

# **Writing Effective Op-Eds**

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**EdSource**

# Where to begin

**Before you start writing, you should know:**

- What is the point of your commentary?
- Who is your audience?
- What do you want them to know or do after they read your piece?

# Starting the commentary

## Put what's most important right at the top

- Catch the reader's attention with the first sentence.
- State early on why the reader should care about the point you are making and what impact that issue or concern will have on real people.
- Back it up (e.g. your authority for making this argument, the data).

# Writing tips

- Make a clear argument, and argue it all the way through to the end of your commentary.
- Try not to make too many points in the same piece.
- Use a conversational style. Include real people – the human face – whenever possible.
- Avoid sweeping statements and generalities.
- Don't forget the ending.

# Important guidelines

- Keep it short - 750 words max
- Stick to one main point
- Use plain English
- Steer clear of jargon
- Explain concepts not widely understood, e.g., “herd immunity” in the context of vaccines.

# Don't forget

- Readers should be able to read your commentary once and understand it.
- Fact-check & proofread! Inaccuracies or typos will make readers doubt everything you say.
- Use links to back up your assertions, but not as a substitute for explaining concepts and terms.

# Useful resources

- Learn how to spot “deadwood” phrases [here](#).
- A nice article with tips for aspiring op-ed writers from a NY Times columnist is [here](#).
- The Writing Cooperative offers tips on writing and submitting op-eds [here](#).
- EdSource commentary guidelines are [here](#).

# Where to submit

- EdSource
- Media outlets/blogs you follow
- Local papers
- Public radio
- Other sources from the Op-Ed project:  
<https://www.theopedproject.org/submission-information>