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Writing & Publishing an Effective Letter to the Editor

How to Write a LTE:

1. Keep it short – 150-200 words is ideal. It's also helpful to check out other letters published in the paper you're targeting to see if there is a particular length or format that the paper prefers.
2. Make one point (or 2, at most) in your letter. State the point clearly, ideally in the first sentence.
3. Make your letter timely. If you are not addressing a specific article, editorial, or letter that recently appeared in the paper you are trying to write to, try to tie the issue you want to write about to a recent event.
4. Make sure you have an action item for people. What should they do with the information you are giving them? What person are you targeting?
5. Find the angle that makes your point interesting or noteworthy.
 - **Timing** – Why is it relevant now?
 - **Significance to readership** – Know your audience. Why should they care?
 - **Geographic proximity** – How does it affect where you are?
 - **Prominence** - Are there well respected or well-known people who contribute to your cause?
 - **Human Interest** – Make it personal, add some details about who the writer is or where they are coming from (talk about family, related education)

How to submit a LTE and get it published:

1. Get other people to write and send letters as well. This will show that many individuals in the community are concerned about the issue. If your letter doesn't get published, perhaps someone else's on the same topic will. Make sure to make them different!
2. Check out the letters page of the newspaper(s) you're targeting. You'll find instructions there about where to send letters to the editor. Submit your letter accordingly.
3. Once you submit your letter, follow up with a phone call one day later. Call the editorial page editor to make sure that it was received. Ask if the paper will print your letter, and make a quick pitch as to why it should.

Note: This follow-up call is essential! By drawing the editorial page editor's attention to your letter, you dramatically increase the odds that it will be published.
4. Monitor the paper for your letter.