**What is an Op-Ed?**

Op-eds (or “opposite editorial”) are articles devoted to commentary, feature articles, and opinions. Due to strict space limitations in newspapers, not all op-eds are published, but the more op-eds the publication receives on a certain topic, the more likely they are to run at least one op-ed on the topic. Op-eds must be approved by the editorial page or opinion page editor and will also be cleared by a copy editor.

**When to Write an Op-ed**

* Your topic is timely and relevant
* Your topic will be of interest to a wide audience
* You have important information to share in a new or interesting way
* You are unable to write your piece in 250 words or less

**How to Write an Op-ed**

Follow the Publication’s Rules — Each publication will be slightly different so check out their website to see what requirements they have for op-eds. Many publications limit pieces to 750 words or less.

Know your goal and audience — What do you want to accomplish with your op-ed? What do you want people to learn? Op-eds can be a powerful tool for informing the public of an important issue and inspiring action.

Hook the Reader — Start with something compelling and unique to hook the reader. A catchy first line can make all the difference.

Stay Relevant — Make sure you are writing about something timely and relevant. The more relevant it is and of current interest to readers, the more likely it will be published.

Use Everyday Language — Don’t limit your audience by using complex language and acronyms, you want to draw in a wide audience. Aim for writing at an 8th grade level or below.

Assume Nothing — Do not assume that your readers are informed on your topic. Give a concise but informative background before plunging into the main issue. Also include any relevant credentials that prove you are informed about your topic.

Link your Sources — Whenever you state a fact hyperlink your text with your source to backup the information that you’re sharing.

Be factual — And highlight aspects of the issue that haven’t been previously addressed.

Stay Focused — Op-eds don’t allow for a lot of space; therefore, it’s critical to make sure you stay focused on the one thing you want your readers to know. Don’t try to fit too much into your piece or the purpose and goal of the op-ed will become lost.

Maintain Composure — It is okay to express outrage, but it should be kept under control. Never personally attack someone. Instead, focus on criticizing specific policies or ideas and propose a better alternative.

Find a Local Angle — Readers are more interested in an issue when they see how it affects their lives and communities. Find a way to show how budget cuts or environmental policies will affect this particular readership.

Keep it “You”— Authenticity is the name of the game. Express your opinion succinctly and support your points but remember to make it your own. Telling your personal story is the most powerful tool in advocacy -- don’t hold back! Include personal details (hometown, professional title) to better drive home your arguments.

Avoid Duplicate Op-Eds — Do not send the same op-eds to two publications. Most major papers will only print letters that are exclusive to that paper.

Send a Polished Piece — Be sure to send your op-ed as an attached Word document, double spaced, with a title. Also make sure to include your name, title or position (if applicable), email, phone number, and address.

Say “Thank You” — Once your piece is published, be sure to reach out to the publication thanking them for including your piece.

Spread the Word — Share your piece on social media, send it to your legislator, or to any relevant decision makers.

**Writing an Op-Ed on Behalf of Sierra Club Maine**

We love to have volunteers write op-eds on behalf of our chapter! We simply ask that you identify yourself individually in addition to our chapter name such as “volunteer, Sierra Club Maine” and submit your op-ed with at least 24 hours notice (Monday through Friday) to [Maine.Chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:Maine.Chapter@sierraclub.org) to be reviewed prior to submitting.

**Have any questions? Don’t hesitate to reach out to us at** [**maine.chapter@sierraclub.org**](mailto:maine.chapter@sierraclub.org)**.**