

Opinion Editorial How-to-Guide

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in authoring an op-ed. The following are guidelines and “how-to’s” to help you write, submit/pitch your op-ed, and ensure the op-ed is placed in your preferred media outlet.

An op-ed, short for “opposite the editorial,” is generally a 500-750 word piece expressing an opinion on a current topic and published in a publication by a contributor who is not affiliated with the publication.

Drafting Your Op-Ed

1. **Determine your ask/call to action.** What key point or message are you trying to share with your audience? This main point should ring clear throughout your op-ed.
2. **Put together an outline.** This doesn’t have to include complete thoughts or even full paragraphs initially, but it will help to get your ideas and main points down on paper. Most op-eds cannot exceed 500-750 words, so it is important to have a good sense of what you are going to say with the limited amount of words available. Try to limit your op-ed to 2 main points; too many points might dilute your overall message.
 - a. Sample outline:
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. Point #1
 - iii. Point #2
 - iv. Conclusion
3. **Draw from personal experience as much as you can.** The more that you can make the op-ed about yourself and why you believe it’s important to position doctors of optometry as the primary eye care providers for Americans, the more your op-ed will resonate with readers. This is your opportunity to share *your* point of view with readers, and they are willing to hear it!
4. **Localize your topic.** Can you make the issue relevant to your readers with local data/health statistics to back up your claims? If so, include this information as succinctly as possible.
5. **Draw your reader in with a captivating opening.** A good way to catch and keep a reader’s attention is to start with an engaging line that draws them in—whether it’s a quick story about your experience as a physician, a patient anecdote or a compelling statement.
6. **Use complete sentences.** Make sure you are writing in full sentences to illustrate fully your well-thought-out points.

7. **Take a step back.** After writing your first draft, step away and take another look with a fresh pair of eyes later. This will help you to catch errors that you might have overlooked before.
8. **Proofread!** Double check your op-ed for typos and correct formatting - and ensure any hyperlinks work properly.

Pitching Your Op-Ed to The Media

1. Depending on where you live, your local AOA chapter can suggest several target publications where you can consider submitting/pitching your op-ed.
2. Make sure that your op-ed meets the qualifications of the specific publication you've selected, such as adhering to each outlet's specified word maximum.
3. Prepare a short, succinct email to the opinion editor, or appropriate staff member, of your target publication. The note should explain the following: who you are, what your op-ed is about, and why you think the topic is important. Your note should not be more than 3-5 sentences. Include your op-ed in the body of your email below your note as well as an attachment to your email. Not all reporters like attachments, so it is important to include it both ways.
4. If you have not heard from the editor in 2-3 days, follow back up with a phone call or a reminder email. If you still do not hear from the editor, send a final reminder note. If you do not hear a response back in 2 weeks, then you can begin to consider an alternative publication to pitch your op-ed.
5. If the op-ed is accepted and published/posted online, consider sharing it through your personal and professional networks, as appropriate. This could include amplifying the piece on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or via e-newsletter, if appropriate.