

Writing Effective Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the editor can be effective in influencing public opinion. This section is one of the most widely read parts of most newspapers, offering a chance to reach a broad audience. Letters to the editor can provide readers with information and insights on issues with which they may be unfamiliar and can also inspire readers to take action.

- **Keep it brief** — Keep letters to 250 words or less. Discuss only one issue in a letter. Many newspapers will edit letters. Keeping the letter short will help ensure that the newspaper does not edit out important points.
- **Get to the point** — Make one main point. Start with a compelling introductory sentence. Follow the introduction with short, clear factual points. Don't make broad statements you can't support with facts. **Include a citable/ credible statistics.** Focus on what is most important rather than trying to address every aspect of the issue. Don't go on an emotional rant, stick to your points, and let the facts speak for themselves. Make sure to reference your sources!
- **Relate it to home** — Newspaper readers care about how an issue will impact them or their families locally. Including brief information on the economic or other impacts of an issue in the community will draw readers' interest.
- **Personalize the issue** — Provide an example of how the issue impacts a real person in the community to help readers understand the issue and encourage them to take action. Avoid submitting form letters.
- **End with a call to action** — Ask readers to follow-up, such as joining in calling on policymakers to address the issue.
- **Be timely** — Try to place letters when they will be most effective. For example, letters supporting or opposing legislation will have the most impact when legislators are considering the issue.
- **Be professional** — Letters should be typed or neatly handwritten and should follow the submission rules of the particular newspaper. **Language should be polite but persuasive.**
- **BE INTERESTING:** Get your reader's attention and keep it to the end of your letter. Open with an interesting fact or strong statement and keep your points as interesting as possible.
- **AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS:** Show respect for the opposite opinion. Being rude may cause people to disagree with you on principle.
- **PROOFREAD:** Re-read your letter. Check for grammar and spelling mistakes. If possible, ask another person to read your letter for accuracy and clarity.
- **Identify yourself** — Sign the letter personally. Include any information highlighting your expertise on the issue. Provide contact information, including an address and daytime phone number so the newspaper can verify the letter's authenticity.
- **Follow Writing Packet Rules** — This is another part of your Newspaper Portfolio. It will be graded. Do your best work.

Modified from <http://www.nea.org/home/19683.htm>
<https://www.studentnewsdaily.com/letter-to-the-editor-guidelines/>