

San Francisco Chronicle

Correction Policy

Mistakes happen. How we deal with errors in our reporting is important to maintaining our integrity and the trust of readers and sources. When the Chronicle publishes an error, we will acknowledge it and take appropriate steps to correct it as quickly as possible, both online and in print and, if necessary, on social media and other off-platform applications.

Readers who wish to alert editors to a needed correction can email corrections@sfchronicle.com.

Factual errors must be corrected — even if the subject of the error does not formally request a correction. We also correct factual errors made, for example, in an event listing, even if the relevant event has passed. When in doubt about whether a correction or clarification is needed, it is generally best to consult with your editor. Leaving anyone with the impression that we do not admit and rectify mistakes could cause readers to question our journalistic integrity.

Occasionally, an error may not be a misstated fact but a matter of nuance, context or tone. Such mistakes may require clarifications, editor's notes or a statement from the editor in chief.

The information in a correction should be verified by the reporter, photographer or editor who made the error. Source editors must fact-check the correction as well. All corrections must be brought to the attention of and approved by a section or masthead-level editor before being published.

If a request for a retraction or correction comes from an outside attorney or person threatening a legal response, the editor in chief and our legal counsel must be consulted before any response or decision is made about how to handle the complaint.

Generally, the Chronicle does not repeat the original error and does not editorialize about the cause or implication of the error in publishing a correction.

Print procedure

If the error has been printed, a correction should run on A2 as soon as possible in consultation with the A1 editor.

If an error appears in the Sunday paper, we should correct it as soon as possible. We also should rerun the correction in the next Sunday edition to reach Sunday-only readers.

The typical correction style for print is:

Article headline, publication date, section, page

In an article about XYZ, W was misstated. Then, if needed, a sentence explaining the fact as it should have been reported.

Online procedure

It is expected that online stories will be polished and expanded after their initial posting, and it is not necessary to flag every change for readers. But adding a correction or clarification may be appropriate if new reporting has revealed a significant error in an earlier account.

Occasionally, errors due to incorrect information by sources (e.g. law enforcement misstating a death toll) may be handled within the story (e.g. "Police revised a previously reported death count, saying only five people have been confirmed dead.") If there is any question about whether the error rises to that level, consult with the appropriate section or masthead-level editor.

If an online error was a significant one that could give the reader a false impression, factors such as the nature of the error and how long it has been posted should be considered before a correction is written.

When a significant error is discovered, the story should be corrected and reposted as soon as possible. The person making the change to the online story should first consult with and obtain the approval of a section editor or masthead editor. Once the change is approved, the story should be changed and a note appended to the revised story that briefly states the nature of the change.

If a significant error appears in the url, editors and producers should change the url to reflect the truth.

Placement: In general, the note about what has been corrected/clarified in an online story should be appended to the end of the online version of the story. If an error is deemed egregious enough — for example, misleading, fabricated, unethical — then the correction may be placed at the top of the story. Egregious errors that indict the entire premise of an article may require deleting the entire article. In such cases, the content should be replaced with an editor’s note explaining why the article was removed. This decision must be approved by the Editor in Chief.

Workflow: It is vital to make corrections to online stories as soon as possible. Following appropriate approval, the copy desk — if available — will be the initial group responsible for quickly making corrections to online stories.

Social media: If incorrect information is shared on a news alert or on social networks, we should notify readers using the same platform and provide the accurate information. In many cases, it may be appropriate to delete the incorrect post. In such cases, a screenshot should be taken of the original post, which should be shared with clarifying information and explain that the post was deleted.