How to write a letter to the editor

There's pretty much no better advocacy tool than writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper—for all sorts of reasons.





Let's say there's an issue of public concern happening in your town and you want to reach other members of the community to alert them—and get to your elected officials at the same time—that's prime time for writing a letter to the editor, or LTE.

They're known to be one of the most widely read sections in a newspaper, print or digital. Political staffers pay close attention to LTEs to get a sense of community opinion, look for mentions of their bosses, and take the public pulse.

Generally, they're a useful way to share your views with your wider community, correct any misinformation being spread, and call your neighbors to action. Despite all this, fewer people are writing LTEs than ever.

If you've never written one before, here's how.

Where to submit an LTE

First, choose the local paper with the audience you want to reach. Look up the Opinion Section of that paper. There, you should find guidelines on how to submit a letter to the editor. Follow them.

What to write

Make the issue you're addressing as locally relevant as possible. Why does it matter to your specific community? Then, get straight to the point, clearly and precisely. Stick to one point only—consider not writing more than three paragraphs of one or two short sentences each. That said it's more than OK to make your LTE personal and tell your story—briefly—if you have one. A human angle can help others identify with your concerns. But don't get overly emotional, rant, or opposition bash. Facts and figures are helpful, but don't overcrowd your limited space with them, and be prepared to provide references for any facts if asked to by an editor.

If you're responding to an event, make sure to tie it in with recent coverage by the newspaper you're pitching. You can refer to an article by date, headline, and with a link. Sign off with a direct call to action.

1 Choose a newspaper

2 Pick a local issue

3 Make every word count

4 Submit your letter

MOMS *clean air* FORCE

The mission of Moms Clean Air Force is to protect children from air pollution and climate change. We envision a safe, stable, and equitable future where all children breathe clean air. We fight for Justice in Every Breath, recognizing the importance of equitable solutions in addressing air pollution and climate change. www.momscleanairforce.org

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Writing dos and don'ts

- **Keep your letter short**

  LTEs must be very short. On average, newspapers require them to be 150 to 200 words. Look up the word count guidelines at each individual paper, but likely, you won't be able to exceed 250 words.

- **Include your contact information**

  With the letter, always include your full name, hometown, and best contact information, including email and phone. Keep in mind that news outlets reserve the right to edit your letter for clarity and length. This is standard.

- **Submit to one paper at a time**

  Also, it's customary to submit your LTE to only one paper at a time. If one newspaper declines to publish it, then you're free to submit it to another one. But don't submit an LTE to more than one publication at once.

- **Consider an op-ed if you need more space to make your point**

  If you're struggling to make your point in such a limited space, consider writing and submitting an op-ed. These are typically longer, around 700 words or less, depending on the paper. They can be a lot harder to get published than a letter, though.





The New York Times

OPINION
LETTERS

Climate Change as a 2026 Campaign Issue

May 14, 2026

To the Editor:

As a mother of two young children, I believe that it is simply disqualifying in 2026 for a candidate not to mention climate. Matthew T. Huber may be correct that we can fight climate change without mentioning the word "climate," but is that the kind of leadership we want in office? The kind that avoids naming a problem and is incapable of making the connections for people about climate change's effects: poor air quality, health impacts, supercharged storms, skyrocketing energy costs, cities running out of water and homeowners being priced out of or denied home insurance?

People are sick of the rampant corruption of the current administration — in which former chemical executives and lobbyists now run the E.P.A.'s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, and where committees work behind closed doors to revoke the endangerment finding, the legal foundation of countless health-protective rules.

No doubt candidates should run smart campaigns that connect with their districts, but make no mistake, climate change has already touched every corner of our country. Candidates who can't call it out are doing themselves, and all of us, a disservice.

Ali Simpson
Bedford, N.Y.

Following up

Once you've submitted your LTE, it's natural to be eager to hear back. Make sure you know the publication's rules about following up. Some tell you not to contact them unless they contact you to say your LTE is being published. If there are no guidelines, it's still a good idea to give it a few days before following up with the news outlet's Editorial Department. If you don't hear back in a week or so, or if the topic of your LTE is no longer in the news, it's time to move on.

Keep in mind that if you've had a letter published recently, that specific paper is less—not more—likely to publish another one soon. Better to try another news outlet instead. If you get rejected, don't get discouraged. Keep trying to get the word out about your community's issue.

Updated November 2026

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