

The **Drudge Report** is an American conservative,<sup>[4]</sup> right-wing<sup>[5]</sup> [news aggregation](#) website. It is run by Matt Drudge with the help of Charles Hurt,<sup>[1]</sup> the site consists mainly of links to news stories from other outlets about politics, entertainment, and current events; it also has links to many columnists. Occasionally, Drudge authors new stories himself, based on tips.

The Drudge Report originated in 1995 as a weekly subscriber-based email dispatch.<sup>[3]</sup> It was the first news source to break the [Monica Lewinsky scandal](#) to the public, after *Newsweek* decided to hold its story.<sup>[6]</sup>

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# Origins [ edit ]

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The Drudge Report started in 1995 as a [gossip](#) column focusing on [Hollywood](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#)<sup>[7]</sup> Matt Drudge began the email-based newsletter from an apartment in [Hollywood, California](#) using his connections with industry and media insiders to break stories, sometimes before they hit the mainstream media. In its early days Drudge maintained the website from his home in [Miami Beach, Florida](#), with help from assistants in story selection and headline writing. His first assistant was [Andrew Breitbart](#).<sup>[8]</sup> Breitbart, who described himself as "Matt Drudge's bitch",<sup>[9]</sup> worked the afternoon shift at the Drudge Report,<sup>[10]</sup> at the same time as running his own website *breitbart.com* and another website *BigHollywood.com*, providing a [conservative](#) perspective for people in the Los Angeles entertainment industry.<sup>[11]</sup> [John Ziegler](#) has said that Drudge blocked Breitbart from posting content critical of [Barack Obama](#) during the 2008 campaign for the US Presidency.<sup>[12]</sup>

In 2010, Drudge added to the Drudge Report staff former columnist for *The Washington Times*, Joseph Curl.<sup>[13]</sup> In 2011, he added to the staff Charles Hurt, most recently the Washington bureau chief of the *New York Post* and a columnist for *The Washington Times*.<sup>[1]</sup> Curl, who served as morning shift editor, left the site in 2014 and, with Drudge's blessing, in January 2015 launched his own aggregator *Right Read*, for *The Washington Times*.<sup>[14]</sup>

Drudge, who began his website in 1997 as a supplement to his \$10 per year e-mail newsletter,<sup>[15]</sup> received national attention in 1996 when he broke the news that [Jack Kemp](#) would be Republican [Bob Dole](#)'s running mate in the [1996 US presidential election](#). In 1998, Drudge made national waves when he broke the news that *Newsweek* magazine had information on an

inappropriate relationship between "a White House intern" and President [Bill Clinton](#)—the [Monica Lewinsky scandal](#)—but was withholding publication.<sup>[16][17][18]</sup> After Drudge's report came out, *Newsweek* published the story.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Content [\[ edit \]](#)

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The Drudge Report site consists mainly of selected<sup>[20]</sup> [hyperlinks](#) to news websites all over the world, each link carrying a headline written by Drudge or his editors. The linked stories are generally hosted on the external websites of mainstream media outlets. It occasionally includes stories written by Drudge himself, usually two or three paragraphs in length. They generally concern a story about to be published in a major magazine or newspaper. Drudge occasionally publishes [Nielsen](#), [Arbitron](#), and [BookScan](#) ratings, or early election [exit polls](#) which are otherwise not made available to the public.

The site carries advertisements which generate the site's revenue. The Drudge Report's advertising is sold by Intermarkets, the [Vienna, Virginia](#)-based advertising firm.<sup>[21]</sup>

In April 2009, the [Associated Press](#) announced that it would be examining the [fair use](#) doctrine, used by sites like [Google](#) and the Drudge Report to justify the use of AP content without payment.<sup>[22]</sup>

On May 4, 2009, the [US Attorney General](#)'s office issued a warning to employees in [Massachusetts](#) not to visit the Drudge Report and other sites because of malicious code contained in some of the advertising on the website.<sup>[23]</sup> In March 2010, antivirus company [Avast!](#) warned that advertising at the Drudge Report, *[The New York Times](#)*, [Yahoo](#), [Google](#), [MySpace](#) and other sites carried malware that could infect computers. "The most compromised ad delivery platforms were Yield Manager and Fimserve, but a number of smaller ad systems, including Myspace, were also found to be delivering malware on a lesser scale", said Avast Virus Labs.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Design [ edit ]

