**Open the letter with a simple salutation.** Don't worry if you don't know the editor's name. A simple "To the Editor of the *Daily Sun,*" or just “To the Editor:” is sufficient. If you have the editor's name, however, you should use it to increase the possibilities of your letter being read.

**Grab the reader's attention.** Your opening sentence is very important. It should tell readers what you’re writing about, and make them want to read more.

**Explain what the letter is about at the start.**

**Throughout your letter, remember the rule:**

* Be quick,
* Be concise, and then
* Be quiet.

Don't make the editor or the general public wait to find out what you want to say. Tell them your key point at the beginning.

**Explain why the issue is important.** If you are motivated enough to write a letter to a newspaper or magazine, the importance of your topic may seem clear to you. Remember, though, that the general public probably doesn't share your background or the interest. Explain the issue and its importance simply. Use plain language that most people will understand

**Give evidence for any praise or criticism.** If you are writing a letter discussing a past or pending action, be clear in showing why this will have good or bad results.

**State your opinion about what should be done.** You can write a letter just to ''vent," or to support or criticize a certain action or policy, but you may also have suggestions about what could be done to improve the situation. If so, be sure to add these as well. Be specific. And the more good reasons you can give to back up your suggestions, the better.

**Keep it brief.** Generally, shorter letters have a better chance of being published. So go back over your letter and see if anything can be cut or condensed. If you have a lot to say and it can't be easily made short, you may want to check with the editor to see if you could write a longer opinion feature or guest column.

**Sign the letter.** Be sure to write your full name (and title, if relevant) and to include your address, phone number, and e-mail address. Newspapers won't print anonymous letters, though in some cases they may withhold your name on request. They may also call you to confirm that you wrote the letter before they publish it.

**Check your letter to make sure it's clear and to the point.** A newspaper may not print every letter it receives, but clear, well-written letters are likely to be given more serious consideration.

**How do you get your letters accepted?** Keep your letter under 300 words. Editors have limited space for printing letters, and some papers have stated policies regarding length (check the editorial page for this).

* Make sure your most important points are stated in the first paragraph. Editors may need to cut parts of your letter and they usually do so from the bottom up.
* Refer to a recent event in your community or to a recent article – make a connection and make it relevant.
* Use local statistics and personal stories to better illustrate your point.
* Make sure you include your title as well as your name – it adds credibility, especially if it's relevant to the topic being discussed. If you are a program director, your title may lend credibility to the letter.

Including your title is also important to showing that you’re not trying to hide your interest in the topic. If you’re a program director and you don’t mention that in your letter, there may be a letter the next day accusing you of dishonesty for not revealing it.

* Editors may want to contact you, so include your phone number and e-mail address.
* If your letter is not accepted the first time around, try again. You might submit a revised version with a different angle on the issue at a later date.

You do not have to be the only one to write the letter: letters are often published with multiple signers. You also don’t have to be the only one to write *a* letter. Several people may write letters on the same topic with the same or slightly different points, and submit them a few days apart, so

Contributor

Jenette Nagy (portions reprinted for use of Lincroft group)

**Online Resources**

[**Advocating for Change**](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/writingalettertotheeditor.pdf) is an online PDF provided by the Treatment Advocacy Center with tips to writing and submitting an effective letter.

[**Advocates for Youth**](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/topics-issues/organizational-development/245?task=view) provides this guide to writing a letter to the editor and gives ten tips and a sample letter.

[**Effective E-mail Communication**](https://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/effective-e-mail-communication/) from the University of North Carolina provides tips on professional e-mail writing and communicating via e-mail.

[**Letters to the Editor Tips**](http://www.stopdiabetes.com/advocacy-center/activist-toolkit/tips-for-writing-a-letter-to-the-editor.html) is a guide provided by the American Diabetes Association.  It includes links to a tip sheet for a successful letter, as well as an online tool to find local newspapers in your area.

[**Media Advocacy Basics**](http://hospiceactionnetwork.org/linked_documents/get_informed/grassroots/Media_Advocacy_Basics.pdf) is a mini-guide for hospice advocates and professionals.

[**Media Communication Tip Sheet**](http://www.esa.org/ecoservices/comm/body.comm.medi.html) provides tips on contributing to the local news, tailoring language and style for the media, developing messages to reach the public, and evaluating media coverage.

[**Using Effective Communications**](http://businesscasestudies.co.uk/unison/using-effective-communications/introduction.html#axzz2vVZy4oyI) from UNISON is a guide to communicating effectively in both formal and informal settings.

[**Using Print Media as Advocacy**](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:MMvYoInMVmsJ:www.tear.org.au/static/files/resources/advocacyInfo-Editor.pdf+&cd=16&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us) is an article titled, “How to Write a Letter to the Editor,” with tips on effective communication with the media.

You can get more details and a list of resources by visiting the Community Tool Box and looking for How to Write an LTE

The Community Tool Box is a service of the [Work Group for Community Health and Development](http://www.communityhealth.ku.edu/) at the University of Kansas.

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