

Top 10 Tips for Writing & Placing Op-Eds

1. **Always tie your op-ed into a news hook.** If you can see one coming, plan ahead. If a story is breaking, act fast (24 hrs). There has to be a reason why an editor should run it now.
2. **Make it personal.** Tell a story. Invoke an experience. Make it readable and relevant.
3. **Make it local.** With the exception of a small number of national outlets, there has to be a local tie in. What is the relevance of the local Representative or the states' Senators? How will the decision impact the community? What is the community history on the issue?
4. **Choose the right author.** A relevant local signer is key with most regional and local newspapers. With national outlets, the prestige and credibility of the author can make all the difference.
5. **Choose the right messenger.** On any given topic, some messengers have more persuasive credibility with the target audience than others. Who do they listen to? Who do they respect? And who do they not listen to?
6. **Argue a strong point – *powerfully*.** An op-ed argues a point of view, it does not weigh all sides of an issue. As a rough rule of thumb, make one strong point and back it up with 3-4 supporting arguments.
7. **Avoid jargon.** Use accessible language. Wherever possible use metaphors, analogies and stories to make your argument an accessible, common sense, plainly stated perspective.
8. **Always respect the word limit.** Editors don't have the time to cut your piece down to size and if it's too long it will very likely be rejected immediately. Typically, 750 words will do, but always check the paper's op-ed page to find out their preference. In general your odds will be better if your piece is even shorter.
9. **Start strong and end strong.** Open with a strong, tight, clear paragraph. If the reader only reads two paragraphs they should get your essential point. The middle paragraphs exist to reinforce your point. The final paragraph should close the deal and leave the reader feeling like it's only sensible to agree with you.
10. **Name names.** Policies don't just happen - people make decisions. In political communications, the aim is to declare who is responsible and to make it clear why they should do the right thing. This need not be adversarial, but it cannot be vague or unstated.