

# Off the Record

“On the record” implies that anything said can be used in a story with complete attribution (name, title, address, etc.) so the reader knows precisely where the information came from. Once you’ve identified yourself as a reporter, you should operate under the assumption that everything said can be used in your story. You may need to educate your sources about this, especially if they have never been interviewed before. Never assume that an interview subject knows the ground rules.

**In order of preference, here are the agreements between reporter and source:**

1. On the record. Reporter can use all information, with attribution, in a story.
2. Not for attribution. Reporter can use information but promises to protect and conceal the source’s identity.
3. Off the record. Information cannot be used in a story, even if the source is not identified. (Some reporters take “off the record” to mean that they can use the information so long as they don’t indicate the source of it.)