



The Op-Ed: Guidelines for Submitting and Publishing

There is inherent value in writing an op-ed. Over the last few weeks, you've spent time investigating a subject that's important to you and gained expertise through your research. Through this process, your perspective likely evolved as you gathered information, your ideas shifted to accommodate new data, and you honed your argument until it was watertight. And perhaps most importantly, you learned more about yourself as a writer, engaging in review and revision, as you worked toward your final draft.

With a polished op-ed before you, it's time to submit it for publication.

The benefits? There are many! The whole objective of the op-ed genre is to hear more voices—more opinions—from the public sphere. What do you have to say to a larger audience—municipal, national, even global? As the Op-Ed Project puts it, this form invites us to “join the important public conversations of our age, to take our equal place as narrators of the world.” And on a personal level, to see your work published is validation like no other. A hungry audience is perhaps the most powerful tool for keeping at it: crafting your words into cogent arguments, drafting and re-drafting again and again.

The risks? Your op-ed might not get accepted. In fact, it likely won't get accepted. But that's true for all writers, no matter how experienced. Part of the discipline that writing demands is to take rejection in stride. In fact, many professional writers set rejection goals each year—with the idea that if you are rejected, say, 100 times, not only will you be honing your craft through such a great output of work, but you'll also be bound to get some acceptances in there, too! So keep writing until an editor sees your brilliance and puts your ideas in print.

We encourage you to go for it. And if one publication doesn't take it, try another. Here are some tips for how to go about the process.



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Decide on your target audience. If your op-ed focuses on a specific community issue, then try a local publication with a smaller circulation. If your audience is broader, think national. If your topic falls squarely in an interest area—legal, business, etc.—then you may look for a publication that focuses on that issue.
2. Submit your op-ed to ONE publication at a time. Response time is usually fairly quick—if your piece is not accepted, you can then submit it elsewhere.
3. After you’ve decided on a publication, check their submission guidelines. Here’s a great list of [compiled guidelines](#). These will tell you useful information like word limit, response time, and how to send your submission.
4. Keep it current. Tie your piece to a current news item. You can let the editor know that you would like a quick response due to your article’s timely nature. Send your piece with an attention grabbing lede, for example: “On Tuesday, the local school board will meet to discuss redistricting. Only one of the plans they have on the table is optimal for our town. Here’s why.”
5. Write to the future. The other strategy is to write your op-ed, and then release it with a coinciding news item. For example, if you work on immigration policy, write an op-ed now. Then, wait for Congress to debate the next big bill before you submit it for publication. In many cases, you can write an op-ed which can have many possible ledes. This way of working means that you can recycle your article if it’s not accepted the first time. If, for instance, the New York Times doesn’t pick it up, you can revise, wait for the next major event that coincides, and send on to the Washington Post.

Best of luck in your submissions and please remember to let us know when your piece is published!