

A Letter to the Editor = Opinion Poetry

- **WRITE TO RESPOND.** Rarely is a letter published that is not responding to a news story, editorial or previous letter. This is the first and most important test an editor will apply to your letter.
- **MAKE THE CONNECTION.** Write to media outlets in communities where you live, work or used to live. Keep the audience in mind when it comes to content and tone.
- **PROVIDE A NEW TAKE.** Find an angle or point that has been overlooked. Editors are looking for ideas that add to the public dialogue.
- **TIMING IS EVERYTHING.** Editors like to package letters around a topic rather than spread them over time. A day late can be too late.
- **EXPLOIT YOUR EXPERTISE.** Address topics related to your professional expertise or personal experience whenever possible.
- **KEEP IT SHORT AND TIGHT.** Brevity is more important than ever. Confine yourself to one or two powerful thoughts. Keep it less than 200 words; 150 is better. Check limits before you send!
- **tone depends on intent.** Why are you writing? To correct a fact, restore media balance, motivate others to take action or persuade people to take your side?
- **MAKE IT PERSONAL.** Use your life, speak from the heart, let your personality shine through. People respond to the genuine.
- **ANGER TRIGGERS RESISTANCE.** Try expressing sadness or taking the moral high ground vs. mounting a moral high horse.
- **AVOID BUZZWORDS.** Political rhetoric is the equivalent of a commercial played loudly and repeatedly. No one really pays attention.
- **PRESENT THE EVIDENCE.** Don't just tell people why your idea makes sense; show them, with data or other evidence.
- **FORM LETTERS = DEAD LETTERS.** Editors do not knowingly print form letters. Tailor your letter to the publication.

