

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and striped tie is looking down at a document he is holding. He is wearing glasses. The image has a strong green color overlay. In the background, there are blurred computer monitors.

Media Tools

Engaging with the media can be an easy and powerful way to communicate your message to large audiences, including community members and decision makers. Utilize these tips and examples to express your support or opposition for an issue or topic.

[Letter to the Editor \(Tips and Example\)](#)

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Speaking up for what you believe in is a fundamental right. When it comes to an issue as important as cancer prevention, we must join together to speak up across the spectrum—to Members of Congress, state legislators, the media, and the people we care about—to educate them about how they can help to reduce the incidence of cancer across this country.

RON CHRISTIE, CEO, CHRISTIE STRATEGIES &
PREVENT CANCER FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are published on the editorial page of a newspaper. Writing a letter to the editor is an effective way to briefly respond to an article or editorial that was previously published or to provide your opinion on current events, such as new legislation or the actions of your elected officials. When you communicate your opinion in a well-written piece, you can help to inform, and even influence, the public regarding issues that are important to you. This sample letter and tips can help you in drafting your own letter to the editor.



TIPS TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Check the publication's website for guidelines on letters to the editor to make sure your piece satisfies length and formatting requirements. Make sure to send it to the specific contact listed for this purpose. This may be an online form or email address.

Keep it concise. Each media outlet has a maximum word count. Focus on just one major concept or idea and limit it to 200 to 250 words.

Open with the title of the article or editorial which you are responding to and when that piece was published.

Don't make it complicated. Remember, not everyone will have read the piece you are referencing or be familiar with your topic. Keep your writing simple and avoid acronyms and jargon.

Keep it relevant. Write about an event in the news or piece that was recently published and cite the article.

Make it relatable. Write about something that pertains to your community. Explain how your topic impacts your community and, if possible, include an example from your personal experience.

Begin your letter by stating your thoughts on an article, editorial, or recent event. You can express disagreement, contribute to the discussion by offering information, or point out inaccuracies in an article.

End your letter by stating the main point that you would like your audience to take away from your letter. Include your name, address, and phone number, as well as any relevant academic degrees to demonstrate your qualifications to the media. And, if you are writing on behalf of an organization, be sure to include the name of that organization in your letter.

Don't make personal attacks. Avoid emphasizing that a reporter, editor, expert or other individual was wrong.

Write and submit your letter as quickly as possible so that it's still relevant. If it has been more than a week after the original article or column appeared, it is too late.

Have someone review your writing to make sure it is clear and effective. If your letter is published and if it is relevant, send a copy to your elected official's office.

Letter to the Editor

Example

A letter to the editor is similar to an op-ed; however, there are some differences. People typically write a letter to the editor in response to an editorial or an article. Op-eds are often written in regards to broader issues. Letters to the editor are also much shorter (200-250 words) than op-eds (500-800 words).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OP-ED & LETTER TO THE EDITOR

	Op-Ed	Letter to the Editor
Topic	Regarding a general issue	In response to an article or editorial
Placement	Published opposite the editorial page	Published on the editorial page
Purpose	More thorough analysis	Brief response
Length	500-800 words	200-250 words
Focus	Stay relevant and on topic	Stay relevant and on topic
Author	Someone with expertise on the subject	Anyone interested in the subject

LETTER TO THE EDITOR EXAMPLE

This letter is in response to recent coverage regarding the Medicare Evidence and Coverage Advisory Committee’s (MEDCAC) opposition to providing Medicare coverage to high-risk individuals for annual lung cancer screening through computed tomography (CT) scans. This recommendation is unfortunate and perplexing.

Twenty-seven percent of cancer deaths are from lung cancer, which is higher than the percentage of deaths from any other type of cancer. Smokers are considered to be high-risk individuals and are more than twenty times more likely than non-smokers to develop lung cancer. The American Cancer Society states that over 224,000 new cases of lung cancer will be diagnosed this year alone.

High-risk individuals are most in need of these preventive services. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) states that a CT scan is a common screening service and is at least 20 percent more effective than a chest x-ray at preventing lung cancer deaths. On average, a CT lung scan costs about \$300. This price tag can be a barrier to individuals most in need of these services.

I urge members of Congress to speak out against this injustice. Additionally, I encourage the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to consider the evidence for CT screenings and recognize how important it is that Medicare provide coverage for them.

Sincerely,
Insert your name, relevant degrees or qualifications, and organizational affiliation (if stating one)

Op-Ed Tips

An op-ed is published opposite the editorial page and is a way for you to provide your opinion on current events in greater detail. Like a letter to the editor, anyone can submit an op-ed and doing so allows you to inform the public about relevant issues and shape public opinion. This document provides a list of suggestions to keep in mind as you write your op-ed.



