

Letter Writing Tips

Newspaper Editors



- Include your full name, title/organization, address, daytime phone number, email address and signature.
- Be concise - Keep it short; 200 words maximum.
- Keep to one or two points. Ideally, state them in the first sentence.
- Refer to the article/item - identify its title/date – or mention the specific event.
- Stick to the facts. Refute or support specific points, address relevant items that are ignored, avoid attacking the media/newspaper. Do not make personal attacks on the reporter/columnist, but rather his/her views.
- Keep your audience in mind. Who reads this source? What arguments are likely to resonate with them? Remember, you are trying to convince others.
- Be timely. It can take a week before a letter is published – respond while the issue is hot.
- Be witty but avoid clichés.
- Respond while the issue is still current. Send a letter within a day of broadcast or article.

Elected Officials



- Be brief: Limit your letter to 350 words.
- Be clear and concise: State your position in the opening sentences of your letter. What you want from your government official, and why should he/she do it? Edit your letter before you send it.
- Be focused: Concentrate on the issue to create one very forceful and convincing point. Branching off on other topics will dilute your message.
- Be factual: Facts, quotes, and statistics strengthen your letter's credibility. Personal opinions lacking evidence sound vague and are easily dismissed.
- Be rational: Be credible. Revealing hostility or bitterness will undermine your integrity. Do not use angry tones.
- Be gracious. Thank the government official for his/her consideration.