

## How to Write a Letter to the Editor

*Using print media as an advocacy tool has many benefits. Politicians closely monitor the letters section of newspapers to gauge public opinion, and a letter can also be used to get a message out to the newspaper's readership*

### **When writing a letter to the editor, keep these things in mind:**

- **Stick to the rules:** The newspaper will specify a word limit so stick to this, but usually the letter should be under 180 words—preferably under 150 words. Provide contact details including a name, daytime phone number, email and suburb.
- **Punctuality:** If you are writing a response to an original article, you will need to send your letter that same day or the following day. If the letter is sent any later than this, it probably won't be published. Email is the best method to send the letter.
- **Be relevant:** If you are writing a stand-alone letter, try to link the letter with a certain issue of the newspaper (or other publication), or an issue that has been in the news recently. If you are referring to an original letter, refer to the article from the outset, preferably in the first sentence.

E.g. "If the Government does go ahead and cut aid as threatened, ("Aid cuts imminent" 23/4) 800 000 lives could be lost". If you are responding to a previous letter, reference the author (Joe Blogs-Letters, 25/2).

- **Be concise:** Plan one or two points within this you would like to discuss and have a logical progression for your letter. Start by stating your opening argument, follow up with your points and evidence and finish by summing up your argument, ending with a hard-hitting or witty comment, or something for the reader to ponder. Don't provide unnecessary information, or points that aren't relevant.
- **Provide facts:** If there are circumstances, surveys or other facts to validate your argument or points, be sure to provide these to add credit to your letter.
- **Stand out:** Try to catch the editor in the first couple of lines. Try to be funny, witty, pithy etc. Ensure your letter is not regurgitating an argument that gets tossed around, but is articulating something new to a debate, possibly including your personal opinion and experiences. If you are writing in response to an MP's comments, be sure to mention their name so the letter gets on the politician's radar.
- **Be polite:** Make sure you don't make slanderous comments about individuals or the newspaper in your letter.
- **Edit properly:** Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors, and if possible get another person to read your letter before you send it off. A fresh pair of eyes will help to point out any errors.

### **If at first you don't get published, try again!**

For more tips visit:

- Oxfam: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/act/diy-campaigning/make-your-mark-in-the-media/writing-a-letter-to-the-editor/>
- Results: [http://www.action.org/site/get\\_involved/write\\_a\\_letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor/](http://www.action.org/site/get_involved/write_a_letter_to_the_editor/)
- Global Poverty Project: [http://globalpovertyproject.com/howto/write\\_letter](http://globalpovertyproject.com/howto/write_letter)