



## Writing an Op-Ed

The Op-Ed section of a newspaper, so-called because it often appears opposite the Editorials, is a place for readers to express their opinions on an issue. Writing an Op-Ed is a strategic way for ordinary citizens to shape and inform the public debate and persuade others, including policy-makers, to consider an issue from a different point of view. Consider that an Op-Ed is often written by one person and signed by another; an Op-Ed is more likely to be published if it is signed by a prominent member of your community.

### **Tips for writing an effective Op-Ed:**

1. **Follow the rules.** Every newspaper has its own guidelines for word count, style, and submission. Find out what your newspaper requires before you start writing.
2. **Make it timely.** Connect your piece to a current event (called a news peg), like the anniversary of a major event, the publication of new research findings, or a politician's visit to your city.
3. **Take a stand.** Op-Eds are meant to persuade, not merely inform. Communicate a clear and concise argument and back it up with facts. Include your sources.
4. **Be brief and focused.** Keep your piece to 500-750 words and stick to one issue. Use short sentences and get to the point in your first paragraph. If it's any longer and you aren't well-known in your community or field, most editors will not even consider your piece.
5. **Use your own voice.** It is appropriate to reference and even lead with a personal anecdote or story; sharing a vivid and relevant story grabs readers' attention and can sometimes be the most persuasive part of your argument.
6. **Propose a solution.** Your Op-Ed should include specific recommendations on how to address the issue.
7. **Address your critics.** Consider devoting one paragraph to anticipating your opponents' responses. You might introduce this section with a line like "to be sure," or "granted,"...
8. **Go out strong.** Your Op-Ed should conclude with a strong closing paragraph that summarizes your argument and drives your point home.

Your piece should be double-spaced, and should include your name, address, phone number, title, and e-mail at the top. Find out the proper form of submission from your local paper's website. You can expect that if a paper intends to use your Op-Ed (or some excerpt from it) that they will contact you for permission.