



Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor

- Great way to influence your community and your legislators.
- Influences the newspaper -- even if not printed.
- It's free.
- Easy as **A-B-C** and **1-2-3**.

A = About. About something in the newspaper.

- Take as your starting point a recent article in the newspaper.
- Best chance of being printed: respond to an editorial, op-ed, or front-page story.
- Cite the specific article/letter/editorial's name, date and author.

B = Brief.

- Short.
- Common limits: 200-250 words.
- Check your newspaper's policy (letters page or website).

C = Concise.

- Get to the point.
- Just one point please.
- Can the reader to draw a clear conclusion?

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1: State the issue

- Refer to the issue as reported in the newspaper.
- Restate the issue as you understand it.

“Climate change is happening, it's happening now, and it's hurting our community.”

“Climate change is not just for polar bears any more. It's harming our health.”

2: Build your case

- Make one significant point. This could be:
 - Refute erroneous information. *Or...*
 - Provide a better interpretation of the facts. *Or...*
 - Add depth, nuance, new information.
 - Then stop.
- Use your own voice.
 - *Your* words, *your* expertise, *your* experience. For example:
 - Your experience as a health professional and/or member of PSR.
 - If your health is affected by the issue, or someone you love is.
 - Your direct experience. Example: if you're proposing renewable energy, and you have solar panels on your roof.
 - Include facts, and also feel free to include feeling.

3: Call to action.

- What can the reader do? Be specific, concrete, brief.
- If calling for a legislator or a corporation to take action, include their full name. (They track the newspapers, so they will see your letter.)
 - If your letter is published, send it to the target with a brief cover note. This doubles your impact.

Additional tips:

- Timeliness is critical -- submit by email.
- Mention your local connections. Newspapers love them.
- Sign with your full name. If you're a health professional, include medical credentials (MD, RN, etc.).
- For verification purposes, include your home address, email address and daytime telephone number. These will not be published.
- Disclose any personal or financial interest in the subject matter.
- Letters may be subject to editing.
- Individual letter writers are usually not published more than once every 60 days.
- Your submission must be unique. Not submitted to, or published by, any other media.

Now it's your turn!

- Did you cite a recent article?
- Your personal voice?
- What's your main point?
- Your local connection?

- Your opening sentence?
- Health expertise?
- Your ask?
- A cool closing line?

Remember: ABC, 1-2-3. Go forth and write LTE's!