



# Writing a Letter to the Editor of Your Local Newspaper

Be sure to consult the news outlet's guidelines before writing a letter. Most will post guidelines on their websites, on the same page as the "opinion" or "contact us" section. Newspapers print them on their editorial page. If you're not able to find the guidelines, simply call the news outlet to request them.

## How to Get Your Letter Published

**Keep it short.** Letters should be concise, typically 150 to 200 words, or about three short paragraphs. For a news magazine or a radio news show, they should be about 100 words.

**Respond to a recent article or editorial.** When you connect your opinion to a current topic of discussion, you increase your chances of being published.

**Write an original letter.** Don't simply copy from a Bread alert. Your own voice is much more compelling than a canned message. Editors welcome opinions that contain personal insight and expression. Also, don't send the same letter to different news outlets. Each letter you submit should be unique.

**Express your opinion with conviction and passion,** using strong but not strident language. Vitriolic opinions are easily dismissed.

**Name your representative and/or senators** so that your letter, if published, reaches your members of Congress quickly. Congressional staff monitor media "hits" for their offices daily. If your member of Congress is on a relevant committee related to your issue, be sure to include that detail in your letter.

If you email your letter, **send your message as text only.** Do not use attachments. Also, do not cc: your letter to Bread for the World or any other organization or individual. If you want someone else to see your letter, copy the letter into a separate email.

**Always include a daytime telephone number and your mailing address** in case the newspaper wants to verify you as the author. If you submit a letter by regular mail or fax, don't forget to sign it. Many newspapers won't



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publish a letter without a signature.

Remember that it may take a week or more from the time a newspaper receives a letter before it gets published. Weekly papers and news magazines take even longer.

Small-circulation newspapers usually print most of the letters they receive. It's more challenging to get a letter printed in major metropolitan newspapers, as they receive a larger number of letters. But the more feedback a news outlet receives on hunger, the more likely they are to print news stories and opinions related to hunger. So even if your letter

doesn't get printed, remember that your voice still influences the editorial process and creates awareness about hunger.

With a little practice, writing good letters to the editor is neither time-consuming nor difficult. No other form of communication can match the impact of a thoughtful letter written directly from the heart by a concerned community citizen.

### Template for a Letter to the Editor

A good letter to the editor should be no more than three paragraphs and should not exceed 250 words. Follow this general structure:

1. **Introduce the issue and why you are writing the letter.** If you are responding to what someone else has written, directly address that article or letter.

Example: *I totally disagree with John Doe's assessment of hunger in our community ("Ignore the Hungry," Feb. 1, 2015).*

Example: *Hunger is pervasive around the world as 805 million suffer from malnutrition and depend on the U.S. govern-*

*ment to be a leader in the movement to improve this situation. We have an opportunity to improve the lives of women and children around the world, to help communities lift themselves out of poverty.*

2. **State the facts using statistics, preferably local.** If you do not have the statistics, cite a local story. But use statistics sparingly.

Example: *St. Mary's food pantry in downtown Anycity shows how churches are combatting hunger. But need has increased beyond the church's capacity to help. In fact, churches and food pantries supply only 1 bag for every 20 bags needed to feed hungry people in our country.*

3. **Close with a call to action or offer a solution to the problem.** Then thank the editor.

Example: *As a concerned reader and an active member of Bread for the World, I hope that Representative Jane Doe will help protect programs such as SNAP from further budget cuts. Thank you.*



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