

Writing an Effective Op-Ed Piece

Jacob C. Farbman, M.A., APR
Director of Communications
NJ Council of County Colleges
Adjunct Professor
Communication Studies Department
The College of New Jersey

What is an Op-Ed?

- Opinion-Editorial piece
- Written by prominent reader
- Topic relevant to audience
- Author is experienced in topic
- In PR, we ghost write op-eds for others' approval

In PR, we write Op-Eds for:

- President/CEO
- Board Chairwoman
- Board Chairman
- Board Members
- Managers
- Expert Employees
- Opinion Leaders w/ vested interest
- Advisory Board Members

Aspects of Published Op-Eds

- Timing – track news
- Length? 600 to 750 words
- Answer readers' question: Why should they care?
- Offer Specific Recommendations
- Avoid Jargon
- Write S-V-O
- Winning Ending
- Include brief bio – Resource Box

Op-Ed Topics

- Foreign Affairs
- Local Policy
- Economics
- Public Education
- Politics
- Cultural Relations
- Personal Experience
- Crime and Justice
- Environment
- Health Care
- Drugs, smoking or alcohol
- Child care
- Media issues
- Science and Tech.
- College Education
- National Policy

Writing a Good Op-Ed

- Narrow Scope of Topic
- Localize
- Consider Audience
- Clarity
- Don't just attack, offer alternatives
- Avoid tired subjects
- Know the Newspaper
- Follow Newspaper Guidelines

More Op-Ed Tips

- Message
- Audience
- Outlet Rules
- The Ask
- Background Information
- Focus on one issue
- Strong opening
- Strong closing

Op-Ed Logistics

- PR drafts Op-Ed
- Shared with "author(s)" for approval
- PR sends it to Op-Ed editors at newspaper(s) via e-mail
- Editors will contact "author(s)"

Remember...

- Most Op-Eds are commissioned
- Exclusivity agreements

Questions?
