# Tips for Writing an Op-Ed

Op-eds typically analyze current news, introduce readers to new ideas, or share an argument or fresh perspective that has not been previously discussed or heavily covered by the media.

In general, editors want pieces that do not just display expertise; they want pieces that are well written, timely and provocative. Copy peppered with personal anecdotes, analogies, and/or compelling arguments that are informed and backed by facts (not just emotion or opinion) will capture both the editors' and readers' attention.

Most media outlets see op-eds as a section for advocacy and an opportunity to stimulate discussion and public debate.

Tips for writing an op-ed:

- A typical op-ed is generally 500-750 words. (Select national newspapers may print longform op-eds of up to 1,200 words.)
- Good op-ed blends factual information with informed content and opinion/a strong point of view
- Focus on a single issue or idea
- Use plain language. Writing should be clear and concise. Avoid technical jargon and adverbs
- Use the active voice. (Instead of "One would hope that educators will …" say "I believe educators should…")
- Use questions sparingly. Be satisfied with making a single point clearly and persuasively. If you cannot explain your message in a sentence or two, you're trying to cover too much.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs relying mainly on simple declarative sentences. Cut long paragraphs into two or more shorter ones. Go easy on adjectives and adverbs
- Respect the reader. Recognize that your average reader is not an expert in your topic, and that the onus is on you to capture his/her attention. Make your argument compelling
- Check direct quotations and paraphrasing for accuracy. Have a list of sources on the side for factual information and quotes, though formal citations are not necessary

Suggested Outline:

- Lead paragraph should express your opinion or reflection on a timely news hook. Editors like a timely hook or reference to current events/news. Use this opportunity to grab the reader's attention
- Following paragraphs should back your lead with factual, researched, or first-hand information. Pepper in anecdotal stories to help bring the facts to life and help enhance understanding of an issue
- Near the very end, restate your position and if you are discussing a problem, offer a solution/better approach, and/or succinctly recap why the reader should care or act
- Close with a strong final paragraph that echoes or answers the introduction. This can be a very brief line or full paragraph