

Writing a Letter to the Editor



Best Practices to get your message across

Introduction

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) have become a key element of a winning campaign strategy. Whether you're promoting your business, a ballot measure, good neighbors relations, or a candidate, LTEs are a great way for you to create a dialogue around the topic you're interested in and get others in your community involved in the conversation.

You don't have to be an industry professional to submit an LTE—in fact, receiving input simply from active members in a community can show what your neighbors and community members are really interested in or concerned about. That said, if you don't know where to start with your LTE, check out these best practices.

Best Practices for Writing Your LTE

Be Brief

LTEs should be short: 150 to 200 words, maximum. Although some papers will allow 250 to 300 words, less is more when it comes to LTEs.

Stay on Target

Focus on only one issue. After you choose the one issue you want to discuss, make your point succinctly and clearly. Be factual and specific.

Stand Strong

Being catchy and memorable is good, but it's not necessary. When in doubt, prioritize making a compelling argument that can be weighed on its own merits.

Be Lighthearted

Humor is a clever, effective tactic. Gentle sarcasm, funny quotes, and tongue-in-cheek comparisons are entertaining to read—and they can drive home your point with readers in a way that a serious LTE may not.

Go High

Don't be spiteful or vindictive. Maintain a positive message. Let the other guys be the ones to go low.



Be Topical

You're encouraged to respond to an existing article, editorial, or LTE. It's vital that you rebut misguided points and correct false statements. When we allow printed content with erroneous statements to slide by without contestation, we're leaving the door open for people to think those misstatements are true.

Say It Loud

Always clearly state your support for a campaign. You need to increase awareness about the campaign, and that doesn't happen if you merely say your opinion is similar to (or differs from) an existing editorial piece or LTE.

Keep It Crisp

Always proofread your LTE before sending it. Spelling and grammar matter to readers! If needed, enlist a friend who's good at checking for writing errors. Never expect the newspaper to correct any mistakes.

Submitting Your LTE

Identify Yourself

Include your name, complete address, email, and phone number. No anonymous letters! Most papers won't print letters without this information.

Go Digital

Email or online submissions are preferred. If you don't have access to a computer, you can print and mail your LTE.

Or Ink It

If you can, sign your letter. Remember to show that you stand behind what you wrote.

Keep It Simple

Always send the same LTE to all of the newspapers. Don't make different versions for different-sized newspaper organizations. If anything, the smaller papers are more likely than the larger ones to print your complete, unedited letter.

Need Help?

For further help writing an original or ghostwritten letter, please contact 421 Group at Info@421.group.