



Tips on Generating a Letter to the Editor — Remember Your C's

Current — Responding to a recent article in the newspaper or to a very recent event is a great way to increase your odds of being published. Refer specifically to the article by using the name of the article and date, such as “In response to your recent article on child care . . .”

You can do a search on newspapers' websites for recent articles, using search words like “poverty,” “education,” “Head Start” and “priorities.” Or, collect newspapers for a few days before writing your letter, and then skim them looking for a “hook” that you can hang your response on, even if it is a stretch.

Construct — your letter using the EPIC format:

E = Engage Your Audience

P = State the Problem

I = Informing about Solutions

C = Call to Action

Clear and Concise — keep your letter short and to the point. Stick to one subject and check your grammar. After you have written your letter, read it out loud and listen to it. Have you made your point clear? Can you shorten your letter and still get your point across?

Most papers will not print letters that are more than 250 words, or two to three paragraphs in length. The shorter the letter, the better chance it will be published.

Connect the Dots — connect the dots between poverty issues and the greater world at large. Relate your topic issues with other social justice issues, defense spending and how it affects what's left of the pie for all other programs, government waste, debt relief, education and many others. Be creative in connecting the dots to other issues in your newspaper.

Controversial — feel free to question or challenge what others have said or done, and even start your letter off with a feisty first sentence. However, be sure to avoid personal attacks. An argument based on merit rather than emotion tends to sway opinion.

Coordinate Your Efforts — have as many people in your group send in letters to the editor at the same time to maximize your odds of getting published and emphasize the importance of the issue. Whether they print your letters or not, you are letting the paper know what issues the community cares about.

Contagious — maximize your efforts by sending your LTE to newspapers around the state and the nation. (Remember.... if you are trying to get a letter published in a major outlet--like the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* that expect exclusivity--do not send it to other papers until you are sure they will not print it.)

Contact information — include your address, e-mail and a daytime and evening phone number. They won't print this information, but may use it to confirm that you indeed wrote that piece of art!

When your letter is printed, send a copy to your lawmakers offices and to THCC!

Main source: RESULTS a nonprofit group committed to ending hunger.