

How to Letter-Write! For activists, journalists, concerned citizens, and/or all of the above.



A tutorial on persuading with just a few sentences.

By Anna Olteanu

Despite our hyper-connectedness in the digital age, we can still find ourselves disillusioned at the feeling of being drowned out by the deafening roar of the internet. It can feel as though news outlets, politicians, and even our own communities cannot hear us. Here are some steps to maximize communication and reception.

Writing Persuasively

Remember this: REPETITION, REPETITION, REPETITION

The advertising industry continually markets certain consumer goods day-in, day-out—so, too, can activists. Consistently repeating bite-sized pieces of information to politicians, newspapers, or communities can effectively shape conventional wisdom.

On an individual level, it would be wise not to send, for example, a letter to the editor on the same subject every day, or even every week. Instead, mobilizing high volumes of concerned citizens across numerous regions—letting them know they have power in numbers—can help change mainstream narratives.

Passive vs. Active Voice

In the active voice, the subject of the sentence comes first, followed by the verb and the object.

For example, “the child kicked the ball” uses active voice. The same sentence in the passive voice is “the ball was kicked by the child.” The object of the verb comes first, followed by the verb and the subject.

The passive voice is effective when softening an action or tone. The active voice is ideal for persuasive writing, as it is direct and impactful.

Writing Letters to the Editor

- ★ Include your name and contact information.
- ★ Diversify your outreach—write to multiple outlets, rather than one.
- ★ Stay concise. Try not to exceed 300 words.
- ★ Respond to a recently published article. Positive feedback can be especially encouraging to the publication.
- ★ Be polite.
- ★ End with a call-to-action.

Writing to Elected Officials

- ★ Contact all relevant representatives—those that chair a commission that would be concerned with the issue at hand.
- ★ Keep it local and personal. Try incorporating details that will resonate with your specific municipality or region.
- ★ Focus on a piece of legislation (either passed or one that's being deliberated).
- ★ Include your name and contact information.
- ★ Stay concise. Try not to exceed 300 words.
- ★ End with a call-to-action.

Additional Resources

- ★ [Writing Workshop: Letter to the Editor with Bill McKibben](#)
- ★ [Examples of effective letters to the editor, how to campaign on social media, and strong op-eds](#)
- ★ [George Orwell on Writing Well](#)