

DoRight Enterprises—Public Relations Department

Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

1. Provide your full first and last name, address, phone number and the contact information of your teacher. Most publications will want to call the writer to confirm authenticity: (i.e. that you are using your correct name -- not a phony name -- and that you did in fact write the letter). When they know it is a young person writing they will often call the teacher.
2. Choose an issue you care about. Remember that the public is generally very interested in what young people are thinking—be bold. Make a suggestion for how your issue should be dealt with. Share observations and/or what you have learned--about schools, businesses, politics, or just the behavior of citizens in society.
3. If you are referring to a previously published letter, a [news story](#) or column, identify it by its headline and the date it was published (Re: Davenport grinds out a win, Aug. 17). This enables the editor to quickly check the original item to verify any references you have made to it (i.e. quotes, statistics, etc.).
4. Be simple and get to your point quickly. You don't need a long, rambling introduction to your subject. Just focus on one or two key points that you want to make and then get out.
5. Your overall letter can be *very* short if you like, even a couple sentences. Whatever the length, write short, punchy sentences, grouped in two or three paragraphs.
6. Be witty. Let your sense of humor and irony shine through. You can even be a little wicked, as long as you don't cross the line of good taste.
7. Avoid worn out cliches and weak puns (groan).
8. If you are responding to a columnist's views (or any other opinion piece), don't launch a personal attack on the columnist -- attack his/her views. Offer a countervailing opinion. Try to advance the debate so that other readers might join in the discussion in subsequent letters.
9. If you have read a news story or feature article that relates to something you've experienced, respond by putting your own personal twist on the subject.
10. Don't send copies of your letter to a whole host of publications. Make it an original to the publication you really want to publish it. If you don't get a confirmation call within a week to 10 days, then try submitting it elsewhere.