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Op-ed Development Worksheet

This worksheet will guide you through the process of developing a first draft of your op-ed.

Before You Get Started

1. Choose a topic for which you have a passion and/or personal connection.
2. Decide the tone of your piece. Think about what you want the reader to feel.
3. Consider what action you hope the reader will take.
4. Research your topic, including other op-eds about your topic, to see what is effective.
5. Pull points from your research that may support your argument.

First, you'll create your thesis statement. List the broad topic you want to address.

Example 1: Cigarette smoking

Example 2: Soda machines

Narrow the focus to a more specific topic.

Example 1: Cigarette smoking in restaurants

Example 2: Soda machines in schools

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Form an opinion or stance. Are you against or in support of your topic?

Example 1: Cigarette smoking should be banned in restaurants.

Example 2: Soda machines in schools encourage students to make poor nutritional choices.

Revise this opinion to make an assertion clarified by your preliminary research. Introduce information your average reader may not have already.

Example 1: Since the odds of lung cancer developing in non-smokers sharply increase with regular exposure to second-hand smoke, cigarette smoking should be banned in restaurants and other indoor public areas.

Example 2: With child diabetes cases on the rise, soda machines should be removed from schools as they encourage children to make poor nutritional choices.

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This will be your thesis. Now you can shape the body of your op-ed.

Next explain how this subject is personal to you. What led you to this this opinion?

List a few potential points for your supporting arguments.

Example 1:

- Provide statistics from reputable medical journals that show a correlation between instances of lung cancer in non-smokers and exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Name some establishments that have already implemented non-smoking policies and still sustain profitable business models.

Example 2:

- Find the percentages of child diabetes in the U.S. over the last 10 years.
- Look at nutritional programs in the schools of other countries with lower rates of child diabetes.

Acknowledge/address your opposition's main argument.

Example 1: A non-smoking policy for indoor public areas won't eliminate lung cancer all together, but the number of cancer patients in the U.S. would be greatly reduced and countless lives could be saved.

Example 2: Sodas are not the sole cause of diabetes in children. However, in excess, they are a contributing factor; and with soda machines always within reach, convenience often wins out over conscientiousness.

Define a call to action. Now that you have informed your readers, what do you want them to do? List some changes you want to see and determine an overall message from there.

Example 1:

- Boycott establishments that will not implement non-smoking policies.
- Write to your local congressional representative, calling for a new law that prohibits smoking in indoor public areas.

Example 2:

- Parents write to their School Board representative proposing the removal of soda machines from school grounds.
- Replace the soda with healthier juice options.

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Now that you've mapped your argument, organize your results here.

Thesis:

Personal association:

Supporting arguments:

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Rebuttal to the opposition's main argument (optional):

Call to action:

The op-ed writing process should follow this general timeline:

Day 1: Submit op-ed development worksheet

Day 2: Receive written and/or verbal feedback

Day 3: Submit draft of op-ed

Day 3: Receive written feedback & edits

Day 4: Submit re-drafted op-ed

Day 4: Receive pitching instructions and student submits op-ed

Day 6: Student follows-up with reporter via phone

Day 11: Receive pitching instructions for next news outlet, if not published.