



How to Write an Op Ed

IPS Toolkit: Media Advocacy



Opinion Editorial (“Op-ed”)

Op-eds are an opportunity to make the case for your issue in a print or online publication. They are written in a journalistic style, framed to be newsworthy and provide a useful and visible forum for the community to express their views on a particular issue of importance. Op-eds can signal community interest and send a strong message to policymakers.

Tips:

- Respond quickly. To craft a compelling op-ed, you need a link between your campaign and a current event. This event may be internal or external. If you see an article that you want to respond to, try to send your letter by the next day, at the latest.
- Mention your reason for writing. While the main focus of the op-ed should be on your key messages, lead with the broader context so the audience understands why the piece is relevant to them and why they should continue reading. This should be done preferably in the first sentence. If you are responding directly to an article you read in the publication, state the article's headline and publication date. If you are commenting on a local current event, be specific about the issue.
- Limit the content to one or two key points - A letter to the editor offers the chance for a concise statement on a subject, not an in-depth analysis. Focus on one message.
- Take a strong position. Clearly define the problem, why it matters, and the solution. Support the argument with a few compelling data points, honest statements of opinion, and creative slants on the news. You can make your op-ed more compelling by working with a well-known and credible messenger to publish the piece under their name, which lends more credibility to the article.
- Keep it short and sweet. Aim for about 200 words. The more direct and simpler your op-ed is, the more likely it will be published.

Following the format required by the outlet you're writing for will also increase your chances of publication. Make sure that you check their guidelines for length and format before drafting and submitting the piece.

IPS's Toolkit consists of a suite of tools to assist advocates, community groups, prevention practitioners, and policymakers in achieving community transformation. IPS's tools are for practical application in the field, supporting all functions necessary for creating community-level change: Research and Data, Media Advocacy, Community Organizing, Policy & Systems Change, and Sustainability.