

Guidelines for Submitting Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are among the most-read parts of a newspaper. The following guidelines will help you focus and write your letter.

BEGIN

1. What do you want to accomplish? What is your main idea? Who is your audience? Do you want to speak your truth? Try to convince others? Or do you have some other objective? Spend some time deciding this before you begin.

2. Keep to a single topic.

Advanced suggestions:

3. If you mention or want to get the attention of a particular Congressional representative, visit his or her Web page and notice what issues he/she is addressing. Note the buzzwords being used, and incorporate some of those words into your letter.

WRITE

1. Begin with "Dear Editor" (this does NOT count in your word count).
2. Stay under the maximum word count (different for each newspaper).
3. Brief is best — the shorter the letter the more likely it is to be read.
4. Strive for clarity.
5. Make each word count, and use "active voice" rather than "passive." (Passive voice: "It was decided that we should call our Legislators." [9 words] Active voice: "We called our Legislators." [4 words]).
6. Avoid profanity, insults or slurs. Make your point without name calling.
7. Humor is fine, but if you use sarcasm, be sure the reader can recognize it is sarcasm.

REVIEW

1. Leave the letter alone for a while, then go back to it. Does it still say what you intend?

2. Check for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3. Ask someone to read/edit it for you. Fresh eyes can catch typos and non-sequiturs and make it more concise and powerful.
4. Double check the word count.
5. Make sure you haven't submitted to this newspaper within the past 30 days.

SUBMIT

1. Include your full name, address, and phone number. Your address and phone number will not be published but must be included to have your letter considered.
2. Submit no more than once per month.
3. Mail or email your submission. Email is easier for them and means a speedier inclusion.
4. You may choose to submit elsewhere as well as to these local papers:

| Newspaper | Maximum Word Count | email |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| The Daily Courier | 250 | letters@thedailycourier.com |
| Medford Mail Tribune | 200 | letters@mailtribune.com |
| Rogue River Press | 300 | editor@rogueriverpress.com |
| The <u>Illinois</u> Valley News | | kevan@illinois-valley-news.com |
| Sneak Preview | | sneakpre@mind.net |

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