

Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) Proposed Structure

I. Lead with an Objective Explanation of the Issue/Controversy.

Choose a current issue. For your editorial to be good, it will have to address an issue or topic that is on the public mind as at the time it gets into print. Look to news services for the hot topics.

- Include the five W's and the H (who, what, where, when and how).
“Members of Congress, in effort to reduce the budget, are looking to cut funding from Medicaid pre-natal care. Hearings were held ...”
- Start out with a thesis. It doesn't have to be stated up front, but your thesis is the foundation for your editorial. The thesis represents a clear stance you are taking on a particular subject.

II. Present Your Opposition First.

As the writer you disagree with these viewpoints. Identify the people (specifically who oppose you. (Republicans feel that these cuts are necessary; other cable stations can pick them; only the rich watch public television.)

- Give a strong position of the opposition. You gain nothing in refuting a weak position.
- Include reasons why the issue needs to be dealt with or changed. This is generally the basis of an op-ed piece. It is not an analysis or discussion, but rather concrete ideas about why what's happening is wrong and what needs to be done about it.

III. Directly Refute The Opposition's Beliefs.

Show your reader why the subject is worth caring about. Demonstrate with examples and statistics that support the point you're making. Each paragraph should include some piece of information that shows the reader why the subject is important.

- Pull in other facts and quotations from people who support your position.
- Concede a valid point of the opposition which will make you appear rational, one who has considered all the options (fiscal times are tough, and we can cut some of the funding for the arts; however, ...).
- In defense of your position, give reasons from strong to strongest order. (Taking money away from public television is robbing children of their education ...)

IV. Conclude With Some Punch.

Give solutions to the problem or challenge the reader to be informed. (Congress should look to where real wastes exist — perhaps in defense and entitlements — to find ways to save money. Digging into public television's pocket hurts us all.)

- A rhetorical question can be an effective concluder as well (If the government doesn't defend the interests of children, who will?)
- Summarize your opinion and argument in the last paragraph. This paragraph should leave readers with a full understanding of everything that was discussed.
- Format your op-ed piece. You should also use the active voice whenever possible, and avoid all technical jargon that readers are not likely to understand.