

HOW TO

Write an Op-ed or Letter to the Editor



Community
Advocacy
Field Guide

A WHAT?

One way to share your thoughts with your community is to submit a written piece to your local newspaper. Sure, you can always publish it on social media, but you will only be engaging with your friends and followers there. You should submit your written thoughts somewhere people are already reading to get more engagement.

You have two options when you go this route.

A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is a short piece written in response to something published in a paper, magazine, or news website. It can also be a brief response to things going on in the community.

An **Op-ed**, which stands for opposite the editorial page, is a longer persuasive piece. You will see these in papers like the New York Times, the Washington Post, and most local newspapers. It's up to you where you submit your piece, but be aware of two things: If it's a local issue, you should submit it to a local paper, and competition is fierce in larger papers.

What's the point?

Pick one point and phrase it as a single, clear, and specific thesis or question. If you can't make your point in one sentence, it's too complicated.

Hook the reader

State your point right away to grab your audience. You can add a personal story, cultural reference, or current event to make it interesting, but the goal is to catch the reader's attention.

Support and Solutions

For the body of your written piece, state the problem and why the reader should care. Use data, facts, and personal stories to persuade. Address opposing arguments and propose solutions and why they will work.

Call to Action

State your point right away to grab your audience. You can add a personal story, cultural reference, or current event to make it interesting, but the goal is to catch the reader's attention.

Keep it short

Remember to keep LTEs around 200-300 words, but even shorter is fine. Op-eds should be around 500-600 words. Remember to take time to edit for grammar, word choice, content, and length.

Timing is everything

Good timing can make your piece more relevant. Submit quickly in response to events, LTEs/op-eds/articles that have been recently published, statements by elected officials, or current affairs.

DO IT!

Submit your LTE or Op-ed to your local paper

1

Each paper has its own deadlines and word limits - so check your paper's requirements before you begin writing. For example, [here](#) are the guidelines for submitting to the Salt Lake Tribune.

2

Submit to only one paper at a time. If a paper isn't interested they will let you know and then you can submit it to another publication.

3

Send LTEs responding to someone else's LTE, op-eds, or article to the paper that published them.

4

Don't submit to the same paper within 30 days of publishing there.

Lastly, don't despair if your letter doesn't get published. Submit a new letter to the same publication. Try a new angle. Try a new issue. The main thing is to not give up and keep trying!

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