



AT MITCHELL HAMLINE SCHOOL OF LAW

www.worldwithoutgenocide.org

How to Write an Op-Ed

An op-ed is an opinion piece, or opinion editorial, for a newspaper. Op-Eds are typically printed near the paper's main editorial section and they represent submissions from people in the community who have a personal connection to an issue in the news.

Op-Eds are most likely to be printed if the author (you!) has a personal or professional connection to the issue. It's important to make that connection clear in your op-ed. You want to emphasize your expertise, if you have it, or the reason for your opinion, which should be clearly supported.

Check out op-eds that have already been published at your target news outlet. This will give you a sense of the overall tone and style and what the outlet looks for. Each news outlet also has its own guidelines for the number of words in a letter to the editor and for a longer piece.

At the bottom of the op-ed, include your name, address, phone number, email address, a short description of what you do for a living, and anything else the newspaper should know about you that's relevant to the topic of your column.

Key points in writing an op-ed:

- Compelling op-eds convince readers with emotion and story, not just facts and figures. Try not to be overly preachy, technical or boring. Remember, op-eds are not news stories or investigative pieces. They are opinion pieces, and the reader should be able to easily identify your perspective. Op-eds don't have footnotes and sources.
- Speak to your audience and use accessible language. Use examples and concepts people can relate to. Avoid clichés and obscure language. Use active, not passive, voice, and convey a sense of urgency – which is, after all, why you've written it.
- Be accurate! Proofread many times and give the essay to others to review. It should be error-free.
- Timing is important. The news cycle moves quickly. If you're writing about an issue that is 'hot,' submit your article while the topic is on readers' minds. If you wait a week, it will be too late.
- You may want to end with a call to action, such as support for a bill or a policy that relates to your topic.

The Op-Ed Is Written. What's next?

- Prepare your email submission: Use a subject line such as "Op-ed on immigration reform"
- For the body of the email, you can write something like this:

Dear Opinion Editor,

Please find attached an op-ed about the proposed immigration reform bill. As a concerned community member and a participant in several immigration reform coalitions, I hope to share my view.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

YOUR NAME

Phone number, email address

Attach the op-ed as a word document.

Follow up with an email between 36 and 48 hours after you sent it to confirm receipt and explain why it may still be relevant and ask them to publish it. If you have several places where it might be published, send it to your first-choice publication and note that you'll appreciate hearing within 48 hours if it will be published; otherwise, you'll submit it elsewhere. Material cannot be submitted to multiple publications at the same time. If it's published, that news outlet holds the copyright to it.