



Writing Letters to the Editor

A Letter to the Editor addresses the way a newspaper covered a particular issue. Writing a Letter to the Editor provides an opportunity for anyone who reads the newspaper, or most magazines, to express an opinion about a specific issue to a large audience. Policy-makers pay attention to Letters to the Editor, so they are also an important advocacy tool.

Tips for Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor:

1. **Speed is (almost) everything.** Editors receive hundreds of letters every day. How do they decide which ones get printed? Often it boils down to timing. Responding to a news story the same day it was printed will greatly increase your chance of getting published.
2. **Keep it short and to the point.** Keep your letter to a maximum of 150 words. Be sure to make your point in the first paragraph and substantiate it with facts throughout the letter.
3. **Use your own voice.** Editors are less likely to print those that seem like form letters. Be strategic with any special knowledge or expertise you bring to the issue.

A persuasive Letter to the Editor will follow this general format:

1. To the editor:
2. “Your article, *‘Thai Premiere Ousted,’* Smith, John, Sept. 10...”
3. Paragraph stating your position about the article and any facts supporting it.
4. Pithy closing line.
5. Your name, title, address, and daytime phone number.

You can expect that if a paper intends to use your Letter to the Editor (or some excerpt from it) that they will contact you for permission.