

Activity: Reach Out Through Writing



Suggested Levels: B J C S A

Objective: Draft and submit a letter to the editor of your local, regional or national news source.

Leader Prep: Review the guidelines for submitting a letter to the editor for the most appropriate news source for your issue. Local issues would be best for local papers, state issues to larger papers like the Wisconsin State Journal, and national or global issues to large circulation papers like the New York Times or the Washington Post.

Supplies:

- Elevator pitch
- Relevant facts and statistics
- Personal stories or quotes
- Guidelines or template for an impactful letter (recommended)
- Paper and pencils
- Computer or tablet (optional)

Ways to Include Supporters:

- Ask supporters to share personal stories, quotes or reflection for inclusion in your letter
1. Before you begin your letter, reflect on the best place to submit your letter and what type of audience might be reading that news. Are you writing to local citizens, to your peers, to voters, or to a marginalized group? How can you frame the personal stories and statistics to make the most impact on your audience and encourage them to support you?
 2. Next, read the editorial, op-ed or letters to the editor section of your selected newspaper. What are readers already receiving? Can you reference one of those stories or letters in your own letter? If not, try reading more of the newspaper to find news stories that are related to your issue. You can also reference a recent event or experience or another activity you did that is related back to your issue.
 3. Remember these key points when drafting your letter to the editor:
 - a. Keep it short – about 250 words or fewer. Make sure you focus only on the issue you're targeting.
 - b. Start with an engaging first sentence. Continue with a short introduction that talks about clear facts. Keep your focus on points that can be backed up by evidence.
 - c. Relate your letter back to the audience you're targeting, so they can see why it is relevant and belongs in the newspaper you've selected.
 - d. End with a call to action or something reads can do to follow-up, perhaps by joining you at a meeting or an action event, or by writing to their policymakers about your issue.
 - e. Sign the letter personally and include your contact information so that the editor can verify your letter and its writer.



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