Environmental Journalism: 
Op-Ed Guidelines

TAKE A STAND! An op-ed is your chance to weigh in on an environmental issue that impacts you, your community, and/or your country. Most essentially, an op-ed asserts an opinion. So be sure to include a clear thesis statement that unequivocally states your central argument.

Forms of Persuasion

Some readers might be convinced by hard facts and statistics. Others might be persuaded by an emotional anecdote, or a story from your own life. Writing a compelling op-ed often requires looking at the topic from multiple angles—each perspective helping to solidify your argument, while convincing readers to listen up. Here are some different strategies to try out as you craft your argument. You might focus on two or three, or perhaps all forms of persuasion will come into play in your piece.

- Personal Experience: The writer describes an experience he or she has had.
- Expert Opinion: The writer draws on the opinion of an expert—someone trained in a particular area, or someone who has relevant personal experience.
- Example: The writer provides an example that supports a larger idea or pattern.
- Analogy: The writer compares the situation to another similar situation.
- Facts and Statistics: The writer uses facts or numbers to prove their idea. Often this information comes from other sources, such as books, newspapers, or websites.
- Logic: The writer uses reasoning or logic to argue their point.
- Emotion: The writer makes an emotional appeal to the reader.

Sample Op-Ed Outline

I. Introduction
   a. Hook: Capture your reader’s attention from the beginning! What can you start with that will compel your audience to pay attention? Perhaps an anecdote or a surprising fact?

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b. Context: Now back up a little bit. Explain what the issue is at hand. In a few lines, provide some background and context.

c. Thesis: Finally, make an argument. Tell your reader where you stand on this issue.

II. First body paragraph
   a. Evidence #1: Describe the central piece of evidence that supports your position.
   b. Tie Back: Make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

III. Second Body Paragraph
   a. Evidence #2: Describe a second piece of evidence that supports your position. Try using a different type of persuasion (see list below).
   b. Tie Back: Again, make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

IV. Third Body Paragraph
   a. Counter Argument: Imagine you hold the opposing point of view—what would your main argument be?
   b. Rebuttal: What is your response to this argument? Why doesn’t it apply to this situation/context?

V. Conclusion
   a. Summary: In just a few lines, remind your reader of the main argument and evidence.
   b. Thesis: No need to repeat your thesis word-for-word, but remind readers what you’re arguing and why they should care!
   c. Personal Comment, Call to Action, or Question: The last few sentences of your essay will linger in your reader’s mind? What do you want to leave them with?