



Women. Power. Peace.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

WRITE AN OP-ED OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR



CONTENTS

- General and logistical information about writing op-eds
- Overview of what to include in an op-ed
- Key facts and recommendations on writing a letter to the editor
- Suggestions for writing your letter to the editor

WHAT IS AN OP-ED?

An opinion editorial (op-ed) is a short written piece sent to a newspaper that offers a clear and opinionated view of a current events issue. Writing an op-ed gives the writer a chance to voice concerns or thoughts regarding a recent event or political issue; however op-eds are not in direct response to something already published. By writing an op-ed, you can influence fellow citizens as well as your members of Congress.

THE BASICS:

An op-ed should be 600-800 words, ideally under 750. If you don't have enough material to write an op-ed, consider writing a letter to the editor.

Make sure to have ONE main point.

Your op-ed is more likely to be placed in a local newspaper where you have roots (you grew up there, own property, went to school there, etc).



WHAT TO INCLUDE

- Any **qualifications** that support your credibility on the issue
- A **short cover letter** in your email with the op-ed text copied below and attached in the e-mail. The cover letter should briefly explain why you are writing and why **your** view is important
- **Contact information:** name, day and evening phone numbers, fax number, e-mail address

OP-ED OUTLINE

You have 10-12 short paragraphs to make your point and lay out your argument in an op-ed. This outline offers suggestions to ensure you include all of the information that will make your argument as strong and effective as possible.

Introducing the Issue:

- **Act fast:** To make sure the subject is relevant, act within the same week!
- **Attention grabbing:** Compose a first sentence that grabs the reader's attention and clearly introduces your point.
- **Be direct:** Be clear, concise, and strong with your message.

Developing your Argument:

- **Persuasion:** Include a few persuasive paragraphs explaining your point and offering supportive and attention-grabbing facts.
- **Illustration:** Metaphors, analogies, and stories are all useful devices to help convey your point in common and relatable language.

Offering an Alternative:

- **Is there a solution?** Make sure to include a few paragraphs explaining what you think we should do to address the issue.

Addressing the Other Side:

- **The opposition:** Finish the body of the op-ed by briefly addressing opposing arguments and demonstrating why your view is more credible. You want your message to be strong and rational; addressing opposing arguments will allow an opportunity to further emphasize why your view is the right one!

Ending Strong:

- **Hearts and minds:** Make sure the ending is strong and catchy. Ideally the facts and persuasive arguments in the body of the op-ed have established the groundwork for your message. Now make sure to draw an emotional connection to your piece that will recruit the hearts of the readers.

Try to make a personal connection to your message and don't be afraid to take a stand!

For additional information about placing op-eds, contact WAND at peace@wand.org.



Be sure to include a "pull quote" - a catchy, memorable line or strongly stated main idea that will stick with your readers a month after they read your op-ed.

-Truman National Security Project

WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR (LTE)?

Letters to the editor are usually written responses to something that has appeared on the op-ed page or in a news story. LTEs are a vehicle for public response to current news, not the place to demand a correction or complain about bias. As with writing an op-ed, you can impact the opinions of other citizens as well as your members of Congress by writing a letter to the editor.

TIPS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

Send your LTE in response to news pieces within 2-3 days.

Look up the submission guidelines and contact information specific to your local paper. Following any given guidelines will increase the likelihood of getting your letter published.

Send letters to local as well as weekly community newspapers.

THE BASICS:

- **Letters to the editor are generally much shorter than an op-ed and highlight one specific point.**
- **Letters should be 100-150 words.**
- **Keep your letter relevant and concise.**
- **Include your contact information: name, day and evening phone numbers, address, and e-mail.**
- **Make sure to specify any relevant qualifications you have that relate to your issue.**



WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- **About what?** You may choose to comment on a specific allegation in a piece or take issue with a reported policy or position. An LTE may also be a place to share your own views on a current news story.
- **First impressions:** Draw people in immediately with an attention-grabbing first sentence.
- **Be specific:** Make sure to reference the newspaper and the specific article, publication date, and author to which your letter responds.
- **Illustrate your point:** Include relevant facts and try to draw personal and local connections to the issue. Keep your message short and avoid too many statistics that overwhelm your main point.
- **Provide direction:** Conclude your letter by stating ways to address the issue.