

Tips for Writing Effective Letters to the Editor:

Keep it short: Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. For example, The San Diego Union Tribune has a limit of 150 words. This rule is usually strictly enforced.

The power of “RE:” Make the letter specific, and with reference to a previous article, op-ed or other letter to the editor in the newspaper. If you submit your letter online, there is usually an area where you can identify the topic or article that your letter pertains to. If not, here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

- *I was disappointed to see that The Post's May 18 editorial "School Vouchers Are Right On" omitted some of the key facts in the debate.*
- *I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on women's reproductive rights. ("Name of Op-Ed," date)*
- *I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe is working to roll back affirmative action. ("Title of Article," date)*

Use your word processing program's spell check and word count options before submitting

Make sure that the text expresses your own opinions, and is in your own words. Artificial intelligence (AI) applications, such as ChatGPT, can be used to generate a letter to the editor, but it is always best for the letter to express your own opinions. AI can legitimately be used, however, as an “editor” for your original document; it can suggest edits for keeping the word count below a certain level, or different phrasings for greater clarity, for example.

Be prepared for a phone call from an editor to verify who you are. This is a standard procedure for many papers who want to confirm that a letter was submitted by a real person.

NOTE: These guidelines were partially adapted from the ACLU document, [“Letters to the editor: How to write them and why they work”](#)