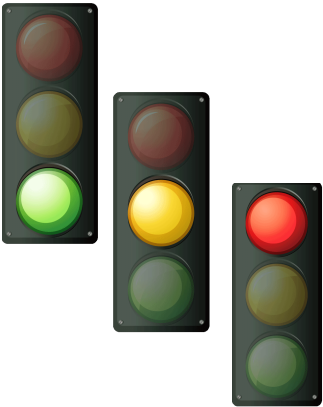


Story Risk Checklist



Most news stories are harmless, even stories driven by professional criticism. Other stories involve a potential risk for the reporter or the source. You need to spot the difference between the two.

- This checklist reflects the most basic risk assessment automatically exercised professional journalists when working with a story idea. But it needs to be trained and kept fresh, even by senior reporters. So here is the tool for training individually, collegial or at editorial meetings.

Instruction: Ask yourself if the story in any way could be dangerous. If “Yes”, then score the likeliness and possible danger from 1-4.

If the total equals 4 or above at any given line, you are advised to do a full risk assessment and coherent mitigation of risk.

If the Total is 5 or above, you should also make a safety plan – and maybe a contingency plan.

- If the story risks to harm you or your sources or to put your medium in danger, you need tools for further risk assessment: The “Critical Reporters’ Checklist” or the “Event Risk Checklist”.
- If not, do your story with your usual professional criticism – and be alert throughout your research.

Formulate the story angle – as a claim of your possible finding. Then ask yourself: Does the story ...?	Score Yes/No	If Yes: Score the likeliness of you being a target for hostility: 4 = highly likely, 3 = likely, 2 = possible, 1 = unlikely	If possible or likely: Score the possible danger for you or your sources: 4 = attacks on life, 3 = physical abuse, 2 = personal threats, 1 = aggressions	Total
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Critical Reporting

... uncover a wrongdoing by some people?				
.. uncover organized crime, terrorism, warlords?				
... otherwise risks making someone hostile?				

Event Reporting

.. cover an event of protests, rallies, civil unrest?				
... take place in an area with tensions?				
... expose you to armed confrontation?				

If Green: (No-answers or Score 1-3)

Go on, but ...
Be Professional



= follow the ethics and professional standards

If Yellow: (Score 4 in total at any line)
Watch out!
Be Alert



= do a full risk assessment and mitigate the risks

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If Red: (Score 5 or above at any line)
Fear!



= do a full risk assessment and mitigate the risks
+ make a safety plan and maybe a contingency plan