

The Eagle: Writing a Guest Column

Hello! Thank you for expressing interest in publishing a guest column in The Eagle. Here is a guide to read over that details our editing process, standards and more. We accept guest columns from current students, faculty and staff at American University. Please reach out to Alana Parker with any questions.

The Editors:

Opinion Managing Editor: Alana Parker

Contact Information: aparker@theeagleonline.com

Assistant Opinion Editor: Quinn Volpe

Contact Information: qv2310a@american.edu

Article Formatting:

- 500-800 words, 850 max
- Title your Google document with “Guest Column” followed by a two/three-word story description of your article.
- The Eagle uses [AP style](#). The Eagle has an amazing copy-editing team who will help you with this!

Articles should have the **following headline -**

HED: The headline is usually an opinionated stance on the topic or a few words that summarize your position.

SUB: The subheading should provide additional context or information beyond the headline.

By: Your first and last name (or organization name)

Photo: [Your name] headshot

- Each guest columnist must upload a headshot to be published alongside their article. In larger pieces by organizations or clubs, please submit a picture of the organization/club’s logo.
- Email photos to multimedia@theeagleonline.com

We encourage you to follow the [inverted pyramid style of writing](#):

LEDE:

- *Two-three sentence paragraph that sets up the problem or topic.*

NUTGRAF:

- *The first paragraph expands on the lede, giving your “so what?,” demonstrate how the*

problem/topic affects different factors and hints at finding a solution or introduces your argument.

BODY GRAFS:

- *The body paragraphs should present a solution or an argument about the problem/topic. The paragraphs also provide examples that the author supports that tie into their argument or other perspectives/sources/experiences that support their argument.*

KICKER:

- *The concluding paragraph acts as a call to action. It invites readers to become part of the solution in their communities.*

Articles should **end with the following -**

[Name] is a [year] in [school].

Ex. Alana Parker is a senior in the School of Public Affairs.

Once your guest column is written, share it with Quinn Volpe (qv2310a@american.edu) for editing.

Here are examples of well-researched and thoughtful op-eds:

- [Opinion: Posting an AI image does not make you an activist](#)
- [Opinion: Kamala Harris was pushed off a glass cliff](#)
- [Opinion: Calling sororities fake and depthless is a lazy label](#)

Questions to Ask Yourself to Help with the Writing Process:

- What is the big, overarching idea of the column? What's the point? Why is my point important? Is my point clear?
- Is there substance to my argument? Is it well-cited with links to articles, studies, social media posts, etc.?
- Who is my audience? Why am I targeting this specific audience?
- Who am I trying to convince?
- Does it follow an inverted pyramid structure?

Voice

Having a strong voice is critical to a successful guest column. Columns are most typically conversational in tone, so you can imagine yourself having a conversation with your reader as you write (a short, focused conversation). But the range of voice used in columns can be wide:

contemplative, conversational, descriptive, experienced, informative, informed, introspective, observant, plaintive, reportorial, self-effacing, sophisticated, humorous, among many other possibilities.

Sometimes what voice you use is driven by the publication for which you are writing. A good method of perfecting your voice is to get in the habit of reading your column or op-ed out loud. Doing so gives you a clear sense of how your piece might sound – what your voice may come off as – to your intended reader.

Editing Process:

After submitting your guest column to The Eagle, your piece will go through the same editing process as articles at The Eagle. The following people (in order) will edit your guest column:

- Assistant opinion editor (Quinn Volpe)
- Opinion managing editor (Alana Parker)
- Editor-in-chief (Abby Turner)
- Copy managing editor (Luna Jinks and Olivia Citarella)
- Assistant copy editors

Edits will be left with suggestions on Google Docs, which you will accept. Once edits are accepted, the guest column will be shared with the next editor. Once all edits are accepted, Luna Jinks will ask you to approve that the guest column is ready for publication!

What we edit for: Clarity, coherence and unity, active voice and tone, AP Style and Support of argument (ie. linking to articles, studies, social media posts when making statements of facts) The Eagle does not seek to change your opinion or argument. If there are edits we make that you disagree with, those are always open to conversation. Alana and Abby will be more than glad to sit down and discuss those with you.

The Eagle is not obligated to publish guest columns that do not meet our standards for support of an argument and truthful information.

FAQ

- **Can I submit an anonymous guest column?**
 - We require that guest columns written by individuals include the writer's first and last name, and a headshot. For guest columns written by larger organizations, the byline will be the organization's name and the photo can be a group logo.

- **What if I don't have a published source to support my statement of fact?**
 - If your statement of fact doesn't have a published source (ie. social media post, article link, study), The Eagle can independently verify the statement of fact. For example, if you say that Joe Smith said something during a meeting, The Eagle can listen to the meeting to verify the claim.
- **Should I interview someone for my column?**
 - Interviews are not necessary. These articles are YOUR opinion. That said, The Eagle does not publish rants, "how to's" or gossip. We are looking for educated argumentative pieces that relate to D.C. and AU's campus/culture/news.