

## Letter to the Editor

Source: <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/politicalscience/ht/lettertoeditor.htm>

1. **Select a topic or a publication.** If you are motivated to write a letter to the editor because you've been instructed to do so, you should start by reading a publication that is likely to contain articles that interest you. It is a good idea to read your local paper to look for local and current events that matter to you.

You may also choose to look in magazines that contain articles that interest you. Fashion magazines, science magazines, and entertainment publications all contain letters from readers.

2. **Read instructions provided.** Most publications provide guidelines for writing a letter to the editor. Look over the first few pages of your publication for guidelines and follow them carefully.
3. **Include your name, address, email address and phone number at the top of your letter.** Editors often require this information because they will need to verify your identity. You can state that this information is not to be published.

If you are responding to an article or letter, say so right away. Name the article in the first sentence of the body of your letter.

4. **Be concise and focused.** Write your letter in pithy, clever statements, but remember that this is easy to do! You will probably need to write several drafts of your letter to condense your message.
5. **Limit your letter to two or three paragraphs.** Try sticking to the following format:

In your first paragraph, introduce your problem and sum up your objection.

In the second paragraph, include a few sentences to support your view.

End with a great summary and a clever, punchy line.

6. **Proofread your letter.** Editors will ignore letters that contain bad grammar and poorly-written rants.
7. **Submit your letter by email if the publication allows it.** This format enables the editor to cut and paste your letter.

## **Tips:**

1. If you're responding to an article you've read, be prompt. Don't wait a few days or your topic will be old news.
2. Remember that the more popular and widely-read publications receive hundreds of letters. You have a better chance of getting your letter published in a smaller publication.
3. If you don't want your name to be published, state so clearly. You can put any direction or request like this in a separate paragraph. For example, you can simply put "Please note: I do not want my full name to be published with this letter." If you are a minor, inform the editor of this as well.
4. Since your letter may be edited, you should get to the point early. Don't bury your point inside a lengthy argument.

Don't appear to be overly emotional. You can avoid this by limiting your exclamation points. Also avoid insulting language.

5. Remember that short, concise letters sound confident. Long, wordy letters give the impression that you're trying too hard to make a point.