



Writing a Letter to the Editor or Op-ed

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE):

- Make it short (100 words is good; 150 words maximum)
- Go for a near-conversational tone – there is no need to use fancy words
- Format your LTE as a column (see below)
- LTE's are generally meant to be reactions to something previously written on the Editorial/Op-Ed page of that newspaper.
- Make it interesting! If it bores you, it will bore the paper.
- SAMPLE LTE:

To the Editor:

Our recent election for _____ should not be considered a success! Rather, it is a good example of our flawed election system. Candidate A was elected with less than 50% - he/she only represents a minority of voters. Candidates B and C have similar positions and split the vote. This is the "spoiler" problem in action, and happens often.

How can we continue using a system that leaves the majority out in the cold?

Instant runoff voting (IRV), which is used at more than 35 universities including Duke, Harvard and Berkeley, would allow voters to rank candidates. If your first choice doesn't have the support to win, your second choice is used and so on until we have a winner who best represents the majority of voters. We could use a change like that in our elections. IRV is simple, fair and just plain good for democracy.

John Smith
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Writing an opinion editorial (Op-ed):

- Opinion editorials (op-eds) are longer than letters to the editor and are not necessarily responses to other articles/commentary
- Op-eds should be well-crafted pieces of analysis and opinion written with a professional tone
- Use a relevant example of unfair elections to frame the argument for IRV
 1. Assess the example, highlighting problems of current plurality or runoff systems (minority rule, a "spoiler," low turnout, etc.)
 2. Next, lay out what IRV is, how it works and why adopting it improves elections
 3. Throughout the text, try to incorporate ideas that appeal to popular notions such as majority rule, fairness, less negative campaigning, better choices, etc.
 4. Remember, IRV is better and there are lots of reasons why (see "Talking Points" and "Selling the Solution" sheets)
- Be sure to read an op-ed included in this packet

IF YOU GET AN OP-ED OR LTE PUBLISHED, BE SURE TO LET US KNOW!
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