

espn.com

The website of ESPN, a global media brand and satellite-network channel that broadcasts 24-hour sports coverage in more than 200 countries.

Ownership and Financing	<p>ESPN is based in Bristol, Connecticut. Its majority owner, with an 80 percent stake, is ABC, Inc. ABC is a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, a publicly traded media and entertainment conglomerate based in Burbank, California. The Hearst Corp., a privately held company based in New York City, owns the remaining 20 percent.</p> <p>ESPN.com generates revenue from advertising and subscriptions.</p>
Content	<p>The website provides extensive coverage of sports in the U.S. and internationally. ESPN features dedicated sections for professional sports organizations, including Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League. The site's approximately 20 sections also include College Sports, Soccer, NASCAR, the Olympics, the Special Olympics, Mixed Martial Arts, Cricket, Horse Racing, and the X Games.</p> <p>ESPN reports breaking sports news and provides scores, schedules, and statistics for various teams. A Chalk section features analytics and other information for sports wagering, including a map showing its legality in each state. The website also provides news and information about football, baseball, basketball, and hockey in a Fantasy sports section, as well as forms for readers to start their own league or join a public one.</p> <p>ESPN.com features many podcasts. "Caught Offside," for example, discusses the latest soccer news. "Fantasy Focus Baseball" provides strategies, injury reports, and game summaries. Website visitors can also listen to ESPN Radio and watch video clips. Subscribers to ESPN+ are provided access to premium and original content, such as broadcasts of live sporting events.</p> <p>ESPN.com links to articles on its sister websites, including the data-driven journalism site FiveThirtyEight.com and the sports and culture site TheUndefeated.com.</p>

Credibility	<p>ESPN.com regularly conducts original reporting, citing interviews with athletes, coaches, executives, and others in the sports industry. Headlines are typically straightforward and reflect the content of stories.</p> <p>A Corrections page outlines ESPN.com's policy on fixing mistakes, stating, "Significant errors of fact will be corrected in a clear and timely manner, with appropriate prominence." The page lists recent corrections, along with links to the updated versions of erroneous stories.</p> <p>ESPN.com does not have an opinion section. Many stories are written conversationally and include analysis about games, teams, and athletes' performance. NewsGuard found one article, published on Oct. 22, 2019, three days after the Houston Astros won the American League championship, that criticized the team and its managers. The story, "The Houston Astros' denial just made a bad situation worse," faulted the leadership after Assistant General Manager Brandon Taubman "taunted a group of female reporters" by bragging after the team's win about the acquisition of a player who was suspended in 2018 for violating MLB's domestic violence policy. The article concluded with the rebuke, "Domestic violence is a scourge, one that has existed for too long because people are unwilling to hold accountable not only those who perpetrate it but also those who look past it." (On Oct. 24, the Astros acknowledged making mistakes and fired Taubman.)</p> <p>However, the website does not often depart from its general sports</p>
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This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 92.5/100

- Does not repeatedly publish false content** (22 points)
- Gathers and presents information responsibly** (18)
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors** (12.5)
- Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly** (12.5)
- Avoids deceptive headlines** (10)
- Website discloses ownership and financing** (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising** (7.5)
- Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest** (5)
- The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information** (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance. [More information.](#)

analysis, or insert opinion into its news stories. More typical, for example, is an October 2019 story titled “NBA commissioner Adam Silver says financial losses in China ‘substantial.’” In that article, ESPN provides a straightforward report on Silver discussing his views after Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey’s support of Hong Kong’s anti-government protesters led to China and Chinese businesses canceling deals with the NBA. The website does not take a position regarding the protests or Morey’s comments. NewsGuard has determined that in generally avoiding such commentary, ESPN handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

In 2019, ESPN won six sports Emmy awards, which are presented by The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. The network won one Emmy for its pregame football show “College GameDay,” and another for its coverage of the United States Open Tennis Championships.

Transparency

ESPN.com only discloses ownership on a hard-to-find About page that is a subsection of the ESPN Press Room section. This does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for disclosing ownership in a user-friendly manner.

ESPN.com did not respond to NewsGuard’s two emails or a phone call seeking comment on the website’s practice regarding ownership disclosure.

A Bios page provides the names and biographies of ESPN’s managers and many of its content creators. Most biographies also display photos, and some include links to Twitter accounts. In addition, writers’ stories are credited to them, and the authors’ names often link to their bios and Twitter accounts.

Advertising and sponsored content are distinguishable from editorial content.

History

ESPN, originally called the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, was founded in 1978 by Bill Rasmussen, his son Scott (who founded the polling company Rasmussen Reports in 2003), and Ed Eagan. ESPN was one of the first networks to be distributed via satellite communication.

Since its inception, ESPN has been an industry leader and innovator in televised sports coverage. In 1998, it debuted the “Virtual Yellow 1st and Ten,” a computer-generated yellow line that appeared onscreen to show viewers the location of a first-down on the football field. In 2001, baseball fans were given the “K-Zone,” an onscreen white box that outlined the strike-zone and pitch location. The visual aid won the 2002 Sports Emmy Award for innovative technical achievement.

Although ESPN maintains a policy of not discussing politics unless the issue intersects with sports, several employees have publicly criticized aspects of Donald Trump’s presidency. In 2017, anchor Jemele Hill described the president in a tweet as a “white supremacist.” She subsequently tweeted that people should boycott the Dallas Cowboys and their merchandise after team owner Jerry Jones said his players would stand for the national anthem or sit the game out. ESPN suspended Hill for two weeks after the second Twitter episode for violating its social media policy. Hill left ESPN the following year to become a staff writer for The Atlantic. Another ESPN commentator criticized Trump in January 2019 for serving fast food to the Clemson University football team. In July 2019, an ESPN Radio talk-show host criticized a Trump rally, as well as ESPN’s no-politics policy.

Following the July 2019 incident, ESPN’s president circulated a memo reminding employees to adhere to the no-politics policy, according to a report on the website The Hill.

Correction: Upon further review, and a change in NewsGuard’s standards, this Nutrition Label was updated on Oct. 28, 2019, and its rating was changed, to reflect NewsGuard’s determination that the site does not meet its current standard for disclosing ownership in a user-friendly manner.

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