

Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor is the simplest way to communicate an opinion to the general public. The chances of having the letter printed greatly increases at smaller or less prominent newspapers or magazines. On average, many local papers publish up to 80 percent of the letters they receive. Of course, if you hope to have the letter published in The New York Times, then it will compete against hundreds of thousands of other letters.

The most important caveat is to write a letter no longer than what the target newspaper tends to publish. A much longer letter is more likely to be discarded, and if it is not discarded, an editor will decide what information will be cut in order to fit the length requirements.

Before you begin writing your letter, look at the editorial pages of different newspapers. Often, specifications on writing letters to the editor will be on this page. If not, follow these general tips for writing your letter.

- Be brief and concise. Focus your letter on just one concept or idea. Limit yourself to 250-300 words.
- Refer to other stories. If possible, refer to other articles, editorials or letters the newspaper has recently published. This should be done as soon as possible after the article was published. It increases the chances of your letter being printed.
- Include contact information. The newspaper will need your name, address and daytime and home phone number, so its staff can contact you with any questions. Also, include any titles and degrees that are relevant to help the media know you have expertise. Finally, make sure to refer to your organization in your letter.
- Let us know if you get your letter placed! Please forward the date and title of the publication as soon as possible, along with any web links or scans of your piece, to advocacy@nhpco.org.