

## How to Write an Editorial

An editorial is an article written to express a person's views on a specific topic to hopefully influence other readers' opinions. While anyone can write an editorial, they are traditionally written by the editor(s) of the newspaper or magazine that publishes the piece, though many venues also take guest submissions.

Editorials are different from letters to the editor because they have a more specific format and there are higher professional expectations. For example, a good editorial will *always* have a thesis statement. Just leaping into a discussion without a clear opening is unacceptable.

There is a professional expectation that the writer(s) will not be overly emotional. While someone who writes a letter to the editor can go on about how all of the colorful graffiti in the city makes her smile, an editor who pens an editorial needs more than "it makes me happy" to support his or her claims. An editor who wants to write about graffiti being something pleasant to look at probably needs to make a case for graffiti as art.

Not every editorial has to relate to the government. It is true that many editorials are political in nature, choosing to focus on current events that are of concern, such as military action or higher taxes. But other editorials will talk about something that is going on in society, such as bullying, the effects of social media, or changes in the workplace.

How long should an editorial be? The length depends on the publication as well as the space available. For this assignment, you want to aim for somewhere between 250-500 words.

What does an editorial look like? There are a number of possible templates, but we will use the one below, suggesting a hypothetical letter one might have written in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment a century ago.

- **Develop a clear thesis.**

This needs to be a clear statement that tells the reader exactly what your editorial is about and where you stand on the issue. This may take one sentence or a whole paragraph. It depends on your writing style.

- Example: *It is December 1918, and January 1919 is just days away. We here at The Daily News propose a New Year's resolution for the nation: passing the 19th Amendment and guaranteeing women the long-deserved right to vote.*

- **Make sure you consider all sides to the topic.**

Just focusing on your side creates a lopsided approach that is generally less compelling and less intellectually rigorous. If you address the counterpoints from the start, you can then make your argument by explaining why the counterpoints are not persuasive or conclusive.

- Example of the counterpoint(s): *Some people say that women do not possess the mental capacity to vote. They say that women are the "weaker sex" and cannot be trusted to make informed decisions.*

- Example of the response to the counterpoint(s): *We say nay. Women have long demonstrated the same intellectual abilities as men. During the Great War, we saw our nation's women step up to replace the men who went off to war... at no point did we see evidence of that weakness the detractors claim exists...*
  
- **Use facts and logic to support your claims and refute theirs.**

The more strength you have behind your argument, the better. If you are able to cite studies or reference history, go for it.

  - Example: *Numbers do not lie. Women who worked in munitions factories were just as productive as the men they replaced. When we look at the statistics...*
  
- **Make sure that you offer benefits as well.**

Don't just say "this is what I think and here are facts to back it up"; show the reader how agreeing is beneficial. Offer at least two benefits. Three if possible.

  - Example: *By granting women the right to vote, our politicians will be able to better represent the nation as a whole...*
  
- **Write a strong conclusion.**

For the conclusion, recap your argument. Make sure that you restate your thesis, then remind the reader why it's a good idea to agree.

  - Example: *Ratifying the 19th Amendment is long overdue. Women deserve the right to vote because.... Granting them the right to vote will help our nation by....*

The very last thing that you want to do before sending your editorial out is to edit it. You will want to look for spelling and grammatical errors, but don't stop there. Read your editorial with a critical eye. If someone wanted to criticize your argument, what potential weaknesses of your editorial would they point out? Look for gaps in your logic or places where you might need to add a few more details.