

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

# Una verdad conveniente

A B2 story about selective evidence, viral headlines, and how accurate facts can be arranged to produce a misleading conclusion.

CONTEXT

FRAMING

CORRECTION

APRENDE GRATIS EN [EZINGLES.COM](https://ezingles.com)

## ANTES DE LEER

# Prepare to read

A reporter publishes a technically accurate article about rising crime in a neighborhood. When the story spreads, he discovers that factual sentences do not automatically create an honest picture.

## Think critically

Can an article be factually correct and still mislead its readers? How?

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## Reading goal

Analyze framing, scale, source selection, and corrections. Distinguish false information from a convenient but incomplete truth.

## THE STORY · PART 1

# A headline with perfect numbers

Javier Cruz covered public safety for MetroView, a local news website funded by advertising and subscriptions.

On Monday, a police report showed that reported robberies in the Riverside neighborhood had increased forty percent compared with the previous month.

The percentage was striking. Javier wrote the headline ROBBERIES SURGE 40% IN RIVERSIDE.

Every sentence was factually correct. Robberies had risen from five incidents to seven. Two involved the same convenience store, and one report was later classified as attempted theft.

Javier included those details near the end. His editor moved them lower, explaining that mobile readers often left after the first paragraphs.

The article quoted a police spokesperson warning residents to remain alert. It also quoted one shop owner who said the area felt less safe.

Javier had interviewed another owner who described the month as ordinary, but her comments did not fit the article's urgent **framing**. He saved them for a possible follow-up.

The story became MetroView's most-read article that week. A television station repeated the forty-percent figure, and neighborhood social-media groups shared maps of individual incidents.

Readers interpreted the percentage as evidence of a broad crime wave. Few compared it with Riverside's population or the same month in previous years.

The headline was not false. Its convenience came from how easily one accurate number supported a familiar narrative.

# The facts outside the frame

Within days, evening customers declined at Riverside restaurants. A youth soccer league moved a tournament, citing parent concerns.

Community organizer Rosa Vega contacted Javier. She did not ask him to hide crime. She asked why the article provided no **baseline**.

Over twelve months, robbery totals were actually lower than the previous year. Reports had risen for one month after reaching an unusually low point.

Rosa also questioned the map. It showed incidents without bus stops, lighting outages, business hours, or population density—the context necessary to interpret location.

Javier defended the story. Journalists could not include every fact, and public safety mattered.

Rosa agreed. ‘Selection is unavoidable,’ she said. ‘That is why selection is a form of power.’

Javier reviewed website analytics. The dramatic headline increased advertising revenue and new subscriptions. MetroView had a financial **incentive** to define urgency through clicks.

The incentive did not require anyone to invent data. It rewarded the most alarming truthful interpretation.

He proposed a correction. His editor refused because no factual error had occurred, offering instead to publish a second article with annual context.

Javier realized that a quiet follow-up would not reach everyone who had absorbed the first conclusion. Corrections and clarifications rarely traveled with the original claim.

He wrote an editor's note for the first article: ‘The percentage reflects an increase from five reports to seven. Yearly totals remain below last year's level.’

The note changed the meaning without changing the underlying facts.

# Correcting more than an error

MetroView published Javier's follow-up with the headline WHAT RIVERSIDE'S CRIME NUMBERS DO—AND DO NOT—SHOW.

He explained absolute numbers, long-term trends, report classifications, and the limits of drawing conclusions from one month.

He also acknowledged excluding a source whose comments challenged the original frame. That admission angered his editor, who believed it made routine editorial judgment appear unethical.

Javier did not claim every omitted fact belonged in every article. He argued that omission became misleading when all selected elements pushed readers toward one conclusion while relevant contrary evidence remained hidden.

The follow-up received fewer views, but several regional outlets updated their stories. The soccer tournament returned the following season.

Some Riverside residents accused Javier of damaging the neighborhood. Others accused him of minimizing real safety concerns. Both criticisms contained legitimate fears.

MetroView adopted a statistics checklist requiring absolute numbers, comparison periods, data limitations, and a reason for any percentage used in a headline.

The policy could not eliminate bias. It made certain editorial decisions more visible and therefore easier to question.

Months later, robberies increased again—this time across several neighborhoods and over a sustained period. Javier reported the rise directly, with context that strengthened rather than softened the warning.

He had not learned to avoid uncomfortable facts. He had learned that accuracy was the beginning of responsible reporting, not its final standard.

A convenient truth survives by offering audiences facts they can accept without revising a familiar story. Critical journalism asks whether the frame explains reality or merely confirms expectation.

**Honesty requires more than facts that are true. It requires a structure that lets those facts mean only what the evidence can support.**

# Words for media and critical reading

| <b>framing</b>           | encuadre            |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>baseline</b>          | línea de referencia |
| <b>incentive</b>         | incentivo           |
| <b>absolute numbers</b>  | números absolutos   |
| <b>omission</b>          | omisión             |
| <b>contrary evidence</b> | evidencia contraria |
| <b>clarification</b>     | aclaración          |
| <b>bias</b>              | sesgo               |
| <b>sustained</b>         | sostenido/a         |
| <b>context</b>           | contexto            |

## COMPREHENSION

# Analyze media framing

## A. Choose the best answer

1. What produces the forty-percent increase? a) Five reports rising to seven b) Forty new reports c) Annual totals doubling
2. What source does Javier omit? a) The police b) An owner who found the month ordinary c) Rosa
3. Why does the editor reject a correction? a) The article contains no factual error b) The website closes c) Police object
4. What does the new checklist require? a) Fewer sources b) Absolute numbers and context c) No percentages

## B. Analyze

1. How does moving accurate context lower in the article affect readers' conclusions?
2. Explain Rosa's claim that selection is a form of power.
3. Why can a follow-up fail to repair the original article's impact?

## C. Write

Rewrite the original headline and opening in 5–7 sentences. Preserve the increase, add scale and time context, and avoid minimizing legitimate safety concerns.

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## ANSWER KEY

# Review and reflect

A. 1. a 2. b 3. a 4. b

## B. Suggested answers

1. Many readers never reach the details, so the dramatic percentage becomes the dominant meaning. 2. Journalists cannot include everything; what they select determines which interpretation receives visibility and credibility. 3. It may receive less attention, and the first story continues circulating without the added context.

## Sample rewrite

Riverside Robbery Reports Rise from Five to Seven in One Month. Police recorded two additional reports compared with an unusually low previous month, a forty-percent increase. Year-to-date totals remain below last year's level. Officials advise reasonable awareness while analysts caution against declaring a broader trend from one month. Residents and businesses report mixed experiences.

**KEEP GOING**

Debate: When does selection become distortion even if every fact is accurate?