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The site's design has seen few changes since its debut in 1997. Drudge has experimented with temporary design tweaks, including using colored text for holidays instead of the standard black throughout the site's existence.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> It remains entirely written in unscripted **HTML**, with a mostly monochromatic color scheme of black boldface monospaced font text on a plain white background. The Drudge Report has been described by Cheryl Woodard, co-founder of *PC*, *Macworld*, *PC World* and *Publish* magazines, as "a big, haphazard mishmash of links and photos"<sup>[25]</sup> and by **Dan Rahmel** as "popular despite a plain appearance".<sup>[26]</sup> The Drudge Report website is simple and, according to Paul Armstrong of *webwithoutwords.com*, **retro** in feel.<sup>[27]</sup> **Jason Fried** of **Basecamp** called it "one of the best designed sites on the web".<sup>[28]</sup> It consists of a banner headline and a number of other selected headlines in three columns in **monospaced font**. Most link to an outside source, usually the online edition of a newspaper, which hosts the story. When no such source is available, either because the story is "developing",<sup>[29]</sup> with little known details at the time, or is an exclusive scoop, a special page is created on the Drudge Report servers, which contains text and sometimes images.

Stories on the site are ascribed different levels of importance, which Matt Drudge rates at his editorial discretion.

The *Report* almost always holds one major story above the logo, usually just one sentence hyperlinked to the most important story of the day. Other stories surrounding the main headline can be found in the upper left-hand side of the page and link to more specific articles dealing with aspects of the headline story. The standard story, either the headline or links below the logo, is written in black. The newest stories and those Drudge considers

most important are in red, all under a single major headline in large bold type. For especially important breaking stories, especially if they are still emerging, Drudge places art of a flashing red light on the screen.<sup>[30]</sup>

Although the site initially featured very few images, it is now usually illustrated with five or six photographs. Generally the images, like the linked headlines, are **hotlinked** from the servers of other news agencies.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> The photos were changed from color to **black and white** in August 2017.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Political leanings [ edit ]

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Matt Drudge has said that he is a [conservative](#), but "more of a [populist](#)".<sup>[32][33]</sup> Some regard the Drudge Report as conservative in tone,<sup>[34][35][36][37][38][39][40]</sup> and it has been referred to in the media as "a conservative news aggregator".<sup>[41]</sup> In 2008, Richard Siklos, an editor of *Fortune* magazine, called the Drudge Report a "conservative bullhorn".<sup>[42]</sup> Peter Wallsten, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, labelled Drudge a "well-known conservative warrior";<sup>[43]</sup> Saul Hansell, writing in the *New York Times*, referred to him as a "conservative muckraker";<sup>[44]</sup> and [Glenn Greenwald](#), writing in the *New York Magazine*, called him a "right-wing [hack](#)".<sup>[45]</sup> Greenwald also wrote that the Drudge Report—inter alia—is part of the "Bush/Cheney right-wing noise machine".<sup>[46]</sup>

Jesse Swick of *The New Republic* notes that the Drudge Report frequently links to stories that [cast doubt](#) upon global warming. "[Drudge] loves a press release from Senator [Inhofe](#) almost as much as he loves taking pot shots at [Al Gore](#) ... It's like flashing tasty images of popcorn and sodas between frames at movie theaters, only much less subtle."<sup>[47]</sup> [Ben Shapiro](#) wrote, "The American left can't restrict Internet usage or ban talk radio, so it de-legitimizes these news sources. Ripping alternative news sources as illegitimate is the left's only remaining option -- it cannot compete with the right wing in the new media ... They call Matt Drudge a muckraker and a [yellow journalist](#)."<sup>[48]</sup>

A study in 2005 placed the Drudge Report "slightly left of center".<sup>[49]</sup> "One thing people should keep in mind is that our data for the Drudge Report was based almost entirely on the articles that the Drudge Report lists on other Web sites", said [Timothy Groseclose](#), the head of the study. "Very little was

based on the stories that Matt Drudge himself wrote. The fact that the Drudge Report appears left of center is merely a reflection of the overall bias of the media."<sup>[49]</sup> Professor [Mark Liberman](#) critiqued the statistical model used in this study on the basis that model assumed conservative politicians do not care about the ideological position of think tanks they cite, while liberal politicians do.<sup>[50][51]</sup> The study was also criticized by media watchdog Spinwatch for its methodology and its authors' ties to conservative think tanks.<sup>[52]</sup>

