

Guidelines for Better Writing

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Here are some helpful tips for stronger and clearer writing, whether for eNews articles, eAlerts, letters to the editor, or op. ed. pieces in news media.

1. Know the audience for whom you are writing.

Who is the reader? Consider the different functions and specific audiences of eNews, eAlert, letters to the editor, op. eds., speeches, public presentations, and even social media. (Note that audiences vary for FB or Twitter, as well as for a blog, a press release, a donor letter, or other types of writing.)

Here are some sources for how you writing op.eds. — possibly relevant to letters to the editor as well:

- New York Times tips for “Aspiring Op-Ed Writers:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/tips-for-aspiring-op-ed-writers.html>

- Op-Ed Writing: Tips and Tricks from the Op-Ed Project:

<https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics>

2. What is your point?

Why should the reader care about your topic or the point you are making? Don't take too long to get to that point.

3. Strive for a natural tone.

It depends on your audience; but in general, you don't need to sound overly intellectual, professional, authoritative or academic. Write in your own voice and in a natural tone. Use simple words. Mark Twain expressed it this way: “I never use a \$5.00 word, when I can use a \$.05 word.”

4. Get to your main point early in your writing; put important supporting arguments and information first.

Chronology, history, supporting data and other information can be brought in later,

5. Use “active voice”.

That makes clear who is the *actor* of the action described: “WILPFers helped the speaker,” rather than “The speaker was helped *by* WILPF. (“By” is often an indicator of *passive* voice.)

Sometimes, the passive voice is useful and appropriate, but, in general, active voice pulls the reader into the piece.

6. Avoid jargon.

That includes acronyms and other abbreviations! Spell them out at least the first time.

7. Allow sufficient time to write, edit and review!

Nearly *all* writing can be improved when reviewed a day later!

Try to cut words, be clear, and get to your point.

- Check for typos, missing words, and redundancy.

- Watch out for contractions: Spell-check will not always catch it's for its, you're for your, and they're for their.

Also, ask a friend who knows the subject and is a good writer to review your draft.

Try applying these steps to produce more persuasive writing!