

## Feeling Moved? Feeling Brave? Write an LTE!\*

Along with parachuting and public speaking, writing to the public brings fear to the hearts of many people. But if we want to reach hundreds or thousands of people with a message, letters-to-the-editor (LTEs) or opinion articles are how to do it!

### Here's how to proceed:

1. Choose topics you care about. Never be bored while researching your topic.
2. Choose the specific point(s) you want to make. Total word limits set by specific print or digital media force us to be concise and focused writers. Be prepared to target your scope.
3. Be sure you understand submission policies of the publication where you hope to submit your work.
4. Begin with a strong opening and end the same way. The aim is to capture attention, deliver your message, and conclude with a memorable point that ties it all together.
5. Avoid hammering readers with off-the-top opinions. Stay grounded.
6. Carefully research your topic. Be able to support your points with real facts (from multiple solid sources). Your work should be accurate, informative and impactful.
7. Keep it simple. Write your LTEs or editorial/opinion articles at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level – use short sentences, brief paragraphs and familiar 1-2 syllable words. It's not the time to show off graduate degree vocabulary.
8. Remember: At most, your piece will receive 30-75 seconds of attention. That's all. Make it easy to read, quickly digestible, and currently relevant.
9. Close by re-emphasizing your point. You are bringing readers' attention home.

### A few thoughts:

Read an editorial page. Note how your eyes are drawn to pieces that are concise and have clear logical sequence. We like easy reads. Meandering is great for walks but hard on holding readers' attention.

**Tip:** If you are not clear about how to open and develop a specific topic, do your research and **simply write!** Ignore the numbered sequence above and let your own style emerge.

Let your message flow into a rough draft, review what happened, and cut and paste into something that approaches organization. Know that you are sitting with a living being, an emerging message that is channeling through you. You are shaping a short-term friendship. Care for it... and complete it!

Then review the numbered points above and see how they may help you.

**Final tip:** Always be respectful of every potential reader. Being offensive is a perverse sort of fun, but we risk losing smart readers who favor civility and the progress it encourages. Avoid creating barriers to common ground. If divisiveness is somehow necessary, let others do it... Let's not join that crowd.

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