

HELPFUL TIPS FOR PREPARING AN OPINION PIECE

An opinion piece—or op-ed—is a short article that expresses a different opinion or viewpoint than that of the editorial staff. Traditionally, op-ed pieces are placed opposite the editorial page.

Today, many newspapers use the work of syndicated columnists on their op-ed pages, thus limiting the amount of space available to community members. This should not dissuade anyone from submitting an op-ed, however; editors are always on the lookout for well-written pieces that clearly express a particular viewpoint.

Writing and placing an op-ed

- Present one fundamental opinion or viewpoint, and then support it with no more than three arguments.
- Try to localize it.
- Write clearly and concisely, using straightforward and compelling language. Avoid jargon.
- Use the active voice. For example: “XYZ Foundation sponsored the event” instead of “the event was sponsored by XYZ Foundation.”
- Offer facts and/or examples to strengthen a statement.
- Include the name of the author and a one-sentence biography.
- Do not include a personal or organizational e-mail or web address in the text. The publication will want responses to the op-ed sent to them.
- Determine each media outlet’s requirements and procedures. Some accept no more than 500 words; others will accept 700 words or more. Some prefer to have an op-ed submitted via e-mail; others by fax or mail. Some will notify the author if the op-ed is rejected; others will 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 issue—will be reviewed promptly and that an “evergreen” op-ed—one that is not time-sensitive—may be held for later use.
- Realize that your op-ed may be edited.
- If the op-ed is not printed, it’s fine to send it to another media outlet.