

## 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*.

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<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).

If you *are* reporting on the use of rape myths in court, make sure statements are clearly attributed and avoid leading with them where possible.

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.

Avoid physical descriptions of witnesses and complainers which play into myths about sexual assault (e.g. that women are “asking for it”).

Turn off commenting functions for stories relating to ongoing sexual assault cases, including when sharing stories on Facebook.

### Helplines

For Scottish media, the following boilerplate statement should be used:

***The Rape Crisis Scotland national freephone helpline is open nightly 6pm-midnight:  
08088 01 03 02.***