



Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor is a letter written by a reader that either responds to a story in a previous newspaper or brings up an issue the reader wants to publicize. Letters are mailed to the newspaper (or submitted online in some cases), but only some letters are selected for publication by the editor-in-chief or a section editor.

What do you create?

A letter to the editor that addresses climate change. Your goal is to write such a great letter that the newspaper publishes your work!

How many points can you earn?

100 points for each letter you write (limit 3) AND 100 points for each letter that is published (limit 3)!

How do you earn points?

Upload a Word document of your letter to the editor in the file field of the [Upload Form](#). If a newspaper publishes your letter, submit a copy for an additional 100 points! If the newspaper is online, cut and paste the URL of the letter to the editor into the URL Field of the [Upload Form](#). You can also scan a copy to a PDF and upload that in the FILE UPLOAD field. Or, send us an original or photocopy of the article by snail mail at:

The People Speak Global Debates
United Nations Foundation
1800 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20036

What You'll Need:

- A recent copy of the newspaper to review
- Writing equipment
- A great argument!

Step 1: Find the section of the newspaper that publishes letters.

• Find the editor's name.

Read the paper to discover whether you should address your letter to the editor of the whole newspaper or to an editor in charge of a particular section of the newspaper. Often you will find a "masthead," a small, boxed part of the newspaper that appears in every issue and that lists all the writers, staff members, editors, and owners of the paper. Often, that masthead explains how to submit a letter to the editor.

• Read some sample letters to the editor.

Read for content, but also read for style, length, tone, and language. Read other articles in the paper as well, taking note of the lengths of sentences, paragraphs, and whole articles. Remember that the closer your style fits that of the paper, the more likely your letter will be published!

Step 2: Write your letter

- **Write a clear, concise argument.** Newspapers do not publish long, involved letters. Decide on the single argument you wish to make. Choose strong evidence and good reasoning. Write crisply and to the point.
- **Remember that you are arguing to a wide range of readers.** Some of your readers will agree with you, some will not agree with you, and some will not know much about your subject. Write to engage as wide a range of readers as you can.
- **Use a tone and writing style appropriate for a public audience.** Avoid debate jargon. Avoid



a demanding or patronizing tone. Engage your audience instead of alienating readers.

Step 3: Edit your letter

- **Edit your letter for appropriate length, language, audience target, accuracy, and tone.** Your purpose is to persuade your readers. Your approach and your credibility will be judged by a public readership.
- **Proofread your letter for errors.** Look for typographical errors, spelling errors, grammar errors. Make this letter perfect!

Step 4: Submit your letter

Send your letter. Be sure to use the correct postage and to include a return address. Then watch the paper for your letter!

Get Others Involved

If your letter is published, share copies with family, friends, and teachers. Discuss your argument. Encourage others (whether they agree with you or not) to write letters in response to your letter.