



Answers

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1. False. If something is not libelous in print, it will not be libelous online.
2. False. There is no law that requires such restrictions in student-edited online media. In fact, such restrictions might not even be permitted under the First Amendment and other press freedom protections.
3. False. For the most part, the same general copyright rules apply no matter the type of media. Copyright owners have full ownership rights in material published on the Internet, and student media have their Fair Use rights as well.
4. True. Students, like all citizens, have strong First Amendment protection when it comes to expressing themselves off-campus. Except in extreme cases, courts have prohibited public school officials from censoring or punishing a student for violations of school rules for posting or accessing a personal homepage or Blog, publishing a Web-based "zine" or using a personal account to send e-mail or instant messages outside of school from a private computer, even if the subject matter of the site is school-related or offensive. Of course, online publishers are responsible for everything they post and can, of course, be sued or criminally charged just like anyone else if they break the law.
5. False. While lawmakers tried to include an indecency provision in the Communications Decency Act in the mid 1990's, the Supreme Court struck down that part of the law as an unconstitutional restriction on free speech. Still, as with print-based publications, high school student media should carefully weigh the benefits and costs of publishing material online that any segment of their readers might find offensive.
6. False. While school officials have some leeway to filter inappropriate material, their authority is not unlimited. Though the law is still developing, it seems clear that a school could not block a particular Web site for no reason whatsoever or simply because school administrators disagree with the viewpoints expressed on the site.

7. False. Even though they are typically informal and fleeting, IM's — like any other "published" statement (for example, chatroom messages, blogs, e-mail, etc.) — can be the source of a successful defamation or invasion of privacy lawsuit.

8. False. Different First Amendment protections have historically applied depending on which category the medium falls into; broadcasters do not get the same high level of protection as the print media, for example. The Supreme Court has said, however, that online media more closely resembles the print media than broadcast. This means the same protections that apply to print newspapers should apply to online publications or Web sites.

9. False. The Internet can be a wonderful reporting tool for journalists provided the credibility of the online sources is carefully scrutinized. Careless use of unknown, unreliable or unverified online sources is a recipe for bad journalism and potential legal trouble.

10. True. As long as links to outside Web sites are clearly identified as such and no attempt is made to deceive users into thinking you are the author or owner of the third-party content, there is no legal requirement to obtain permission to link to Web sites that are otherwise accessible to all Internet users.

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