



Guidelines for Writing and Placing Op-Eds

Op-eds are great ways to raise awareness about a particular topic or to persuade others in front of a large audience of decision makers. They also help to substantiate the writer as an expert on a subject. The following guidelines may be helpful as you draft your op-ed.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- **Be Persuasive:** A successful op-ed makes a persuasive argument while incorporating personal anecdotes and perspective to humanize the issue for readers. Personal stories are especially compelling; facts and statistics can be helpful but shouldn't overpower the piece.
- **Be Timely:** It's a good guideline to highlight the timeliness of your argument by mentioning a recent or upcoming event, article or news moment related to the issue being discussed.
- **Be Straightforward:** Keep sentences simple and avoid big words or overly academic language. It's best to assume that your audience is reading at an 8th grade level.
- **Be Diligent:** Before beginning the writing process, check with the news outlet where you want to submit the op-ed to determine their policy on length and the appropriate email address for submissions. If *BerlinRosen* is handling the placement, share your outlet preference, and we will provide guidelines specific to that outlet. This information is often available on the outlet's website. As a best practice, most outlets' word length policy is 600-800 words.

Key Questions to Answer:

There are also some key questions that you should ask yourself before drafting an op-ed. These questions, which you should ensure you can answer throughout the op-ed writing process, include:

- What is the thesis/main argument of this piece?
- Who is the audience for this piece? In other words, who do I want to read it?
- Asking this question helps you both frame your arguments in language your audience will find compelling and think about where you want to see your piece published
- Why does this issue matter now? What is the news hook or important moment that makes this a timely argument?

- How does my voice contribute to this discussion in a way no one else's does, and is that perspective reflected in my writing?
- Would someone who doesn't have more than a basic background on the topic I'm writing about understand the way I explain it here?

Structure:

The below outline of paragraph structure can be used when developing your op-ed.

- Introduction: Introduce the topic of your op-ed and highlight the piece's timeliness with a reference to recent or upcoming events.
- Outline the Problem: Briefly describe the problem or debate at hand to give the reader context.
- Personal Anecdote: Humanize the issue by including a personal anecdote. Relatable and sympathetic details about someone's experience are very compelling.
- Thesis: Offer a clear solution and make your central argument. You should be able to state your thesis in one sentence.
- Supporting Evidence: Note any relevant statistics, facts, examples from other cities/states/countries, or other evidence from daily life that support your thesis.
- Address or Anticipate Opposition: Proactively address existing opposition or any anticipated push back.
- Closing: Restate your central argument and draw the reader in with a call to act