

## How to report sexual assault trials responsibly: in brief

NB: These guidelines *supplement* legal requirements in relation to the reporting of rape and sexual assault cases, and focus on ensuring reporting does not *legally but inappropriately* lean towards a guilty or not—guilty narrative *whilst the trial is ongoing*.

Do	Don't
<b>Focus</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remember who is on trial.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report the specific charges.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use euphemistic or trivialising language to misrepresent the charges (e.g. sex claims). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present the trial or verdict as a metaphor for something else.
<b>Balance</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Give equal weight to prosecution & defence during the trial. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consider using expert sources to provide context, particularly in post-verdict reporting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't give unnecessary detail about the accused where similar detail cannot be given to humanise the complainer/s.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use equally-weighted terms for the accused and complainer/s. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use, accused and witness; or accused and complainer.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accused and alleged victim are not equally weighted terms. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid accused/ accuser: this portrays the defendant as the victim and the complainer or witness as the aggressor.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use equally-weighted terms for defence and prosecution testimony: e.g. she said/ he said; she testified/ he denied.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid using allegation and alleged in relation to only one side of the evidence.
<b>Myths and common misconceptions</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is the prosecution, not individual witnesses or complainers, who have brought the case against the accused.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid presenting costs to the accused as a consequence of the <i>witnesses'</i> actions or statements.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If using a quote in a headline always use quotation marks, and clearly indicate if the statement is made by a party in the case.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Never lead with unattributed quotations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When choosing which aspects of a day's proceedings to emphasise, reflect on whether it is really necessary to reproduce myths about sexual assault used in court.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid describing accused or convicted men as monsters, beasts, fiends or animals. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid physical descriptions of accused or convicted men which play into myths about sexual assault (e.g. that only ugly men sexually assault women).

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If you <i>are</i> reporting on the use of rape myths in court, make sure statements are clearly attributed and avoid leading with them where possible.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If you are reporting on the use of myths about sexual assault in court, take care to provide alternative viewpoints, whether from defence or prosecution. Post-verdict, consider using external experts who can comment more generally on these myths.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid physical descriptions of witnesses and complainers which play into myths about sexual assault (e.g. that women are “asking for it”).</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turn off commenting functions for stories relating to ongoing sexual assault cases, including when sharing stories on Facebook.</p>	
<h3>Helplines</h3>	
<p>For Scottish media, the following boilerplate statement should be used:</p> <p><b><i>The Rape Crisis Scotland national freephone helpline is open nightly 6pm-midnight: 08088 01 03 02.</i></b></p>	