

## How to Write a Letter to the Editor

1. Brevity is key.
2. A sparse paragraph is better, two is maximum. Of course it helps a lot if you have something meaningful to say. It also helps to have someone ELSE who is good with English to proofread your text if time allows, because their practical and objective advice often makes text shorter or more memorable. It is certainly easier for them to detect misspelling or other common writing errors, and editors tend to be picky about that.
3. A 'hook' or reference to a recent news article or editorial in THAT paper helps a lot. Referencing a story in some other paper seldom helps unless it is an urgent national story. Every paper has its own audience, clientel or circulation, so knowing that and crafting your message to its normal audience helps too.
4. Email has become the preferred way to submit "letters to the editor" these days because it makes editing your text much easier for them. But if you cannot do email, send the old fashioned letter because you are going to make it so short it would be easy for them to type ... if it is memorable and timely. That is the editors main problem ... they are working with so much text each day that they become extremely fast in evaluating it, and pitching most of it into the "round file" (known throughout the industry as the waste basket).
5. Large papers can be read by hundreds of thousands of readers each day, or even by millions for the top dozen. So their space is very competitive and the big papers get hundreds of letters each day. So do not be hurt if they don't pick yours the first time. But believe me, if you can find the way to be brief, but meaningful and memorable, you may be amazed how often editors choose your letter to publish. Then you share an audience that is larger than will ever come to any auditorium.
6. Do not discount even very small newsletters. Church bulletins are good too, school announcements, etc. Just remember that editors of newsletters, and even of major newspapers tend to linger in their positions. So try to be polite at all times and understanding. Because even if they do not choose your message today, you want to be able to send them another one tomorrow or next year.
7. Most papers will always want a complete address and phone number for you, partly to verify that you indeed actually sent the letter and not some evil prankster. Remember, they get a LOT of letters, because a big secret of newspapers is that the letters to the editors section is among the most read of all the paper's sections.
8. It is a privilege to share their precious letters space to get your message out. We strongly encourage positive save-the-world folks to use that space, otherwise commercial interests, local politicians and agents of the dark side certainly will.

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