

Writing an Op-Ed

What is an Op-Ed?

- An article that appears opposite the editorial page in a newspaper and addresses a topic that is relevant to the audience that will be reading the piece.
- It is intended to highlight an issue and influence people to take action.

Why an Op-Ed Assignment?

- Empowers students and challenges them to engage and transform public debate (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015).
- Develops students' research and writing skills.
- Engages students in "real-world" applications of the course material (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015).

Structure

As outlined by Informed Opinions (2019):

- Lede: Open with an exciting or interesting introduction to engage the reader.
- News hook: Make a connection between the issue and why it is relevant today.
- Thesis: State your argument – what is the main point that you want to make?
- Body:
 - Develop your argument and support your ideas with evidence;
 - Consider the other side of the debate or argument.
- Conclusion: State why is it important for your reader to understand the issue and the solution that you have presented for the problem.

Argumentation

- Develop clear arguments and convey them concisely.
- Make a single point clearly and persuasively.
- Explain why – consider the answers to "So what?" and "Who cares?"
- Offer recommendations – include your opinion about how to improve matters (Duke University, n.d.).
- Provide great examples to support your argument – show the reader to engage them in your argument.
- Support your argument with clear and relevant evidence.

Audience

- Decide who your audience is: the general public, academia, etc.
- Write to convince your audience from the beginning to read your piece.

Point of View

- Begin with a problem of interest.
- Clearly articulate a position regarding the problem of interest (this is your argument).
- Acknowledge the other side; this makes you appear more credible (Duke University, n.d.).
- Be respectful of differing points of view.

Style

- Use language that is easily understood by the general reader.
- Embrace your own voice.
- Use the first person when possible.
- Avoid jargon – when in doubt, leave it out.
- Use the active voice to keep the focus on the point or topic being discussed.
- Other stylistic ideas to consider:
 - An op-ed is short and concise: use short, powerful sentences and paragraphs.
 - Start strong and end strong: have a strong beginning and a strong ending.
 - Capture your reader's attention at the beginning.
 - At the end, state what you want your readers to take away from your op-ed.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Have I selected a relevant, modern, news-worthy issue?
- Does the piece have a point that is clearly expressed?
- Does the piece persuade the reader?
- Does the piece engage the reader right at the beginning?
- Is there evidence of thoughtful organization?
- Do I summarize the main point at the end?
- Is the piece readily understandable to non-academic readers?
- Is the piece polite and respectful?

References

Duke University Office of University Communications. (n.d.). Writing effective op-eds.

Retrieved from <https://commskit.duke.edu/writing-media/writing-effective-op-eds/>

Informed Opinions. (2019). Op Ed Elements. Retrieved from <https://informedopinions.org/amplify-women/our-resources/op-ed-elements/>.

Wilson-Forsberg, S. (2015, Sept. 15). Introduction to Course [Lecture]. HR163. Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford, Ontario.
