



Letters to the Editor: A guide to publication in periodicals

Purpose and form: A brief, concentrated remark addressed to the editorial staff submitted by readers (rather than written by journalists) to convey opinions about issues of concern.

Typical length: 250 words

Time between submission and publication: A few days to a week

Best Practice:

- Original material is always preferred
- Send to your local newspaper e.g. West Valley View or the Scottsdale Progress
- Become familiar with the target publication's audience, geographic area, tone and style, and strive to speak in a voice that aligns with these elements. A piece intended for the *Arizona Republic* would sound quite different from one intended for the *Phoenix New Times*.
- Try to write less formally and more conversationally. This does not mean avoiding statistics or relying on slang, but rather shaping your piece so that it sounds as though you are speaking to the reader rather than listening to a speech or reading a textbook. Letters to the editor are typically composed in first person ("I" or "we"); op-eds may be in first or third person ("they" or "it"). Avoid second person ("you"), which can make readers feel singled out.
- Your "lede"—newspaper speak for the main point of the article—ought to come in the first paragraph. State your objective and relationship to the cause, then use the remaining word count/paragraphs to support your argument.
- Be sure any facts you include are accurate, that you cite your sources, and that sources are high quality. If quoting someone, be careful that you both have permission to do so and that your quote is verbatim; do not summarize or edit someone's quote.
- Personal narratives forge emotional connections with readers, so feel encouraged to speak from your experience and your heart. Tell your story.
- Consider how your piece will be received by readers who object to your opinion. You may anticipate arguments and counter them in your article. The primary goal is to sway those who are on the fence about or opposed to MAID, so speak directly to their fears and concerns.
- Articles are often edited by staff for length and clarity, so aim for the utmost precision and concision.
- Remain respectful and civil. Do not disparage opponents, but instead demonstrate why their position is unsupportable.
- Include a call to action at the end of your piece that clearly explains how a reader may support the cause (e.g., visiting azendoflifeoptions.org) or identifying which bill (by title and number) a lawmaker ought to support.
- Proofread it, spellcheck it, and read it aloud, then let it rest for a day before finalizing it.
- Follow the paper's guidelines for submission. You may be emailing or using an online form.