In 2015 and 2016, Drudge repeatedly featured pro-Trump headlines during the [Republican Party presidential primaries](#), leading [Salon.com](#) and [Politico](#) to describe Drudge as "all in" for Trump.<sup>[53][54]</sup>

## Influence [\[ edit \]](#)

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According to Quantcast, the site has more than three million page visits per day.<sup>[55]</sup> According to [Mark Halperin](#), "Drudge's coverage affects the media's political coverage", effectively steering the media's political coverage towards what Halperin calls "the most salacious aspects of American politics".<sup>[56]</sup> In *The Way To Win*, a book written by Halperin and [John Harris](#), Drudge is called "the [Walter Cronkite](#) of his era".<sup>[56][57]</sup> [Democratic Party](#) strategist [Chris Lehane](#) says "phones start ringing" whenever Drudge breaks a story, and [Mark McKinnon](#), a former media advisor to [George W. Bush](#), said that he checked the site 30–40 times per day.<sup>[56]</sup>

Wallsten analyzed the data derived from a detailed content analysis of print, broadcast and blog discussions during the last five weeks of the 2008 campaign. Rather than the broad impact posited by professional political observers, Wallsten found that, even on issues where the site should be expected to have its largest impact, the stories highlighted on the Drudge Report exert a fairly inconsistent influence over what traditional media outlets chose to cover. Specifically, the time series analysis presented by Wallsten shows evidence of a "Drudge effect" on print and broadcast coverage for only five of the 10 political scandals that received the most attention on the Drudge Report between September 30 and November 3, 2008.<sup>[58]</sup>

Matt Drudge has been criticized by other media news personalities: [Bill O'Reilly](#) twice called Drudge a "threat to democracy" in response to Drudge disclosing his book sales figures,<sup>[59]</sup> and [Keith Olbermann](#) referred to Drudge as "an idiot with a modem".<sup>[60]</sup>

Drudge, along with his website, was labelled one of the "Top 10 anti-Barack Obama conservatives" by the US editor of [The Daily](#)

Telegraph in February 2009.<sup>[61]</sup>

In addition to its media influence, the Drudge Report has influenced design elements on other sites, some with opposing viewpoints <sup>[62]</sup> and some which use the same format for listing news. A left-leaning<sup>[63]</sup> parody site called [Drudge Retort](#) was founded in 1998 as "a send-up of Mr. Drudge's breathless style".<sup>[64][65][66]</sup> According to online analytics data for April 2010 from the Newspaper Marketing Agency, the Drudge Report is the number one site referrer for all online UK commercial newspaper websites.<sup>[67]</sup>

## Notable stories [\[ edit \]](#)

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### **Monica Lewinsky scandal** [\[ edit \]](#)

The Drudge Report attained prominence when it was the first to report what came to be known as the [Lewinsky scandal](#). It published the story on January 17, 1998, alleging that *Newsweek* had turned down the story.<sup>[68]</sup>

### **Swift Boat Veterans for Truth** [\[ edit \]](#)

During the 2004 US presidential campaign, the [Swift Boat Veterans for Truth](#) group made claims about [John Kerry's](#) war record, which were mentioned by Drudge and investigated by major newspapers and TV networks.<sup>[56]</sup> The book *Unfit for Command: Swiftboat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry* became a best-seller in part due to its promotion in the Drudge Report.

### **Obama photo** [\[ edit \]](#)

Drudge<sup>[69]</sup> published a photo of [Barack Obama](#) in [Somali](#) tribal dress on February 25, 2008,<sup>[70]</sup> and reported that the photo had been sent to him by a Clinton campaign staffer.<sup>[71]</sup> The publication of the photograph resulted in a brief war of words between the Clinton and Obama campaign organizations.

