

# Writing an Effective 'Letter to the Editor'

Surveys show the "letters" section of any newspaper or magazine has one of the highest readership ratings of any portion of the publication. So writing an effective letter to the editor is a great way to share your views and news with the general public.

Here are some simple tips to help get your thoughts published.

1. Make it legible
2. Keep it simple
3. Make it readable
4. Make it timely
5. Identify yourself
6. Address it properly
7. Keep a copy
8. Be persistent

## Make it legible

1. **Easy to read font.** Use an easy to read font, 10-12 pt Times New Roman.
2. **Double space.** Use one and a half or double space. Use only one side of one sheet of paper.

## Keep it simple

1. **Be as brief as possible,** while long enough to make a solid case. Focus on a basic idea in the first sentence or two so the editor can quickly determine why you are writing.
2. **Letter length.** Letters of 150-200 words are most likely to get printed, and least likely to get edited. Look at the letters page of the newspaper you're writing to so you can get an idea of the typical length of published letters.

## Make it readable

1. **Simple structure.** Use simple sentence construction with enough sophistication to sound credible. Avoid long, windy paragraphs.
2. **Examples.** Use short examples and personal experiences to support your case.

## Make it timely

1. **Quick response.** If you're responding to a news story, or someone else's letter, try to submit your letter within three days of publication of the response worthy article. Refer to the article or letter you're responding to in your first sentence.

## Identify yourself

1. **Individually.** If you're writing on your own, identify yourself with a short introduction that explains why you are knowledgeable on this topic.
2. **Group.** If you're writing on behalf of a group, include that information at the beginning.
3. **Contact info.** At the end, sign your name and give an address and phone number. The phone number is important because if a decision is made to print your letter, someone often will call to verify that you wrote the letter.

## Address it properly

1. **Address it properly.** Use the following as the address on the top of your letter and as the address on the envelope.
  - Letters to the Editor
  - Newspaper name
  - Newspaper address
2. **Double space.** Use one and a half or double space. Use only one side of one sheet of paper.

## Keep a copy

1. **Keep a copy.** If your letter gets printed, you'll want to compare your original with how the newspaper published it. That allows you to make sure the intent of your letter wasn't changed by editing and that no crucial point was eliminated. It also will help you write a better letter next time.

## Be persistent

1. **Be persistent.** If you send a letter and it doesn't get printed, don't get discouraged. Review letters that did get printed, especially on the same topic. You'll probably see how you could have made yours more effective.