



5 Easy Steps to Writing an Op-Ed

Step 1: Focus on an issue that affects your community.

Become an expert. Know your facts. Make sure you have the background to be acknowledged as an expert on this issue. Your issue has to be newsworthy now!

Step 2: Identify a specific problem.

Focus on how it affects your community.

Step 3: Be bold.

Your first sentence, the first paragraph has to say it all. Be clear and bold in expressing your opinion. Be timely but not outrageous. If you could only print this one paragraph, would you persuade your readers?

Step 4: Defend your statement.

This is the core of your op-ed where you bring in the facts, statistics and third party opinions that back up your bold statement (see Step 3). Since you have only 500 words for this portion, the key is to stay very, very focused:

- Boil your argument down to three major points.
- Keep everything directly tied to your opening statement.
- Include emotion to make people care about your facts.
- Include a short scenario, vignette to personalize the issue.
- Educate without preaching. Make your style personal and conversational.
- Write at a level that appeals to the average reader.

"A persuasive op-ed piece is focused, focused, focused."

Step 5: Propose a practical solution.

End on a strong note. Restate your position and include a call to action. You have approximately 100 words to propose a strong solution to the problem you identified. If you skip this part, your op-ed loses credibility.

Formatting tips:

- Use simple, short sentences. You don't have a lot of space for filler adjectives and adverbs.
- Avoid city-oriented jargon.
- Eliminate passive verbs.
- Make your paragraphs short—no more than three sentences each.
- End with a concise bio (no more than a short paragraph) that shows why you're qualified to write this op-ed.
- Put your name, address, phone and email address on the bottom of the page.

How to get published:

- Your op-ed MUST hook into a current event.
- The easiest way to set up your op-ed is call the editorial page or op-ed editor for your local media.
- Most op-ed/editorial page editors plan their section at least a week in advance.
- Be ready to concisely explain why the issue is important. Why would the readers care and why the paper would want to print it?
- Never submit the same op-ed to media in the same market. This upsets editors!
- You don't have to write an op-ed by yourself. It's ok to ask another person to work with you (like a ghost writer).
- Chances are good that they'll welcome your piece. When you're ready to send it (regular or email), include a cover letter that reminds the editor who you are, why you're submitting the piece and your contact information.
- Once it runs, call and thank the op-ed editor for publishing your piece.