

Updates and corrections style guide

We're very careful to observe transparency and clarity when making such changes. We strive to deal with errors quickly and with a minimum of confusion, while being clear with our readers about how and when a published story has changed.

We do not erase stories permanently once they have been posted. If a story has been found to be based on a fundamentally erroneous fact or assumption and cannot be corrected, we should take it down and in its place (at the same URL) post a note explaining what we've done. Remember that even when we've removed a story from our site, it has been stored and cached on other websites.

There are, generally speaking, three styles for updating a story after it has been published: An update, a correction and a clarification.

Updating a story

If some action is taken in response to our story, or if new facts come to light that change facts in our reporting that were true when we published them, we post an update. Updates are usually added to the original story, but in some cases (for example, to show impact) it is preferable to write a separate post highlighting the change.

Placement

- Updates can go at the top or the bottom of a story, depending on length, newsiness, etc. Use your judgment or ask the editor if he or she has a preference.
- If you put an update at the bottom of a story, you can also optionally add a note at the top noting that the story has been updated.
 - We tend to do this for updates that are too long to stick right at the top but are important enough to surface right away. Example: *This story has been [updated](#).* (This would be at the top of the story, with that hyperlink jumping down to an anchor tag on the update itself.)

Update via our own reporting

- This can either be additional copy or an update to existing copy. Both types are noted.
 - Additional copy should start with **Update, Month XX, 20XX:**
 - For smaller changes in existing copy, make the change in the copy and use some variation of **Update, Month XX, 20XX: This story has been updated to include a statement from this excellent person.**
- For durable resources like data tables, etc., that are explicitly kept up-to-date, we do not necessarily note every change.

Update via another news source

- Write a short graph explaining the new development, including a link to the article source for the update.
- Example: **Update, July 18, 2014: The Red Cross is continuing to fight our public records request for information on Sandy spending. The Wall Street Journal [is](#)**

[reporting](#) that the charity's law firm has appealed the attorney general's ruling on its request that some Sandy spending details should be redacted as "trade secrets." The attorney general's office is still processing the request.

Adding a correction

- When we have published a fact that turns out to have been erroneous or misleading at the time of publication, we substitute the incorrect fact with the correct one inside the body of the story, and append a note to the story explaining what was wrong and what the correct facts are. We also put that information on [a page](#) that lists all of our corrections, explaining what we got wrong and how we got it wrong.
 - For details on how to do that, see [this entry](#)
- Example: **Correction, Month XX, 20XX:** *This story originally misidentified the species of one of the subjects. Kermit is a frog, not a toad.*

Adding a clarification

- When a fact in our story is true and complete but is being misinterpreted by readers or others, we substitute the original wording with clearer wording and note the change in a short graf posted at the end of the story.
- Any alterations that change the facts as we originally reported them, either in kind or in degree, must be issued as corrections. Clarifications can only be used to improve the precision of wording.
- Follow the same style as corrections. Clarifications don't get added to the corrections page.