

How To Write A Letter To The Editor

Arguing your position

1. **Be polite.** Even if you are really angry or feel insulted by someone's opinion or actions, don't sink to their level. Respect the people you're talking about, even if you disagree with their position. Comment on **actions** more than personalities.

Bad Example: "FPÖ politicians are dangerous Nazis and should be deported themselves.

Good Example: "I strongly disagree with the FPÖ suggestion of deporting asylum-seekers..."

2. **Be specific.** If you're commenting on an article in the paper, mention the day and page number of the article. If you're commenting on a specific political position or speech, restate it briefly. Don't assume the reader knows what you're talking about: Tell them.
Example: "I disagree with Minister Schmidt's position on comprehensive schools, as reported in the Kleine Zeitung last Sunday. "

3. **Stick to one topic.** Deal with one issue, article or speech in one letter.

4. **Use facts and figures to back up your arguments.** Quote other experts who commented on the same subject, especially if the news article did not mention them.

5. **State your qualifications,** if useful to the letter.

Example: "I've been a teacher for 15 years, and Mrs. Schmidt's plan to invest in early-childhood education is good because in my experience..."

6. **When possible, compare and contrast.** State why your solution or idea is better and why the other one is poor .

7. **Be concise.** Short letters are more likely to be printed and won't be cut short by the editors.

Limit your letter to two or three paragraphs. Try sticking to the following format:

- In your first paragraph, **introduce your problem** and sum up your objection.
- In the second paragraph, include a few sentences to **support your view.**
- End with a **great summary** and a **clever, punchy line.**

8. **Be original.** Don't sound like everyone else. Use your own voice.

9. **Be positive when appropriate.** Don't hesitate to send a complimentary letter to the newspaper for a good editorial or story. Congratulate politicians you agree with.

10. **Read your letter out loud.** Does it sound good? Does it make sense?

11. **Proofread your** letter for spelling and grammar mistakes.

12. **Include all the necessary information about yourself that the newspaper asks for.**

When sending e-mail, this means your city and telephone number. When sending a letter by mail, make sure it's typed (or legible) with your full return address as well as phone number and signature.

13. **There are many places to express your opinion, not just letters to the newspaper.**

There are weekly and monthly magazines. There are internet web sites, blogs, newsgroups and chatrooms. Express yourself, in friendly terms, in conversations with friends or in social situations.



Speak up! Your comment might make a difference!

Examples of Letters to the Editor:

Fish killed by pollution?

If the ongoing fish kills are a natural phenomenon, why are these massive kills not present in the other rivers in Eastern North Carolina. Can it be because the Neuse is so contaminated by pollution because of runoff from homes, farms, construction, and waste water? If so, we all need to do our part to report and confront those who are causing our beautiful river to die.

Joanne Somerday Letter to the Editor Sent to : Sun Journal (New Bern) Country: United States Date: SEP-20-2009 Subject: Fish Kill in North Carolina

Health insurance – no thanks

I do not have health insurance, I don't want health insurance, and I don't need health insurance.

The conclusion that people jump to (including the President) is that I am irresponsible - that I don't pay my bills. Not so. I pay my bills - including my hospital/doctor bills. Insurance is not a right nor a necessity. Nor is it needed for those of us who have sacrificed and saved up to pay our own expenses. Privacy, liberty, freedom to pay my own bills. What is so wrong with that? "Irresponsible" are those who fail to obey the Constitution, lose focus as to governments real responsibilities, and get 'cloudy-eyed' as we were before 9-11...

Louis Gander Letter to the Editor Sent to : NEW YORK TIMES Country: United States Date: SEP-18-2009 Subject: I dont want or need Health Insurance

What a disgrace

It was with a heavy heart I saw in the ST the article concerning the sentencing yet once again of a father who strongly abused his ELEVEN WEEK OLD SON and was sentenced to an 11 week PROBATION.

This should be front page news and is a disgrace to the city and Fort Worth District Court No. 4 Judge Mike Thomas.

Don't you love that someone determined that this tiny baby had no PERMANENT DAMAGES....how on earth can that be determined at this point in this child's life. X-rays showed previous breaks of 22 bones in various stages of healing and in this event he landed on his head.

And to heap disgrace upon disgrace, there will be NO RECORD of this horrific event on this person's record. So one year from now, no one will remember or care and even worse, if it happens again, it will not even be a "repeat" performance. I can only hope that Bill O'Reilly will get wind of this one and bring this to our nation's attention....not that it can be stopped at this point...but how on earth can this keep happening across this great nation?

MARILYN ACUFF Letter to the Editor Sent to : Abilene Reporter-News Country: United States Date: SEP-17-2009 Subject: Protecting Our Children

Have merci on me – no more hospital shows, please.

Am I the only person that is getting a little tired of all the Medical shows on TV? I see where there is going to be another one called Mercy Hospital. I really used to enjoy the medical shows, as they showed how somany patients were cured, or helped by a concerned Doctor or Nurse. Now they feature more sex between the doctors and nurses. You hardly see a patient, andtheir problems. I don't think that I would like to be in the hospital and have any of them operate on me!

Their relationships have to interfere with their performance! I don't think this is going on in our hospitals. I know that we have good hospitals here in Iowa. However, as far as TV is concerned.....Let's bring back medical shows like Marcus Welby!!!!

Florence Lee Letter to the Editor Sent to : Des Moines Register Country: United States Date: SEP-10-2009 Subject: Medical Shows on Television