

# Loyalties and conflicts of interest

- Loyalty to the family of man
  - respect people
  - be honest and truthful
  - strive to improve and protect our community

- Loyalty to ourselves and our families
  - feel good about what actions we choose
  - protect and nurture our loved ones
  - seek economic gain
  - seek respect from others

- Loyalty to our profession
  - fulfill our mission, whether it's to provide entertainment or information
  - be honest and truthful
  - treat our sources and audiences fairly
  - avoid the abuse of power and position
  - gain the respect of our peers

- Loyalty to our employer
  - protect your employer's resources
  - protect your employer's reputation (credibility)
  - promote compassionate and humane professional relationships
  - foster policies that build you community
  - promote the right for all to be heard

- Loyalty to the media's role in our society
  - openly identify who your client is in both PR and advertising
  - avoid false claims about your product or client

**In journalism:**

- seek the truth and report it
- foster open discussion and debate
- explain our actions when questions arise about our methods
- comfort the afflicted
- afflict the comfortable

**Categorical Imperative:**

Create a policy and stick to it

Journalists cannot be active in advocacy groups of any kind.

Journalists cannot accept gifts. Period.

**Golden Mean**

look for middle ground.

Journalists cannot cover groups or issues that they have a stake in.

Journalists cannot accept gifts from sources or potential sources.

**Conflicts of Interest Checklist**

Because of the enormous responsibility journalists have to the public, they must be aware of any situations that create a real or perceived conflict of interest. Individual journalists must weigh their obligations against the impact of:

- involvement in particular activities
- affiliation with causes or organizations

from "Doing Ethics in Journalism"

- acceptance of favors or preferential treatment
- financial investments
- outside employment
- friendships

In the end, individual journalists might do well to ask themselves:

- Am I being independent?
- Could my action harm my integrity or my organization's integrity?
- Is the mere appearance of a conflict enough to diminish my credibility?
- Am I willing to publicly disclose any potential conflicts?

The Potter's Box is also helpful in dealing with conflicts because it helps you chose your loyalties.

1. Define the situation
2. Outline the values involved  
truth, patriotism, family, privacy, etc.
3. Apply philosophical principles  
Categorical Imperative, Golden Mean  
Principle of Utility, Communitarianism, etc.
4. Articulate your loyalties and chose your highest loyalty in this situation

**Should journalists remain unbiased and objective in times of national crises?**

1. Define the situation  
TV newscasters wearing American flags, and flags shown on camera during the news.  
They're using word like "us" and "we" when discussing the attacks and how the U.S. will respond.
2. Outline the values involved  
patriotism  
objectivity

3. Apply philosophical principles
  - Categorical Imperative: Don't show favoritism to any organization, including your government
  - Golden Mean: Be patriotic, but don't give up your watchdog role.
  - Veil of Ignorance: Report this conflict no differently than you would report about a conflict in Europe or Africa.
  - Communitarianism: Support the nation in time of crisis.

4. Articulate your loyalties and chose the highest loyalty in this situation
  - to government: Support Bush in all that he does.
  - to viewers: Don't help Bush prepare the nation for war without asking his administration some tough questions.
  - to good journalism: Ask the tough questions and accept the difficult answers.