An op-ed is similar to a letter to the editor; however, there are some differences. People typically write a letter to the editor in response to an editorial or an article. Op-eds are often in regards to broader issues. Letters to the editor are also much shorter (200-250 words) than op-eds (500-800 words).

Check the publication's website for guidelines on op-eds to make sure your piece satisfies the length and formatting requirements. This information is usually located under the opinion section on the publication's website.

Include your name, address, and phone number so the publication can confirm your identity. Include what makes you an expert on the topic. If you have any relevant academic degrees, include those as well so the media is aware of your qualifications.

Keep it concise. Focus on one or two major concepts or ideas and limit it to 500-800 words.

Don't make it complicated. Remember, not everyone will have a thorough understanding of your topic. Keep your writing simple and avoid acronyms and jargon.

Include personal anecdotes. This will connect you to your writing and engage your audience. Keep it relevant. Choose a topic that relates to current events.

Don't make personal attacks.

Make specific calls for action. Conclude your piece by suggesting your readers call their elected officials or suggesting that elected officials vote "yes" or "no" on a specific piece of legislation or policy.

Have someone review your writing to make sure it is clear and effective.

Op-Ed Example

Below is an example of an op-ed. This is the general framework to consider as you craft your own op-ed about issues important to you. Writing op-eds is an excellent way to advocate for cancer prevention and early detection.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD NOT FRY.

Tanning beds work by emitting ultraviolet (UV) rays. Exposure to UV rays is responsible for over three million cases of skin cancer annually, including the deadliest of all skin cancers, melanoma. Melanoma is responsible for 75 percent of skin cancer deaths.

When I first started using tanning beds in high school, no one really talked about these risks. All people really cared about was that tanning beds gave you beautiful tan skin. I'd always taken pride in my appearance and I felt more attractive when I was tan. So I went indoor tanning on a regular basis, and as soon as my tan began to fade, I went back to the tanning bed.

Eventually, the dangers of tanning were revealed but I chose not to listen. I'd been tanning for so long without suffering adverse effects that I didn't take the warnings seriously. Now I'm thirty-two and it's only recently that I quit. My biggest regret is that I didn't stop sooner.

Fortunately, I'm not among the two million people who are diagnosed with skin cancer each year or, at least, not yet. But what I do have, while not life threatening, is indicative of just how damaged my skin is and how dangerous tanning beds are. I have wrinkles. Not the occasional wrinkle here and there that comes with aging – my skin is so wrinkled that I've been told by family, friends, and even strangers that I look twice my age. My face has dark spots all over it and, no matter how much makeup I put on, I cannot hide them.

And, while these consequences are only cosmetic, that does not mean I'm in the clear when it comes to future health issues. My chances of getting skin cancer have increased by over 70 percent. Tanning beds are not worth it.

The risks of indoor tanning are very real and they can and will happen to you. Do not sacrifice your health for something that you think is making you look better. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must ban the use of tanning beds for those under 18. As 2.3 million people who use tanning beds are minors, this is an important step in stopping this harmful activity. I urge legislators to encourage such action by the FDA.

If you are not a member of Congress, you can still act. Stop using tanning beds and spread the word about how hazardous they are. If your loved ones use tanning beds or are considering trying them, let them know about the risks. If you're not doing it for your health and the health of those you care about, do it for your appearance. Even if you don't develop cancer, you will develop wrinkles. Skin cancer is preventable. You and those you love do not have to suffer from it. If you want to live the longest, healthiest life possible, then you have no use for tanning beds.

Patty Prevention, Expert on tanning bed and skin cancer

Social Media Tips

Social media is the creation and exchange of ideas on a website or application (app). It ranges from putting a photo on Instagram, to tweeting your ideas or messages to your elected official.

WHY DO WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is instantaneous. There is no faster way to reach millions of people with your message. Social media also levels the playing field. Anyone can connect with politicians, celebrities and other important figures through social media.

WHAT DOES ADVOCACY HAVE TO DO WITH SOCIAL MEDIA?

One of the best ways to spread your message and reach prominent figures is through social media. The Prevent Cancer Foundation believes that there are many ways to be an advocate. Do you tweet healthy recipes and exercise tips? Do you share articles about cancer prevention and early detection on Facebook? If so, you're an advocate.

