



How to Write a Letter to the Editor

The letters to the editor section of the newspaper is one of the most widely read sections. Responding to an editorial or article that is published in your local paper is a good way to increase awareness about maternal, newborn and child health.

When writing a letter to the editor, you should:

1. **Tie the letter to an event.** Editors are interested in printing letters that relate to events happening in the community.
2. **Make one clear argument.** The piece should be in favor of or critical of a particular position taken by the paper or described in an article.
3. **Be specific.** The letter should focus on a specific issue that was raised in an article or opinion piece.
4. **Cite the article.** Be sure to mention the title and date of the article you are responding to within your first two sentences. For example: "Dear Editor, Your recent coverage of AIDS orphans ("Who looks after the children," July 13, 2005) was a thoughtful piece ..."
5. **Stay calm.** Use no more than one exclamation point per letter. Do not attack anyone personally. Stick to the facts and keep the letter respectful.
6. **Be brief.** Generally, four to six paragraphs is ideal. If you cannot contain the piece to that length, consider asking someone to help you edit it or write a 750-word op-ed instead.
7. **Follow up.** If you have sent your letter to the editor and have not heard anything within a week, make a follow-up call to check on its status. Be aware that editors receive hundreds of letters and may not immediately respond to you.

You must include your name, address and daytime phone number in your letter. Instructions for submitting a letter to the editor are usually at the bottom of the page where they appear or on the paper's Web site. Find out from your local paper the best way to send a letter. Some papers like them mailed, others prefer faxes, while others favor e-mails.