

EDITORIAL WRITING

Editorials are opinion pieces in newspapers or news sites that are written to influence public opinion. Editorial pages commonly feature opinion pieces submitted by the editorial board, as well as other guest writers, columnists, or folks from the community. Guest submissions are referred to as “op-eds”, abbreviated from “opposite the editorial page.”

Successful editorial writing has a clear style, purpose, and sound reasoning. When you convince others about how this issue affects their communities and themselves, this motivates others to action. Your arguments and stories can convince others to pick up the phone or send a letter or an email to elected officials, urging them to vote in accordance with your position.

What can an editorial do?

- **Explain and Interpret:** Attempt to explain the meaning or significance of a situation, policy, or news event. This could include anything from providing background information to identifying and explaining the facts of an issue.
- **Criticize:** If you are criticizing actions, decisions, or situations in your editorial, be sure to include suggestions for change. It must be constructive criticism that is well-articulated and have sound reasoning. Do not bully or baselessly attack. Your argument must be substantiated with good facts and suggestions for change to be effective.
- **Defend:** Stand up for a viewpoint, individual, or institution that is under attack with the purpose of widening the support base. For example, you could write an editorial to defend a progressive tax proposal that is being criticized by an elected official.
- **Endorse:** Again, stand up for a viewpoint or issue, but go further to give it your commendation. You must give rock-solid reasons for your endorsement or support. This can also include praising a new policy or giving kind words to an action done well. But remember, if you’re writing on behalf of your faith community, 501(c)(3)s cannot endorse candidates in an election!
- **Compel and Inspire:** Compel your readers to take action – for example, to improve school lunch programs. You could do this by explaining the issue with the current lunch program, and then backing suggestions put out by a school committee that studied the problem. You could also encourage people to contact their elected officials and advocate on behalf of an issue or policy.

How should an editorial be written?

- Check with the publication guidelines before submitting an op-ed. Writing a piece to the appropriate length will increase your chances for publication. This is often under 500 words.
- **Avoid moralizing editorials.** If you get too preachy, it may turn the reader off.
- Your editorial must be built around a logical framework. It must have an:
 - **Introduction:** Get the reader's attention. The first sentence (the lead) can compel a reader to read on or give them the opportunity to escape. Follow your hook by introducing your topic or issue. If appropriate, you could also introduce your solution in the introduction.
 - **Body:** Persuade the reader by providing good reasoning with convincing facts and evidence. Explain the impact this issue has on your community. Make the reader feel like they have a direct stake in how the issue will be resolved.
 - **Conclusion:** The best conclusions are clear and concise as they prompt the readers to act on an issue! You can also reiterate the improvements your proposed action would make for the community.
- **An effective formula for editorial writing is to:**
 - **State** and briefly explain the problem.
 - **Take a Position** on the problem within the context of current events or legislation. Who is affected? And how?
 - **Provide Evidence** to support your position. Include statistics, as well as stories of human impact.
 - **Provide Realistic Solution(s)** to the problem. Why is your solution better than the alternative? Encourage critical thinking.
 - **Conclude** by reiterating your points and calling your reader to action.