



Step-by-Step Guide to: Writing a Letter to the Editor

Drafting and Format

1. Pick a topic – something timely, compelling or even just reaction to a story you saw in the paper
2. Outline your thoughts – what is the issue at hand? What is your position? Why is it important?
3. Format of the actual piece – try to make your piece flow and follow this simple setup:

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to (you fill in headline) article published on (insert date).
This is (either right, wrong, half truth, some sort of description) and needs to be addressed.

(2 sentences on your opinion)
(1 sentence with a pithy closing)

Sincerely,
Dr. (Your Name Here)

4. Try to keep the original draft as close as possible to 150 words, or the length preferred by the publication you are submitting it to.

Editing your draft

The simplest way to make edits to your piece is to submit them to either Megan or Mandy, who can help you polish your draft. We respond typically in 24 hours or less to the emails requesting edits and advice, so drop us a line at:

info@drsforamerica.org

How to submit

Typically – your newspaper will let you submit a letter to the editor online. Go to the paper’s web site, click on the “Opinions” section and follow the instructions there. Also, if you prefer, DFA HQ can help you track down that link.

The simplest way to find out how your newspaper takes submissions is to look at the directions in the print version of the Opinions page – or you can always call the opinions editor and ask.

Follow up

The last step of any solid earned media effort is follow up. Opinion pieces are no different.

Call the paper and ask if:

1. your opinion piece was received
2. if they think it may run in the near future



3. are there any other guidelines for opinion pieces you may have missed in doing your research on the editor's preferred stylistic touches for submitted content



(A sample letter to the editor written by a Doctors for America member)

Doctor gives up post over e-mail on Obama July 25

System needs repair

By Mona V. Mangat, M.D. Monday, August 3.

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/letters/article1023796.ece>

I am writing in response to the article on Dr. David McKalip, to applaud the Pinellas County Medical Association and the Florida Medical Association for their commitment to health care reform.

There are numerous physician organizations and specialty societies, including Doctors for America, that are all working together for health care reform that addresses affordability, accessibility, cost and quality.

Instead of deriding the president, we should be respectful of the unprecedented and unusual coalition of pro-reform industries he has brought together, from the pharmaceutical industry to unions to health care providers.

E-mails like the one sent out by Dr. McKalip undermine this process and belittle the real concerns of American citizens.

As a physician, I know our nation's health care system is broken, and I am glad to join the voices calling for innovations to fix it.

