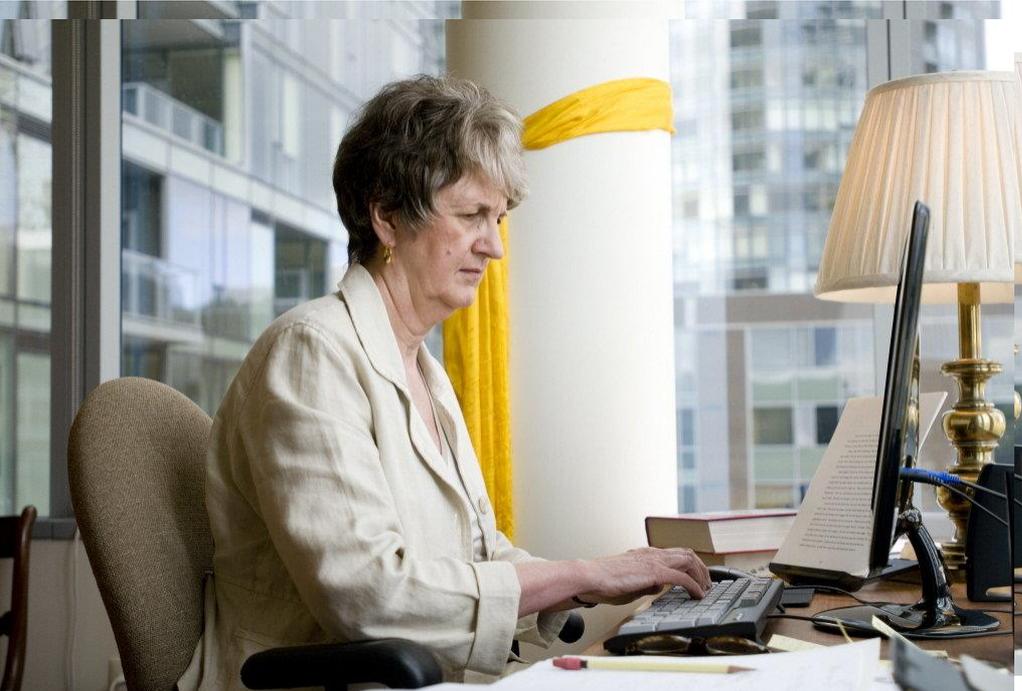


How To Write a Letter to the Editor And Get it Published

By Marilyn Sewell
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Author and Writer



Characteristics of Editorials

Letters to the editor have a structure:

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Conclusion



Editorials should have a tone of objectivity.



A timely news angle can be exploited, the writer often responding to a news story or editorial.



Engage issues, not personalities.



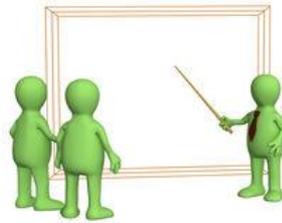
Give constructive criticism and offer alternatives to the problem or issue.

“Do we have the right to kill?”



“An alternative to the death penalty is life without parole.”

Editorials may:
Explain



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Criticize



Persuade



Praise



Or all of the above.

The Process of Writing A Letter to the Editor

1. Choose a topic that is timely, one that you are passionate about and knowledgeable about.
2. Research the topic and gather the pertinent information and facts, using reliable sources.
3. Refer to the issue or article at hand, perhaps giving an opposing viewpoint first. (If there is some part of the opposition with which you agree, concede that ... you will be seen as reasonable and open-minded.)



4. State your opinion in a thesis statement. You may include your motive and expertise, if appropriate.

5. Refute the other side, perhaps questioning the logic and using facts and figures, if appropriate. Use one or two simple facts that are compelling and memorable – don't become *wonky*.



6. Set forth an approach or solution which will enlighten those not so familiar with the subject.

the process con't

7. End with a strong , pointed conclusion that brings your argument together or urges people to take action. The end is the most important part of your editorial.

8. Edit carefully, paring down all unnecessary words.



KEEP
CALM
AND
EDIT
CAREFULLY

9. Read the piece out loud and listen for repetition, awkward rhythm, and lack of clarity

the process con't

10. Give your editorial to one or two of your trusted friends who are good readers/writers and ask their opinion. Is your editorial clear? Logical? Convincing?



11. Edit once again, making corrections; read it once again, and arrive at final copy.

12. If your position or background lends credibility, add this information after your name.



- Timing is everything. Respond ASAP to a current article or civic problem.
- Stay within the length prescribed by the paper.
- Use colorful, fresh language and figures of speech, such as metaphors.
- Avoid trite expressions.
- Stories and images are more persuasive than figures.
- Be specific.
- Focus on emotion and/or values, rather than facts and figures.
- Claim moral authority. You have an opinion that matters.