



Your Climate Story + The Media *Letters, Op-eds, and the Pitch Email*

Questions to Ask Yourself While Writing

- Why should readers trust you? Can you backup your topic?
- Is your argument based on evidence?
- What's new that you are contributing to the conversation?
- So what? Why should readers care?
- Does your language write off the people who would disagree with you, or do you employ empathy and respect in your pursuit to change minds?

Letter to the Editor

What:

Letters to the editor (LTE) are usually written in direct response to an article, editorial, op-ed, or column that your local paper has printed. They can communicate support for or disagreement with an issue, a representative's decision, an idea. They can also be a reaction to or notification of a newsworthy event. Short in length (150-250 words), they are printed in the Opinion section of the paper.

When to use:

- Your desired focus (solar, women and climate change, etc) has been mentioned in the media recently.
- Your issue of focus has a quick deadline or timeframe.
- You're trying to create noise/awareness about an issue, event, etc.

Key things to include:

- A compelling, straightforward hook or topic sentence.
- Concise language.
- One to two points you can explain simply and clearly (this is a short piece).
- A grounding fact or two.
- A call to action—"join me", "call your legislator", "teachers should teach climate change", etc.

Op-ed

What:

Op-eds (or “opposite editorial”) are articles devoted to a strong, specific opinion or commentary on a relevant issue. Think of it as a longer LTE with extra space to backup your thoughts, usually between 600-800 words. Op-eds usually get published when they revolve around a recent or upcoming event, news story, holiday, or issue happening locally. Don’t worry about a title or headline; the outlet will craft one for you.

When to use:

- You are writing about a larger theme that will not fit into 200 words or less
- You have expertise in your desired focus or issue
- You’re hoping to communicate a point and educate readers about a specific issue, cause, or meaning.

Key things to include:

- A compelling, straightforward hook or topic sentence that explains your viewpoint right away.
- Concise language.
- Your distinctive, personal voice (it’s your opinion, after all!)
- A clearly defined point.
- Solid research to ground your point of view in fact.
- A strong closing, whether a statement or a suggestion.

Generic Pitch

What:

Essentially a ‘news tip’. Any constituent can email a reporter, editor, or newsroom and suggest a story idea for the media outlet to cover. Pitches generally take some research into the outlet you are approaching, because they are specific to why that story would interest that outlet’s audience. Often formatted in short sentences and/or a bullet-point list. Always follow up if you don’t get an initial response.

When to use:

- You’re hosting an event you want your local community to know about
- You’re beginning an initiative or project (and your climate story is the perfect human angle to connect to this!)
- Your climate story affects the community at large
- Your story relates to a timely issue

Key things to include:

- A one-two sentence bio describing who you are in your community.

- An explanation of your story, event, etc., around 3-5 sentences long.
- Grounding reasons why your story is perfect for their outlet
 - Examples: Reporter recently covered a similar issue, it would fit during their 6 o'clock news series about sustainability, upcoming national holiday, etc.
- Any links to supporting material you can provide to round out your pitch