### **Prince Harry in Afghanistan** [\[ edit \]](#)

On February 28. 2008, Drudge published an article noting that [Prince Harry](#) was serving with his regiment in [Afghanistan](#). Prince Harry was ten weeks into a front-line deployment in

Afghanistan that was subject to a voluntary news blackout by the UK press.<sup>[72]</sup> The blackout was designed to protect Prince Harry and the men serving with him from being specifically targeted by the Taliban. An Australian weekly women's magazine *New Idea* had broken the story in January,<sup>[73]</sup> but it was not followed up at the time. The *New Idea* editors claimed ignorance of any news blackout.<sup>[74]</sup> Then a German newspaper *Berliner Kurier* published a short piece on February 28, also before Drudge.<sup>[75]</sup>

Drudge subsequently claimed the report as an exclusive. Chief of the General Staff Sir Richard Dannatt, professional head of the British Army, said: "I am very disappointed that foreign websites have decided to run this story without consulting us".<sup>[76]</sup> The Prince's tour of duty was prematurely ended, since his unit might have been targeted by large-scale suicide attacks intended to kill the Prince.<sup>[77]</sup>

## US Senate problems [\[ edit \]](#)

On March 9, 2010, The *Senate Sergeant-at-Arms* claimed that the site was "responsible for the many viruses popping up throughout the Senate...Please avoid using [this] site until the Senate resolves this issue...The Senate has been swamped the last couples [*sic*] days with this issue." The Drudge Report countered stating that "it served more than 29 million pages Monday without an e-mail complaint about 'pop ups,' or the site serving 'viruses'".<sup>[78]</sup>

# Controversial stories, errors and questions about sourcing [\[ edit \]](#)

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## Exclusives [\[ edit \]](#)

Research by the media magazine [Brill's Content](#) in 1998 cast doubt on the accuracy of the majority of the "exclusives" claimed by the Drudge Report. Of the 51 stories claimed as exclusives from January to September 1998, the magazine found that 31 (61%) were actually exclusive stories. Of those, 32% were untrue, 36% were true and the remaining 32% were of debatable accuracy.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Sidney Blumenthal lawsuit [\[ edit \]](#)

In 1997, the Drudge Report reported that incoming White House assistant [Sidney Blumenthal](#) beat his wife and was covering it up. Drudge retracted the story the next day and apologized, saying that he was given bad information, but Blumenthal filed a \$30 million libel lawsuit against Drudge. After four years Blumenthal dropped his lawsuit, saying that the suit had cost him tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees. He agreed to pay \$2,500 to Drudge's Los Angeles attorney for travel costs, claiming that Drudge was "backed by unlimited funds from political supporters who use a tax-exempt foundation".<sup>[79][80][81][82]</sup> The Individual Rights Foundation, led by [conservative](#) activist [David Horowitz](#), paid Drudge's legal fees in the Blumenthal lawsuit. A federal judge noted in the judgment that Drudge "is not a reporter, a journalist, or a newsgatherer. He is, as he admits himself, simply a purveyor of gossip."<sup>[83]</sup>

## **Alleged John Kerry intern scandal** [ [edit](#) ]

During the [2004 Presidential campaign](#), Drudge ran a story quoting General [Wesley Clark](#), in which Clark claimed that the [John Kerry](#) campaign would implode over an intern affair. Drudge reported that other news outlets were investigating the alleged affair, but removed it from the site shortly afterwards when the other news outlets dropped their investigations.<sup>[84]</sup>

## **Alleged Bill Clinton illegitimate child** [ [edit](#) ]

In 1999, the Drudge Report announced that it had viewed a videotape which was the basis of a *Star Magazine* and *Hard Copy* story. Under the headline, *Woman Names Bill Clinton Father Of Son In Shocking Video Confession*, Drudge reported a videotaped "confession" by a former prostitute who claimed that her son was fathered by [Bill Clinton](#). The *Report* stated, "To accuse the most powerful man in the world of being the father of her son is either the hoax of a lifetime, or a personal turmoil that needs resolution. Only two people may know that answer tonight."<sup>[85]</sup> The claim turned out to be a hoax.<sup>[86]</sup>

## **Alleged heckling of Republican Senators by CNN reporter** [ [edit](#) ]

On April 1, 2007, Drudge cited an unnamed "official" source saying that [CNN](#) reporter [Michael Ware](#) had "heckled" Republican Senators McCain and Graham during a live press conference.<sup>[87]</sup> Drudge reported that:

An official at the press conference called Ware's conduct "outrageous," saying, "here you have two United States

Senators in Baghdad giving first-hand reports while Ware is laughing and mocking their comments. I've never witnessed such disrespect. This guy is an activist not a reporter."

