

Writing Letters to the Editor

Basic Letter Format

- I. Mention the article to which you are responding.
- II. State your claim.
- III. Support your claim with verified facts and/or a personal story.
- IV. End with a call to action. What is it that you think should happen?

10 Letter-Writing Tips

1. Keep it short--- usually 200 words or less.
2. Focus on one or two main points.
3. Put the most important information first and the least important last. Editors tend to cut from the bottom up.
4. Cite the article to which you are responding by name, date, and author at the beginning of your letter.
5. Remove any non-essential words, e.g. "In my opinion", "I believe", "It should be obvious". You won't have much space, so choose your words wisely.
6. Maintain a civil tone. Avoid name calling or offensive language.
7. Omit formatting such as boldface, all caps, or underlining.
8. Proofread your letter for grammatical and spelling errors---several times.
9. When applicable, include the name of a legislator or company. Legislators are typically subscribers. Corporations monitor media coverage.
10. Include your contact information with your submission so that newspaper staff can reach you.

Increase Your Chances of Publication

- Respond to a specific previously published article or to breaking news.
- Respond within 1-2 days of the article's publication.
- Write the letter in your own words—no "canned" messages or "scripts".
- If you're an expert on a topic, write a letter sharing your perspective based on your professional expertise.
- If you've been personally impacted by an issue, share your personal story.
- Submit the letter online or in the body of an email rather than mailing or faxing it. It's much easier for an editor to copy and paste your letter. Do not email additional attachments.
- Follow the submission directions for the publication. Here's the link to the N&O's letters to the editor submission page <http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/submit-letter/>
- Consider submitting to smaller publications in your community. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the more likely your letter will get published.



LEAGUE OF
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