

How to Write & Publish an Op-Ed

Named for its position in a newspaper or magazine – opposite the editorial page – the op-ed piece provides a place for you to take a stand on a current immigration issue or perhaps offer an opinion on an immigration subject. Criteria for op-ed pieces may vary by publication but there are some general rules.

On average, one to three op-ed pieces are run every day and are about 750 words in length. Almost all editors agree that op-ed pieces must have two things: timeliness and creativity. The best advice is to read the intended publication to see how other op-eds have been written, and to contact the publication for specifics on length of piece, submission criteria, etc.

Some editors like to discuss the idea for an op-ed piece ahead of time; others prefer to receive the op-ed with a cover letter.

Topics for op-ed pieces are many and range from: opinions and analysis of public affairs, politics, education and law to journalism, healthcare, religion, the military, science, and lifestyles (notice how immigration touches on all of these areas). Topics can be of a local, national or international importance. They must, however, be relevant and timely to something that is happening now or is about to happen. Some editors prefer to avoid extremely controversial issues, feeling that adversary journalism is a never-ending ping-pong match. Others encourage publication of diverse opinions on sensitive issues.

Op-ed pieces are not to be used as a vendetta medium against some alleged injustice to you (or your client), nor are they the forum for challenging a reporter's techniques. The key word in considering op-ed pieces is *judicious*. Just define the issue you wish to discuss or state the problem as you see it, provide whatever background or history is needed and then suggest ways the situation can be changed or improved.

Publishing Your Op-Ed

- 1. Have something to say. The best op-ed pieces are tough, straight-forward, categorical.
- 2. **Be timely.** The best op-eds concern subjects triggered by breaking news.
- 3. **Be topical.** Topicality means that an op-ed is relevant to readers.
- 4. **Start with a grabber.** It's particularly important to "hit the ground running" begin the op-ed with a straight-to-the-gut sentence.
- 5. Have a point. There's not enough space to make more than one point maybe two).
- 6. **Back it up with facts.** Op-eds must be loaded with evidence (cite IPC reports and studies).
- 7. End with a zinger. Many people will remember the initial thing you said and few will remember the middle most will remember how you end.