



PREPARING AN OPINION PIECE

An opinion piece – or Op-Ed – is a short article that expresses an opinion or viewpoint not expressed by the editorial staff on the editorial page. Traditionally, Op-Ed pieces are placed opposite the editorial page. Today, many newspapers use the work of syndicated columnists in their Op-Ed pages, thus limiting the amount of space available to community members. This should not dissuade anyone from submitting an Op-Ed; editors are always on the lookout for well written pieces that clearly express a definite viewpoint.

TIPS ON WRITING AND PLACING AN OP-ED

- Present one fundamental opinion or viewpoint, then support it with no more than three arguments.
- Localize the story.
- Write clearly and concisely, using straightforward and compelling language. Avoid jargon.
- Use the active voice, e.g., “XYZ Foundation sponsored the event,” not, “The event was sponsored by XYZ Foundation.”
- Offer facts and/or examples to strengthen a statement.
- Include a byline – a one-sentence description of the author.
- Do not include e-mail or web addresses in the text. The newspaper or journal will want responses to the Op-Ed sent to them, e.g., “Letters to the Editor.”
- Determine each media outlet’s requirements and procedures. Some accept no more than 500 words, others up to 700 or more words. Some prefer to have an Op-Ed submitted via e-mail, others by fax or post. Some will notify the author if the Op-Ed is rejected, others not.
- Send an Op-Ed to one newspaper at a time. Do not expect to hear from the editor.
- Recognize that a topical Op-Ed – one responding to a current event – will be reviewed promptly and that an “evergreen” Op-Ed – one that is not time-sensitive – may be held for later use.
- Realize that an accepted piece may be edited.
- If the Op-Ed is rejected or not printed, it’s fine to send it to another media outlet.

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