



Letters to the Editor v. Op-eds

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.