

LTE Best Practices and Template

One of the most widely read sections of any newspaper is the page featuring letters to the editor (LTE). A letter to the editor briefly responds to an event or a story that ran in the paper.

While an LTE is often used to push back on a problematic stance, you can also use it to reinforce an article that bolsters your cause and get its messages and information into the paper one more time. Additionally, most outlets prefer not to run multiple letters from the same person, so ask different community leaders and advocates to also write letters.

Generally, LTEs should not exceed 200 words. While the substance of your LTE may change based on the topic you are responding to, below is guidance that organizations can adapt to their needs.

Questions to consider before drafting your LTE

- How are you connected to this issue? What is your goal?
- What is your call to action for readers?

Tips for crafting a compelling LTE

- Be sure to include your name and requested contact information; most news outlets do not publish anonymous LTEs.
- Give your letter your own voice. While you can certainly pull from existing talking points, compelling letters with some personalization will garner more attention from readers.
- When possible, reinforce your LTE with facts or statistics that support your points.
- Encourage readers to visit your website or social pages for additional information, especially about local initiatives and ways they can get involved.
- Be sure to include your contact information when submitting LTEs and research any specific outlet guidelines for format, length or other requirements.

Template:

[Headline]

Paragraph 1: Reference the article you are responding to and then summarize your concern or appreciation for what is presented in the article. This is where you tie your issue to the article in question, take a stance, or correct any errors or misrepresentations. Explain your key point within the first few sentences to keep the reader engaged.

Paragraphs 2 & 3: The next brief paragraph should include your or your organization's ties to the issue. This is especially beneficial if the author is trusted by your priority audience. Include any data or statistics you have. Finally, include a call to action for readers, making the potential impacts of their actions clear.

Closing: In your final sentences, briefly recap your point and reiterate any action items for the reader, including where they could find further information on how to get involved in X.