

SHARING YOUR STORY:

TIPS FOR CRAFTING AN OP-ED OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR



What is an op-ed?

An op-ed is an opinion piece written for the opinion or editorial section of a newspaper, magazine, or other news outlet. It gives you an opportunity to share your perspective, lived experience, or expertise on an issue that matters to you. Op-eds are often 600 to 750 words, but limits vary by publication.

What is a letter to the editor?

A letter to the editor is a short opinion piece submitted by a reader, often in response to a recent article, event, or issue. It typically runs 200 to 300 words, but limits vary by publication.



HOW DO I START?

What's the one thing you want to communicate?

Start with your key message. What is the most important thing you want readers to understand, remember, or do?

Write it in one clear sentence.

Example: "Congress should increase funding for pain research."

Hint: A focused message makes your piece stronger.

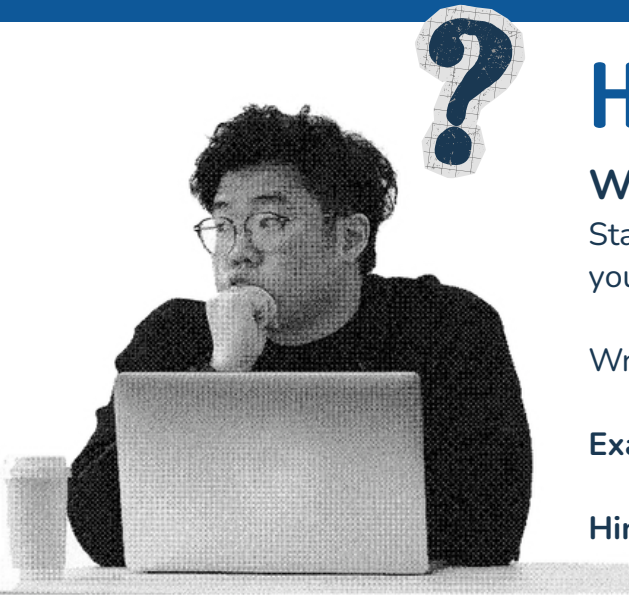
Then what?

- Build your piece around your key message.
- Identify a few facts or examples that support it.
- Share your personal experience to help readers understand why the issue matters.
- Use credible facts, research, or data when possible.

Your lived experience is powerful. Pairing it with strong supporting information can make your message even more effective.

Anything else?

Think about what you want readers to **do, think, say, or feel** after reading your piece. Is there a clear **call to action**?



CONSTRUCTION TIPS



- Engage readers from your first sentence.
- State your **key message** early.
- Keep your points focused and easy to follow.
- Combine personal experience with supporting facts.
- End with a clear call to action and/or reinforce why the issue matters.
- Edit before submitting: **Is my message clear? Is it compelling? Did I support my key message?**

HOW DO I SUBMIT?

Every publication has its own submission guidelines.

Check them before you start writing, including:

- Word count
- How and where to submit
- Submission deadlines
- Whether a short bio or photo is required
- Other formatting or submission requirements

If you don't hear back, it is OK to politely follow up.

