

## Op-eds

Op-eds are columns written by people not affiliated with the outlet. They come from a range of people, including business executives, scientists, school kids, and, for local outlets, interested people living in the surrounding area.

The average op-ed runs 500 to 750 words and provides a great opportunity to make a case and leave readers with a clear call to action. Op-eds often are posted next to columns by well-known syndicated writers, and usually appear opposite the editorial page in print newspapers.

It is difficult to get an op-ed published in a newspaper. There is limited space and editors receive a large number of unsolicited articles. You might consider other options first, as op-eds take more effort and time than a letter to the editor, for example. Just like an essay, op-eds have an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should grab readers and encourage them to read on. Use timely references, colorful language, and metaphors to get the reader's attention. Try to limit the introductory paragraph to three sentences.

The body of the piece further develops your thesis, giving some background and context. Keep each paragraph short and focused. Each paragraph should range from three to five sentences. Try to make one point in each paragraph, and be sure each paragraph flows into the next smoothly. Every paragraph should tie back to the introduction and your overall thesis. Be sure not to get off-track or follow tangents. The final paragraph should wrap up the piece. Do not leave any dangling ends. Tie everything up and close with a kick. Your conclusion should link to your introduction, carrying the same theme but adding something new. Use your conclusion to state your overall point or opinion. As the first sentence should grab the reader and make them want to continue to read, the last sentence should be memorable and make your overall point stick in the reader's mind.

### Tips:

1. **Do some research first.** Before you sit down to write your op-ed, go to the outlet's website to confirm they run opinion pieces and find out the protocol for submitting one. Many outlets have strict word limits; be sure to follow them carefully. Also be sure to include links to back up any claims you make in your column. When sending the piece, paste it into the body of your email rather than sending it as an attachment. Double check that you are following the paper's guidelines. Sending an op-ed to the wrong person, one that is not the correct length, or failing to include all the information they require can keep even the best op-ed out of print.
2. **Use a catchy title that ties into the theme of your piece.** The title is what the reader sees first. Your title should entice the reader.
3. **Keep the op-ed short and to the point.** Ideally, an op-ed should be 550-725 words. Remember, the print version of newspapers have very limited space. A short article has a better chance of getting printed.

4. **Grab the reader's attention in the first couple of lines and close with a sentence that will help them remember your point.** Be creative—an interesting article is more likely to be printed and more likely to be remembered.
5. **Include personal information at the end of your op-ed:** your name, university or organization, title, phone number, and address. Many papers will not run a piece without first being able to confirm that you are the author of the piece.
6. **Follow-up.** If you can locate a phone number for the opinion editor, you may want to give them a call a few days after you submit your op-ed to check on their interest in running it. If you submitted your column through the outlet's prescribed protocol however, you can be sure that they've seen it.