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**Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor**

*Letters to the editor are powerful ways to share information and shape opinions.*

*Public officials pay close attention to them.*

**Set Your Goals**

* Don’t start work on your letter until you know what you are trying to accomplish.
* Who is the intended audience? Are you trying to persuade the undecided, or to rally people who already support you to take action?
* What impact will this story have on them? What action do you want them to take?

**Make it Newsworthy**

* The editors tend to publish letters that address a topic currently in the news, so you may want to respond to an article published within the last two days. If that is not possible, try to tie it to something in current events.
* If possible, refer to an article or editorial in that same periodical.

**Check for the Paper’s Guidelines**

* Buffalo News guidelines are at <https://buffalonews.com/corporate/how-do-i/guidelines-opinion-submissions/>.

**Keep it Short**

* The Buffalo News limit is 300 words. If you go longer, they are less likely to run it, and, if they do run it, they will be making the edits to shorten it, not you.
* Once you have drafted it, go over it to remove every word that is not essential.

**Give it a Title**

* Give your letter a short, informative, engaging title. The Buffalo News does use titles on its letters.

**Get Right to the Point**

* Include the most important information in the first paragraph, if not the first sentence.
* Depending on your goals, it might be helpful to phrase your topic sentence in the form, “X should do Y because Z.” (“The Transit Authority should convert its fleet to electric buses in order to fight climate change and improve local air quality.”)
* Stick to one key point; a letter to the editor is not the place to present all your arguments.
* Let people know where they can get more information.
* In general, it is not wise to repeat your opponent’s points. Readers will often remember and be moved by your opponent’s points, not yours.

**Keep the Style Simple and Newspaper-Friendly**

* Don’t use **bold**, *italics*, or all CAPS, since newspapers do not use them.
* Use short, simple, active sentences and short paragraphs.
* Emphasize the human interest. What will make the reader care enough to act? Can you include a story about a real person that shows the impact?
* Avoid jargon, acronyms, and technical language.
* If it is a state or national issue, emphasize the local angle or impact.

**End with a Call to Action**

* You may want to end your letter with a clear call to action – whether that action should be taken by a public figure, the readers of the letter, or both.

**Include Contact Information**

* Include your name, address and phone number. These won’t appear in the paper, but the Buffalo News, for example, will call to verify if they are going to print your letter.

**Send It In**

* Where should you send it? Think about different audiences, whom you want to reach, and how likely the particular newspaper is to run it. You can create different versions for different outlets. But most outlets will not run it if it has appeared somewhere else, so submit to one place at a time.
* For the Buffalo News, e-mail to LetterToEditor@buffnews.com.