

The Editorial/Opinion Piece

Editorials serve any number of purposes. They may criticize, question, judge, exhort, lament, condemn, explain, praise, congratulate, contemplate, caution, eulogize, inform, satirize, clarify, inspire or support. And I'm sure you could add several more! Editorials vary greatly in tone, as well, ranging from the hard-hitting to the lyrical.

While readers expect that editorials will express opinions, and not have the objectivity of a news column, they still expect them to be honestly and thoughtfully written and not hide facts and arguments that will ultimately weaken the credibility of the original argument. It is imperative that you incorporate documentation and well-reasoned arguments in your editorial; it will do more to establish your credibility and potentially influence your reader than anything else in your editorial.

Anything appearing in the news may become the subject of an editorial. From crucial social and political issues to championships lost and the holiday season, editorials may be written on any subject. When they are based on an issue, a controversy or an event, it's best to have them appear alongside an accompanying news article about the same issue somewhere in the magazine.

Most editorials are structurally similar to the conventional classroom composition or essay, with a beginning, middle and end. The usual formula of an editorial, when it is taking a side or making a point, is to include background about the issue, criticism and suggestions, or reasoned support.

In its most basic sense, the subject of an editorial may be anything in the news about which the writer has something to say. From nuclear waste disposal, racial discrimination and profiling, famine in East Africa or the cloning of human beings, to springtime, the first day of school, sand castles or Thanksgiving. No topic is off the table.

Here is a suggested editorial structure, but of course, it is not the only way to craft a solid piece:

1. **Beginning.** A brief background of the issue that provoked the editorial. This could be in the form of a succinct summary of the news it relates to; in fact, it may even accompany a news story version of the topic being editorialized on an adjacent page.
2. **Middle.** Comment or criticism, with supporting argument and facts. This is crucial in establishing credibility with your argument; otherwise, you just have empty opinions.
3. **End.** Suggestions and solutions. It's not enough to have an opinion; everyone has one of those. The most credible editorials offer solutions.

Here are some sites to find some editorial ideas:

<http://www.accd.edu/PAC/LRC/issues.htm>

<http://www.twinlakes.k12.in.us/info/library/connection/contro.htm>