Reporting Part III: Staying Objective

With their new awareness of how to analyze fairness and check for their own biases, students zero in on a contentious topic and test their own abilities to be objective and evaluate objectivity in others.

**GRADES:** 7-12

**DURATION:** More than 90 minutes

**MATERIALS**

* Handout: Copies of the Staying Objective worksheet (one per student or small group, included in this packet)
* Tipsheets: Copies of the Am I Being Fair? and Is It Fair? tipsheets (one per student or small group, included in this packet)
* A Google site, blog, or desktop publisher to create a “publication” that will showcase student articles

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Tell your class they’re going to put into action what they’ve learned about fair journalism. Brainstorm a list of contentious topics your students are interested in or care about. These topics could be as light or heavy as you feel is appropriate for your group — from rival pop stars to political debates. Make connections to or extend from topics covered in the earlier reporting lesson plans if possible.
2. Zero in on one topic that the class feels is worthy of further exploration. For this one topic, brainstorm different opinions people have on this topic, why it is controversial and where you could go to learn more.
3. Tell students they are all going to write articles about this topic, with the goal of making their articles as fair as possible, while also making them interesting and informative. To prepare for this process, go over the Am I Being Fair tipsheet graphic and have students talk through applying the four strategies to your chosen topic.
4. Distribute the Staying Objective worksheet as a guide to help them get started working individually. Give students a deadline for turning in their reports, just as real reporters must complete their work in a set amount of time.
5. After students have completed a draft of their article, have them pair and share their work. They should trade articles and evaluate their peer’s work using the Is It Fair? tipsheet and, if desired, the accompanying worksheet from the [Is It Fair? lesson plan](https://www.newseumed.org/tools/lesson-plan/Is-It-Fair?) [newseumED.org/tools/lesson-plan/is-it-fair?]. Students should then revise their stories based on their peer’s feedback and share them with the class via your chosen publication platform.
6. As a class, discuss the final articles they’ve produced, using the questions below to guide the conversation.
7. If desired, have students revise their work based on your class discussion and then share the collection of revised articles beyond your classroom, with fellow students or in the community.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* What was the most challenging part of writing a fair article about this topic?
* Which of the four Am I Being Fair? strategies was the most helpful? The least? Why?
* Did focusing on being fair — in other words, not being able to exaggerate things or make an argument — make it harder to write an interesting article?
* Which articles stand out to you, and why?
* What have you learned from reading these articles?
* With whom (other than your peers in this class) would you like to share this content? Why?

**Name: Date:**

Reporting: Staying Objective

Article topic:

Why is this topic controversial? In other words, why do people argue about it?

What’s your opinion on this topic?

What is another opinion someone might hold about this topic?

What do you already know about this topic?

What do you want to find out about this topic? List at least two thin and two thick questions you will need to answer in your article.

Thin question 1:

Thin question 2:

Thick question 1:

Thick question 2:

How will you make sure your story about this topic is fair?

**My deadline:**