— Matthew Drudge, Drudge Report

A video hosted by [Rawstory](#) shows that Ware did not make a sound or ask any question during the press conference.<sup>[88]</sup>

## ***Oprah* and Sarah Palin** [ [edit](#) ]

On September 5, 2008, the Drudge Report reported that *Oprah* staffers were "sharply divided on the merits of booking Sarah Palin". Drudge said that he obtained the information from an anonymous source. Winfrey responded in a written statement to news outlets saying, "The item in today's Drudge Report is categorically untrue. There has been absolutely no discussion about having Sarah Palin on my show. At the beginning of this presidential campaign when I decided that I was going to take my first public stance in support of a candidate, I made the decision not to use my show as a platform for any of the candidates." Oprah Winfrey's public statement came after she had already endorsed Barack Obama for president on *Larry King Live* in 2007.<sup>[89]</sup> Drudge was accused by some commentators of planting a false story for political ends.<sup>[90]</sup>

## **Ashley Todd attack hoax** [ [edit](#) ]

On October 23, 2008, Drudge published an unconfirmed exclusive story regarding [Ashley Todd](#), the 20-year-old employee<sup>[91][92]</sup> of the [College Republican National Committee \(CRNC\)](#) and [John McCain](#) volunteer who had allegedly been attacked by a black male for having a McCain sticker on her car

in [Pittsburgh](#). Drudge reported the story without a link but as "developing", titling the headline "Shock: McCain Volunteer Attacked and Mutilated in Pittsburgh – "B" carved into 20 yr old Woman's Face".<sup>[93]</sup> The story set off a "storm of media attention",<sup>[91]</sup> being quickly picked up by many conservative bloggers and right-wing talk radio show hosts, all citing the Drudge Report as their source. It was also reported in newspapers and TV both in the US and around the world.<sup>[94]</sup> The story was confirmed to be a hoax perpetrated by Todd and, according to [Talking Points Memo](#), spread to reporters by McCain's Pennsylvania Communications Director.<sup>[95]</sup>

Drudge then printed a retraction of the story, including links to the news stories detailing that the attack had been a hoax, and that Ashley Todd had performed a similar "attack" on herself while volunteering in a local [Ron Paul grassroots](#) group. She was later asked to leave the group because of the hoax.

## **Birther conspiracy theories** [\[ edit \]](#)

Drudge Report promoted the debunked conspiracy theory that Barack Obama was not a U.S. citizen.<sup>[96]</sup>

## **Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign** [\[ edit \]](#)

On August 8, 2016, Drudge Report used a photo of Democratic nominee [Hillary Clinton](#) on their website. The photo depicted two men helping Clinton go up the stairs during her campaign in [South Carolina](#) on February 27, 2016. Afterwards, several [Twitter](#) accounts in support of Republican nominee [Donald Trump](#) used the photo on the site, especially with the hashtag #HillaryHealth, which was used prior to the incident.<sup>[97]</sup> The use of the photo was criticized by several commentators for taking a relatively old photograph out of context as well as misleading their readers.<sup>[98][99]</sup>

On October 3, 2016, Drudge Report published an unfounded claim that [Bill Clinton](#) had an illegitimate child named Danney Williams, an allegation that Drudge Report itself had reported as debunked in 1999 based on a [Time](#) magazine article.<sup>[100]</sup>

On December 30, 2016, Drudge Report accused the [United States federal government](#) of attempting to shut down its website with a [denial-of-service attack](#).<sup>[101][102]</sup> Beginning roughly one week earlier, DDoS attacks had repeatedly taken the site offline for extended periods. Cybersecurity analysts speculated that the attack was on the scale of the [2016 Dyn cyberattack](#) and suggested that only a small number of groups would have the ability to take down a highly-trafficked site for extended lengths of time.<sup>[103]</sup>

Drudge Report promoted the debunked [Pizzagate conspiracy theory](#),<sup>[104]</sup> as well as conspiracy theories about the [murder of Seth Rich](#).<sup>[105]</sup>

## **Conspiracy theories about the 2017 Las**

### **Vegas Massacre** [ [edit](#) ]

In October 2017, Drudge Report promoted conspiracy theories about the [2017 Las Vegas Massacre](#).<sup>[106]</sup>

### **Falsely accusing immigrants of starting wildfires** [ [edit](#) ]

In October 2017, the Drudge Report falsely stated that an undocumented immigrant caused the [October 2017 Northern California wildfires](#).<sup>[107]</sup> The story, which originated on Breitbart News was rebutted by the Sonoma County's sheriff department

which stated, "This is completely false, bad, wrong information that Breitbart started and is being put out into the public."<sup>[107]</sup>

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