

Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor

- **Know the rules.** Each newspaper has its own rules for letters intended for publication. Newspapers print the rules from time to time in their "Letters to the Editor" column. Call the editor if in doubt.
- **Stick to ONE point.** Trying to cover an array of issues usually doesn't do justice to any of them.
- **Simple declarative sentences** can be very effective. (Example: "Legislators should champion teachers.") Churchill said, "Mastering the simple declarative sentence was my greatest accomplishment in school."
- **Sometimes the very best** Letter to the Editor is only one paragraph in length. Brevity is the soul of wit. It often is also the heart of readability.
- **Discuss the issue** in terms of how it affects students, if possible.
- **Don't be reluctant.** Express your convictions.
- **The experts say** a Letter to the Editor often wins the hearts of readers with humor, solid logic, a picturesque outlook or a unique manner of approaching an issue.
- **Try to "connect" with the readers.** That is, write your letter as if you were saying "I want what YOU want." A letter that appears self-serving usually suffers loss of credibility.
- **You may want** to include a motivation line (or "Call to Action" statement) in your letter, such as: "Please vote for Proposition 47. Students deserve modern schools."
- **An upbeat letter** may be more persuasive than one that scolds, blames or complains.
- **Remember, it's fair** for the editor to cut part of your letter. The editor wants people to READ the Letters to the Editor column. If the editor believes that editing will improve the readability of your letter, he or she will do it.
- **Check** for spelling in your letter. (The general public expects educators to be perfect.)

