



## HOW TO WRITE AND SUBMIT AN OP-ED

*Boston Globe Opinion Page Editor Margorie Pritchard offers a guide and sample cover letter:*

**Argue.** An op-ed piece is like a legal brief. Forget objectivity; put forward your opinion in a persuasive, argumentative manner.

**Know your thesis.** It doesn't have to be complicated, but if you can't sum up your argument in one sentence, think about it more before you sit down to write.

**Be informal.** Write as you would explain your argument to a friend. An essay can - and should be - like everyday speech.

**Keep it short and simple.** State your opinion clearly and quickly, back it up with facts and examples, and be done with it. Anything longer than 700 words can probably be said more succinctly. Many editors lack space for anything more than 700 words. Your opinion piece may be well-argued, but if it's too long, editors won't even consider it.

**Think about structure.** Aside from length, there are no hard-and-fast rules. While certain topics can be handled casually, even fancifully, others benefit from a well-ordered design. Here is a basic format often used for an opinion essay:

- **Lead paragraph.** Your first sentence should grab people, otherwise they won't read on. Start with a concrete image or example that sums up what you are saying, then get to your thesis and state it. ("Bob Brokaw didn't know it when he started smoking as a teen-ager that he'd be dying at the age of 50 of lung cancer.")
- **Concessions and support.** Now that you've made your point, back it up. Before you give evidence, you might want to provide background ("Cigarettes are long paper tubes...") and/or concede certain points ("Granted, cigarettes made Humphrey Bogart appear suave and sophisticated..."). Then, in successive paragraphs, state the remaining tenets of your argument.
- **Conclusions.** In the concluding paragraph, take things one step further. ("It's high time Congress stubbed out subsidies for tobacco growers and outlawed all forms of tobacco advertising.") Make your last sentence, like your first, a "kicker." You can come back to your lead example ("If it had only happened sooner, Bob might not be in an iron lung today") or not, but don't just fade away. Finish with a bang, not a whimper. Make it memorable.

### SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Dear Ms. Pritchard,

Please consider the enclosed op-ed for publication in the Boston Globe. Now a sophomore at Duke University, I graduated from Anytown Memorial High School in 1998. I keep in touch with the happenings of the educational system in Massachusetts through my mother (a teacher in the Anytown school system) and my brother, who now attends the same high school that I did. The educational system in Massachusetts is changing rapidly, and I feel that it is inevitable that students are going to suffer. I hope that this piece will raise some awareness of the issue, and I think that the perspective of a recent graduate of the system is one that is not often heard.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,