



How to Write a Letter to the Editor

Media research shows that the letters to the editor section is one of the most widely read parts of the paper. It's a natural forum for sharing your opinion and story with your community.

What to say:

- Stay local and timely.
- Stick with a basic issue.
- Tie your letter to a recent event or previous article/editorial/letter to the editor. This helps set the stage for your letter's point.

How to say it:

- Be brief—no more than 200-250 words maximum. Check your local paper for letter guidelines. If you need more space, do an op-ed piece.
- Keep it to one point. State your point clearly in your first sentence.
- Follow with background sentence or two, state your position and end by suggesting what the reader can do to help.
- Use a fact or figure to back up your position if possible.
- Compare and contrast is another good letter-writing technique.
- No more than three paragraphs, with one-two short sentences per paragraph.
- Avoid too much emotion—no ranting, raving or sarcastic remarks about the opposing side of an issue. No clichés or puns please.
- If you respond to another letter or column, don't attack the author. Instead offer your opinion and try to promote a debate that encourages other reader letters.

Practical tips:

- If you're responding to a recent news article, previous letter editorial or news event, reference it by a date and headline. It makes your letter more relevant. It also lets the editor quickly check the original item to verify your references
- Include your name, address, email and phone number.
- Read your letter out loud before you send it. Does it make sense?
- Keep a copy to see how the letter may have been edited.
- Don't be disappointed if your letter doesn't get published. Newspapers get lots of letters daily.
- If you had a letter published recently, wait a month or so before trying again or have someone else submit your letter.
If you send in a letter and don't hear back from the paper within 10 days, try sending it elsewhere.

