



OP-ED CHECKLIST

Getting an op-ed published can be a terrific way to raise awareness of your issue, especially because the piece can then be pushed out through social media and other networks, multiplying the return you get from your effort. Op eds can range from a passionate appeal for more park funding to a moving demonstration of how proposed development will destroy the integrity of your neighborhood Olmsted Park. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you conceive, write and get your op-ed published.

- **Do know your argument and express it clearly.** State your case and then back it up — an op-ed shouldn't be a journey of discovery. Use a strong opening that will quickly engage readers.
- **Do have a strong hook.** Why should an editor run your piece *now*? (The hook could be tied-in to a big news story, an upcoming major related anniversary, or an argument that cuts against conventional wisdom, for example.) Relatedly: Why will a reader want to read it?
- **Do incorporate the Olmsted 200 messaging themes into your op-ed.** The more voices we have, the more effective we will be at advocating. So, if your op-ed is tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure to stress how parks and public landscapes are critical to the physical and mental wellbeing of our nation. You can find all five of the campaign's key messages in our messaging framework.
- **Don't be a salesperson** — be a thought-leader. Don't try to disguise a press release as an op-ed; editors will see through it.
- **Do outline before you write.** It will help ensure that your argument flows logically, and it will make the actual writing easier.
- **Do marshal your facts** — and check them. Make sure you back up your argument with data, statistics and/or quotations. And then double-check that they're correct (memory is more fallible than you realize).
- **Don't over-write.** Less is more and a focused argument will have a greater impact. Aim for 600-800 words.
- **Do include a "to be sure" paragraph.** Anticipate, acknowledge and answer criticism. You will come across as more reasonable and less dogmatic.
- **Don't overstress the headline.** Include one and make sure it's attention-grabbing but understand that the editor will probably replace it.
- **Do research the right outlet for your submission. Make sure you** target publications whose readers include the people you are trying to reach and persuade. Understand their submission guidelines as well as the kind of pieces they run. Double-check that they haven't run a similar piece recently.
- **Don't submit to more than one publication at a time.** Outlets are less likely to accept your piece if it may appear elsewhere, and many have an exclusive policy.
- **Do be patient.** Yours is probably one of a pile of submissions. If you have a hard deadline, specify it clearly. Otherwise, wait 48-72 hours before sending a follow-up email (don't call) explaining that you will be submitting the piece elsewhere if you do not hear back. And once you're in the editing

process, remember the maxim that if you didn't want to be edited, you shouldn't have involved an editor.

- **Do promote the piece** – on social media and through your networks once it's been published. Getting your piece into a publication is a great start — now make sure as many people as possible see it.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR CHECKLIST

A letter to the editor (LTE) is a response to something published in a newspaper, magazine, or website. Here are ways to maximize the chances of getting yours published:

- **Do** check to see if the publication runs LTEs.
- **Do** respond to a specific article, including the date, headline and author (include a link to it if possible). Don't write an LTE to a publication about an article that ran elsewhere.
- **Do** keep it brief and to the point. Editors often run several, so brevity is preferred.
- **Do** get clear and specific. Don't simply say that you disagree with the piece in question or thought it was terrific. Explain what was wrong with the piece, refuting it with data or why the author was right, including the fact that they neglected to include.
- **Do** mention if you have particular expertise or experience pertaining to the topic. It's fine if you don't, but it can help if you do.