

Writing Op-Eds

Op-Eds (referring to the page opposite of the editorial page) refer to articles written expressing the author's opinion. They are longer than letters to the editors and allow for more opinion, but can be harder to get printed in a paper.



Here are some tips that will help you get your column in the paper:

1. **Know the paper's style.** Every paper has different expectations. The average is usually from about 400 - 750 words, but look at the op-eds in your paper to see what is typical; don't exceed that. Be careful to follow all requirements set by newspaper.

2. **Pull people in.** Op-eds should begin with a lead, similar to that of a feature piece in a newspaper, which grabs the reader and pulls him in to the piece. You can be more stylistic in op-eds than in letters or press releases, but the language should remain straightforward. Offer the statistics on the situation in Darfur, or present a personal narrative of a survivor.

3. **Look into ghostwriting.** Ghostwriting refers to writing a column that another person signs. Because op-eds are difficult to get printed, it may be a good idea to ask a local celebrity or elected to sign an op-ed that you ghostwrite.

4. **Keep it timely.** Be careful that you don't just give basic background about the genocide; try to focus on the most current aspect of the genocide and the policies being debated. Unlike letters, op-eds do not have to always be written in response to something specific, but they should still be referencing the situation in the most current way possible.

5. **Mention your elected officials.** Always try to bring up your elected officials, praising or criticizing them for their action to end genocide, and give specific steps that the official can take next. Writing about elected officials may make it more likely for an op-ed to get printed.

6. **It's okay to provide lists.** Many effective op-eds include lists of steps that the reader (or elected officials) should take. For example, well-known writer Nick Kristof often includes a list of steps that President Bush should take to stop the genocide. Students can do the same for locally elected officials in Congress or the state legislature, as well as for members of a school administration.

7. **Include a website.** Along with steps to take, readers should be presented with a website to go to in order to learn more about the genocide and what they can do to stop it. Telling readers to go www.STANDnow.org is an easy way of doing this.

8. **Include your contact info.** Editors usually have to call you to confirm authorship, so don't forget to include your phone number in your submission.

9. **Look at examples.** See the Example Op-Ed column, located at http://www.standnow.org/take_action/media for great examples of op-eds.

10. **Ask STAND for help.** If you want guidance while writing an Op-Ed, or just want another pair of eyes to take a look at it, e-mail media@standnow.org with your column.