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How to Write a Letter to the Editor

Almost all newspapers publish letters from the public. These “letters to the editor” can be a good opportunity for you to get the word out in your community on issues that concern you. Editors are often looking for new voices to appear in their letters section to generate other reader interest. Not every letter you write will be published in the paper, but these tips might help increase your chances.

TIPS

- **Do your homework.** Before writing, find out your newspaper’s rules on submitting a letter. These can often be found on the paper’s website, usually under the opinion section.
- **Start off on the right foot.** The first sentence sets the tone, so open your letter with a strong statement.
- **Keep it short.** Some newspapers restrict the length of the letter they will consider for publication, so aim for 250 words or less. Be sure to stay under the newspaper’s word limit. Going over the suggested word count practically guarantees it will not be run. Or, the editor may alter your letter so it will fit. In this case, a point that you think was important may be cut out due to space constraints.
- **Stay on Point.** To be effective, your letter should contain a maximum of one or two points. Think of it this way: If you wrote a letter on farm animals, you wouldn’t want to get side-tracked and start talking about companion pets.
- **Don’t Wait.** Editors prefer to publish letters that are timely and those that respond to an article, editorial, or previous letter that appeared in the newspaper. If an article on an animal issue appears in your newspaper, respond fast! It’s best to submit your letter the same day the article runs (this can be done through e-mail).
- **Be Nice.** A letter to the editor is a great way to give your opinion on a previous article or disagree with someone’s statement. In the beginning, be sure to mention the original letter or article including the title and date it appeared. And remember – DO NOT resort to personal attacks. There is an effective way to get your message out without putting down another reader or reporter.
- **Get the Facts.** It’s helpful to include numbers and other facts on the issue at hand. Double check your facts before submitting your letter. You don’t want someone to write a response to your letter pointing out an error of fact that could have been caught with a simple proofread.
- **Last sentences stay with readers.** Finish your letter off with a statement before you submit it. By doing this, you can make sure your letter is clear and makes sense.
- **Get a second opinion.** Have someone your trust read your letter before you submit it. By doing this, you can make sure your letter is clear and makes sense.

For additional information please contact our Outreach & Education Manager, Nicole Papageorgiou at (509) 457-6854 ext. 106 or, by email, outreach@yakimahumane.org.