



Writing Op-Eds: Overview and Basics

Opinion pieces in print or online media are written to join or shape the conversation on issues that you care about. They are an opportunity to share your point of view, adding information you believe your readers would benefit from, rather than relying on a reporter or interviewer to interpret your meaning. Op-eds can raise the profile of the author and/or the organization and position you as a thought-leader on your issue. This can build credibility and help lead to members of the media, funders, elected officials, allied organizations, seeking you out in the future.

Format:

1. The lead paragraph introduces your main point.
2. Use about three supporting paragraphs, backed up with evidence such as statistics, historical lessons, unique personal experiences or stories, studies by other experts, etc.
3. Just before the concluding paragraph, take the opposition's core argument and state a rebuttal. This helps the reader see that you understand the opposing view and can refute their argument.
4. In the concluding paragraph, state your proposed solution and/or issue a call to action.
5. An op-ed is usually 600-750 words in length.

One author is standard, and not more than two. Who is the best messenger?

Answer these questions or establish your message before you start writing:

- Who is your target audience? Who needs to be persuaded by reading your piece?
- What media does your target audience consume? Print publications or digital media?
- Summarize your main point in one sentence and determine the best person to communicate.
- Name the three best pieces of evidence that support your position.
- Call out the main argument **against** your position or point of view. State your best counter.
- What do you want your target audience to do after reading your article? Your call to action.
- Do you want to tie this to a particular news story or event? Consider timing.

Connect to a current issue, historical event, popular culture:

- Tie your piece to an event in the news or anticipate news about to break.
- Present new research or studies, preferably with compelling facts or statistics.
- Highlight a unique personal story or experience you wish to share. An op-ed can be first-person.
- Tag onto holidays, anniversaries, references to pop culture.
- Take on conventional wisdom and make your case. Provide another point of view to coverage.

How do you get published?

--It depends on content—your message, point of view—and timing.

--Cut and paste your piece into the body of an email—do not attach.

--Include a pitch note in the body of the email, above your opinion piece. Make the case for publishing your op-ed, in one sentence. Include who wrote the piece and why.

--Tell the publication why your piece is timely and why it should be published now.

--Follow up. Send the email, call 24 hours later, call again in 48 hours.

--Send to one publication at a time. You want to give the paper (or site) exclusive rights to publish your piece before moving on to your second and third choices.

Find your local paper

To write to the Star Tribune: visit <http://www.startribune.com/submit-a-letter-or-commentary/115289839/>

To write to the Pioneer Press: email letters@pioneerpress.com

To write to the Duluth News Tribune: visit <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/content/letters-editor-823>

To write to the Bemidji Pioneer: visit <http://www.bemidjipioneer.com/user/106/contact>

To find other Minnesota newspapers, visit: <http://mna.org/newspaper-directory/>

From training materials by TakeActionMN and the Minnesota Nurses' Association.