

COMMUNICATIONS

OP-ED TIPS AND GUIDELINES



Summary / Overview

One of the best ways of reaching audiences through print and online media is through opinion editorials, called op-eds, and guest columns. They allow us to tell our own stories and circulate our messages to audiences, without too much editing or influences from news outlets. The downside is they can often be rejected by news editors, especially in a busy news cycle. Still, they allow us to paint a clear, human picture for audiences.

Tips to Keep in Mind

- **Brevity!** Word count: *Between 600-800 words*. Editors will often immediately reject op-eds that are longer. The shorter, the better.
- **Tie the Op-Ed to a Recent Event:** A pandemic, a local, national, or regional news story, etc. Regional or local editors particularly like stories that discuss the local impact of a national news story.
- **Think About your Audience:** Who is this designed to reach?
 - Advocates?
 - Legislators?
 - Prosecutors or Judges?
- **What Media Outlets Do Their Supporters Read/Watch?**
 - Daily newspapers?
 - Magazines?
 - Online magazines?
 - Streaming videos?

Overall Op-Ed Structure

- **Intro:** Grab your reader's attention, through **the headline**, and the **first two sentences**. Tying the op-ed to a news event makes it timely and relevant.
- **Thesis:** What is the point of the op-ed? What do you want the reader to know? What are the values you want to uplift?
- **Argument:** This is where you start to prove your point. Try to base this on evidence and facts:
 - First-hand experience
 - Relevant history
 - Data and statistics, etc.
- **Conclusion:** Restate the point of the op-ed. What do you want your audience to do? What actions do you want them to take?
 - Note: News editors will often reject op-eds that reference actions that highlight an organization's own work, such as their campaign efforts, reports, etc.
 - Try to make the action something that your audience can see themselves doing! Call your legislator, attend a rally, support a bill, etc. The easier, the better.