



HOW DO YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Source: Community Toolbox

Here's what you need to know to write a letter to the editor:

OPEN THE LETTER WITH A SIMPLE SALUTATION.

Don't worry if you don't know the editor's name. A simple "To the Editor of the Daily Sun," or just "To the Editor:" is sufficient. If you have the editor's name, however, you should use it to increase the possibilities of your letter being read.

GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION.

Your opening sentence is very important. It should tell readers what you're writing about, and make them want to read more.

EXPLAIN WHAT THE LETTER IS ABOUT AT THE START.

Throughout your letter, remember the rule:

- Be quick,
- Be concise, and then
- Be quiet.
- Don't make the editor or the general public wait to find out what you want to say. Tell them your key point at the beginning.

EXPLAIN WHY THE ISSUE IS IMPORTANT.

If you are motivated enough to write a letter to a newspaper or magazine, the importance of your topic may seem clear to you. Remember, though, that the general public probably doesn't share your background or the interest. Explain the issue and its importance simply. Use plain language that most people will understand

GIVE EVIDENCE FOR ANY PRAISE OR CRITICISM.

If you are writing a letter discussing a past or pending action, be clear in showing why this will have good or bad results.

STATE YOUR OPINION ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

You can write a letter just to "vent," or to support or criticize a certain action or policy, but you may also have suggestions about what could be done to improve the situation. If so, be sure to add these as well. Be specific. And the more good reasons you can give to back up your suggestions, the better.

KEEP IT BRIEF.

Generally, shorter letters have a better chance of being published. So go back over your letter and see if anything can be cut or condensed. If you have a lot to say and it can't be easily made short, you may want to check with the editor to see if you could write a longer opinion feature or guest column.



SIGN THE LETTER.

Be sure to write your full name (and title, if relevant) and to include your address, phone number, and e-mail address. Newspapers won't print anonymous letters, though in some cases they may withhold your name on request. They may also call you to confirm that you wrote the letter before they publish it.

CHECK YOUR LETTER TO MAKE SURE IT'S CLEAR AND TO THE POINT.

A newspaper may not print every letter it receives, but clear, well-written letters are likely to be given more serious consideration.

Visit <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-editor/main> to explore:

- WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?
- WHY SHOULD YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?
- WHEN SHOULD YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?
- SHOULD YOU USE E-MAIL TO FAX OR TO SEND YOUR LETTER?
- HOW DO YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?
- HOW DO YOU GET YOUR LETTER ACCEPTED?

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