and contributions to forum threads or blog posts should be descriptive, succinct, and relevant to discussion or forum topic.
3. Posts deemed the following are subject to removal: unlawful; libelous; misleading or deceitful; vulgar; harassing; defamatory; that intimidates or is hateful toward an individual or group of individuals on the basis of religion, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or disability; obscene; profane; pornographic; threatening; invasive of a person's privacy; or otherwise inappropriate.
4. Hyperlinks: The Signal website may not be used to post, transmit or provide hyperlinks or pointers to material that is knowingly false and/or defamatory; contain ad hominem attacks, misleading, inaccurate, abusive, vulgar, hateful, harassing, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening or invasive of a person's privacy; that otherwise violates any law; or that encourages conduct constituting a criminal offense.
5. Advertising: The Signal discussion board may not be used to advertise or promote businesses, products or services.
6. Intellectual property: The Signal website may not be used to post material that is protected by copyright, trademark or other proprietary right without the express permission of the owner(s) of said copyright, trademark or other proprietary right.