



Op-eds

Op-eds are lengthy commentary pieces that run on the editorial page (opposite the editorial). Most newspapers and magazines like to include thoughtful perspectives on timely issues.

When to use them:

Write an op-ed when you want to undertake a lengthier discussion of an issue than a sound bite in a typical news story. Use op-ed opportunities very carefully: they can generate a great deal more attention than other news coverage. You will probably want to check with higher ups or your agency's public affairs staff before moving too far along with a commentary.

How to use them:

Start by contacting the newspaper's editorial staff to find out if they are interested in the topic and what guidelines they have for submission. Ask them about a recommended length and format. Let them know if you would like distribute the opinion piece to multiple outlets, and be prepared for them to ask that you not do so until they have had a chance to decide if they want to run it. Be ready to explain why the subject and your views on it are important to their audience.

Format:

Following whatever format the paper requests will boost your chances of seeing your commentary in print. Some other useful tips:

- Have a clear message and deliver it through a few clear points.
- Back up your claims with a few carefully selected and compelling facts. You want to support what you are saying, but you are not writing for an academic journal.
- Mix data and statistics with catchy personal stories.
- Stick to a length of 500-800 words, unless the paper gives you some other guidance.
- Include a one or two sentence statement on the author's identity and background.
- Come up with a good title (but be prepared for it to change).