**Writing an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor**

**Planning Worksheet**

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| **How to use this worksheet:**   1. Save a copy to your hard drive 2. Use the writing prompts to fill in the table below |

**Things to keep in mind when writing your opinion piece:**

* The best op-eds and letters to the editor (LTE) use a personal story to help the reader understand a systemic policy issue. [Here’s a great example](https://www.journalnow.com/opinion/columnists/dr-kimberly-montez-paid-family-leave-puts-babies-lives-first/article_06191c78-8e0f-11e9-8f60-b754b5dd54ec.html).
* Start and end with a bang! Open with a strong narrative that gets the reader’s attention. Close your piece with a specific call to action that emphasizes the importance of the issue, and names the decision-makers responsible.
* Short and concise: Op-Eds are between 500 and 650 words. LTE’s are even shorter. Each newspaper usually states its specific requirements on its website.
* Check the specific guidelines on submitting opinion pieces to the publication of your choice. Newspapers usually require that you include your full name, phone number, and address with your submission.

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| Writing Prompts |
| **What is the issue you want to focus on for your op-ed or letter?** |
| **What story can you tell that illustrates why this issue matters so much to you? How does it impact you, your family, friends, neighbors, or community?** |
| **What are 2-3 key points you want readers to know about the issue? What data support these points?**  **Point 1:**  **Supporting Data:**  **Point 2:**  **Supporting Data:**  **Point 3:**  **Supporting Data:** |
| **What is your call to action? Who is the local decision-maker with the power to enact your solution?** |
| **Close with a brief sentence that references the opening story, to summarize and pull it all together.** |
| **Be sure to include a one-sentence bio of the author**. Example: Dr. Kimberly Montez is a pediatrician in Winston-Salem |