Here is information about how you can utilize some of the most popular social media websites:

FACEBOOK ([Facebook.com/PreventCancer](https://www.facebook.com/PreventCancer))

Users create personal profiles, add friends, exchange messages, and post photos, videos, and updates. Professional figures or organizations have special profiles called pages, which users can like. When users like a page or add a friend, their updates will appear on the newsfeed.

What You Can Do:

1. "Like" the Prevent Cancer Foundation and other health and wellness organizations on Facebook. You'll get frequent health and wellness updates on your newsfeed.
2. Share relevant posts on your wall for your friends to see and learn from.
3. Post about a topic you care about on your own page, or your elected official's Facebook wall.

Best Practices:

1. Don't just post. Comment and share posts from other individuals or organizations that you find interesting.
2. Make sure to tag relevant individuals (like the Prevent Cancer Foundation and your elected officials) in your posts.
3. Use hashtags so more people can find your posts. Examples: #cancer, #prevention, #wellness, #health

Possible Positive Outcome: The articles and health and wellness information that you share may encourage others to take steps to reduce their risk for cancer today.

TWITTER (@PreventCancer)

Users send out short (140 characters or fewer) messages called tweets. Tweets can be posted on the feed for followers to see, or tweeted directly at individuals, for only them to see.

What You Can Do:

1. Follow the Prevent Cancer Foundation and other health and wellness organizations on Twitter.
2. Retweet tweets that you like about cancer prevention and early detection.
3. Tweet at your elected official an advocacy issue you care about.

Best Practices:

1. If your tweets begin with a twitter handle, use a period before the handle if you want all of your followers to see it. Example: .@congressmember please vote for bill outlawing use of tanning beds by minors. Without the period, it will only be sent to your elected official.
2. Less is more. Tweets that don't use all 140 characters get more traction.
3. Make it a conversation. Don't just tweet. Favorite and reply to tweets that you find relevant and interesting.
4. If you want to add a thought when retweeting, write "your comment here" RT @twitterhandle "the original tweet"

5. Use hashtags so more people can find your posts.
Examples: #cancer #prevention #wellness #health.
6. Use a link shortener like Bitly to save characters.

Possible Positive Outcome: Enough tweets could educate your elected official about what matters to his/her constituents.

PINTEREST ([Pinterest.com/PreventCancerF/](https://www.pinterest.com/PreventCancerF/))

Users pin images which often link to web pages on boards. Users organize their boards to reflect travel plans, style ideas, favorite quotes, etc.

What You Can Do:

1. Follow the Prevent Cancer Foundation on Pinterest.
2. Create boards for health, wellness, and advocacy.
3. Pin photos, recipes, and exercise ideas that you like on your boards. Upload your own pins as well.

Best Practices:

1. Don't just pin content that's already been pinned on Pinterest. Find photos of healthy recipes and workout tips throughout the web to pin.
2. When pinning from the web, don't just pin the photo. Pin the photo on the actual page with the healthy recipe or workout tip. That way other people can circle back.

Possible Positive Outcome: Your healthy recipes and workout ideas could reach many, encouraging them to lead longer and healthier lives.

YOUTUBE ([YouTube.com/PreventCancerFDN/](https://www.youtube.com/PreventCancerFDN/))

Users upload, view and share videos.

What You Can Do:

1. Subscribe to the Prevent Cancer Foundation and other health and wellness organizations on YouTube.
2. Create playlists of health and wellness videos.
3. Upload your own videos sharing healthy recipes, workout tips, etc.
4. Comment on videos that you like.

Best Practices:

1. When uploading videos, use lots of relevant tags so people can find them.
2. Share your playlists on other social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

Possible Positive Outcome: Someone found your exercise playlist and has a week's worth of new workouts to try.

INSTAGRAM ([PreventCancer/](https://www.instagram.com/PreventCancer/))

Users take photos, apply filters, and often share them on other social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

What You Can Do:

1. Follow @preventcancer on Instagram.
2. Post photos of yourself with your elected official.
3. Take photos of your cancer prevention efforts like cooking a healthy meal or exercising.
4. Favorite and comment on photos that you like.

Best Practices:

1. Use a variety of filters to catch eyes.
2. Tag relevant individuals or organizations in your posts.
3. Share your photos on Facebook and Twitter for maximum effect.
4. Use hashtags so more people can find your posts.
Examples: #cancer #prevention #wellness #health

Possible Positive Outcome: Your healthy salad photo could inspire many to opt for a healthier lunch today.

Find Your U.S. Senator's social media accounts
<http://govsm.com/w/Senate>

Find your Representative's social media accounts
<http://govsm.com/w/House>

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Stop Cancer Before It Starts!



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