

OPINIONS WRITING PRIMER – *THE OBERLIN REVIEW* – Fall 2026

Thank you for your interest in writing for the Opinions Section of *The Oberlin Review*! We're excited to work with you! Even if you have written for us before, please take a moment to read over these guidelines for Opinions pieces.

This guide is divided into three sections: submission protocol, writing tips, and style guidelines. Please contact the Opinions Editors, Zosia Mateja and Ellie Bronwell, at opinions@oberlinreview.org with any questions.

Protocol for Opinions Pieces:

Process

- Before submitting an Opinions piece, you must meet with the editors the week before publishing to discuss the piece and go over expectations. These meetings will take place before Friday night of the week of publishing, however if this is not achievable we can email to find an alternative.
- After our initial conversation about the Opinions piece, please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to go in a different direction with the piece. In this case, we will have a discussion to see if the piece still fits in the opinions section. If you are adamant about making major changes, please come into the office to discuss this with us Wednesday night. We may delay the article's publication if changes are significant enough. If we feel the article no longer works in our section, we will not move forward with publishing it.
- We do our best to include all submissions. However, it is the nature of newspapers that content may have to be cut or pushed to the following week at the last minute if the section is full or if the piece requires substantial edits. We apologize for this inconvenience.
- Please continuously check your email on Wednesdays and Thursdays, as these are the days we are editing your pieces and might need to run edits or changes by you before proceeding. Please respond no later than 8 pm, as we are on a tight schedule. If we send back submitted drafts with suggested edits, please avoid making last minute major modifications other than the suggested feedback to the draft.
- The *Review* will edit all Opinions pieces and letters to the editors for clarity, length, style, grammar, and strength of argument without altering the author's position. All major edits will be approved by the author prior to publication.

Requirements

- Opinions pieces must be signed with the author's full name. We will not publish submissions under pseudonyms.
- The piece must be the author's original work.

- Pieces may be written individually or co-written. For co-written pieces, all authors must be credited.
- Pieces are **due at 4:00 pm on Tuesday** evening. Please contact the Opinions Editors as soon as possible if you think you will not be able to make this deadline.
- Please submit pieces as Google Docs, if possible. Otherwise, submit them as Word Documents. **Do not submit a piece as a PDF.**
- The *Review* will not print advertisements on its Opinions pages. We define an advertisement as any submission that has the main intent of bringing direct monetary gain to a contributor or otherwise promoting an event, organization, or other entity to which the author has direct ties.
- Authors who submit a piece should expect to work with the Opinions Editors on revisions and be responsive to phone and/or email up until publication Friday morning.
- You **must** link all your sources before submitting, and be able to substantiate any factual claim.
- While the *Review* welcomes all opinions, **we will not publish hate speech.**

Writing Tips for Effective Opinions Pieces

- The ideal length for an Opinions piece is **800 to 900 words**. We can go up to one thousand words. Please warn the editors as soon as possible if your piece exceeds or falls short of that range, as it will affect our layout.
- **What does not count as an op-ed:**
 - Works of poetry/fiction; personal anecdotes with no larger relevant points
 - The opinions section does not usually publish satirical material.
 - Article submissions that praise organizations or companies that the author works for will not be accepted.

Choosing a Topic:

- Choose a topic about which you are passionate and knowledgeable; something that you have a strong definite opinion on.
- The best pieces are timely (related to current news) and have an Oberlin College or city tie-in. However, these are not necessities as long as the piece is relevant to our readers.
- Focus the piece on a specific issue, event or article relevant to the Oberlin community.
- Begin with a strong opening that introduces the issue and your opinion. As with a news story, the most important information should be at the beginning.
- Explain the topic: do not assume that your readers know about the event or people involved. The purpose of most Opinions pieces is to educate readers as much as to present an opinion.
- Think about the tone/language that you want to utilize to best articulate your stance on the topic; and maintain consistency throughout the piece.

- Do your research and include the facts! After major claims or statements you make, please provide a source to back it up, if it's not functioning as your own personal perspective. Link each source you have used in the comments on the google document.
- You will sound more informed and authoritative if you are specific about details. As with any academic paper, **you must provide evidence** for your claims in the form of quotes or examples.

More on Facts:

- A misconception about opinions pieces is that they cannot qualify as libel since they represent the writer's opinion. However, this defense only works if the opinions are based on true statements. Thus, be careful when discussing a specific person. If sharing a personal experience, do not exaggerate. Do not say that a person yelled at you if they only spoke. Do not quote someone unless you are certain the quote is exactly right. Consult the Opinions Editors with any questions.
- When mentioning an article in the *Review* or another publication, please list the name of the publication and link to the article.
- Obviously, newspaper articles do not have footnotes or bibliographies, but you still must state where you found your information! Use phrases like "According to ..." to attribute information and statistics.
- **Submit links to sources or other supporting materials with your draft to the Opinions Editors, so that the piece can be fact-checked. Please hyperlink your sources where they are relevant.**

Miscellaneous

- Acknowledge the counterargument. It will strengthen your piece to present and refute counterarguments to your claim.
- Explain why the reader should care about the topic. What is the individual's or community's stake in the issue?
- Present ideas for solutions.
- As with other journalistic writing, short sentences and paragraphs are your friends. Limit uses of semicolons and em-dashes.
- When you first introduce a person, include their full name and title if applicable. When referencing current students, **include their division (College, Conservatory, or double-degree) and year**. When referencing alumni, include their graduation year. **Please double-check name spellings and pronouns.**
- If you cut any words out of a quote, you must include ellipses. Any words you add for clarification must be in brackets. However, try to avoid this whenever possible.

A Few Words on Reported Ops Pieces

- You can absolutely write reported ops pieces! You can interview or request a comment from students, faculty, staff, or anyone else you can think of. Interviews conducted in person or over the phone are preferable but email comments also work.
- When interviewing please ask for the person's name, class year, pronouns (if comfortable), and whether they are in the college or conservatory. This is the information that we provide with direct quotes from people in articles.
- If you get answers via email, you must say so in the article. (i.e. "..._____ said in an email to the Review.") Please forward us the email for fact-checking purposes.
- If you would like to contact a senior member of the Oberlin Administration, please reach out to your editors, who can help you draft an email.
- Similarly to how we do not publish anonymous ops pieces, the *Review* does **NOT** permit anonymous quotes in pieces for any section, including ops.
- For other tips on best reporting and interview practices, we ask that you refer to the [News Primer](#). (Note: Reported Ops pieces do **not** require a minimum number of sources; the three source rule does not apply to you.)

Headlines: Please provide three possible headlines of different lengths using the following guidelines. Our editors will help if you have difficulty with this.

- All stories must have three headlines of varying lengths, angles, and subjects. For example:
 - Removal of Trees on Campus has Negative Consequences on Student Mental Health
 - Student Mental Health Worsens After Campus Wide Tree Removal
 - Tree Removal Unnecessary, Detrimental to College
- Avoid using articles (a, an, the)
- Always use a verb! Implied forms of "to be" are fine, as in "Albino Squirrel Embarrassed by Media Attention," though action verbs are preferred.

Finally, please make sure pieces are submitted on time! **Unless you have communicated with the Opinions Editors in advance, pieces must come in by 4 pm on Tuesday** for Friday publication. It makes it difficult for us, production staff, our fellow section editors, and senior staff when pieces come in late. In weeks with excess content, late submissions may be deprioritized.

For more on the role of Opinion pieces and how to write an effective one, check out this article by an editor at *The New York Times*: "[Op-Ed and You](#)."

