

## Seminar- practicals

# Opinion Piece (op-ed)

As a professional you may need to share the story of your research and practice with members of your community and broader society. But not many are able to tell their story in a concise and compelling way. This task is designed to provide you with an opportunity to develop your skill in writing perspective/op-ed type articles.

In this assignment, you will be sharing your knowledge about the subject you presented in the practical session (see page 6 in Course Guide) with non-academic audiences (e.g. media, industry, politicians and the public).

You should write in a way that shows the depth and breadth of your knowledge about the topic and its related issues discussed in the class during the seminar. However, please keep that in mind your writing should be jargon-free, sharp, and to the point in order to keep general audience interested.

You can get inspired by good examples from outlets such as, The Conversation, New York Times, and Guardian.

Here we strongly encourage you to take a look at <https://theconversation.com/au>, and see how academics from different disciplines engage non-academic audience and increase awareness at all levels in professional and public arena.

## How to write your piece?

Once you presented to the class, you can then arrange a meeting with your teammates and discuss about the topic for your perspective article. The perspective piece is an opportunity for you to summarise your work and the class discussion about the theme of the week in a concise and compelling way. So, you will have full autonomy to pick the story you want to tell—as long as it relates to the week's theme.

After group discussion, you can also hone your story by talking to one of your friends or your classmate who has limited knowledge about the subject of your article. Pay a close attention to what questions they ask you. If they were to ask you bluntly, “Why should people care?” – what would you say? That's the first question readers will ask in deciding whether to spend the time reading your article.

If you can answer that “why should people care?” question well, it will greatly improve the quality of your article and getting higher mark. And in a real world, if you publish it somewhere, you will see more people read and share your article, helping your work reach a bigger audience.

As you will have less than 1000 words to cover too much content, you'd better to start with a clear idea of the most important point(s) you want to cover.

## **Here are some tips to use in your writing:**

- Adopt a conversational, chatty style. Avoid clichés, jargon, academic language and acronyms.
- Put some serious work into your intro – is it intriguing, engaging and different?
- Always use specific examples. Don't generalise or waffle on about challenges and passion.
- Use short common nouns as much as you can: “boots” and “apples” are much more evocative than “footwear” and “produce”. And long strings of multi-syllabled abstract nouns – “advocacy of a multicultural specificity in urbanisations” – are soporific.
- Where possible, find recent research or media coverage about your topic, and link to it in your piece.
- Check your facts. You need to have an up-to-date statistic and a link to show where you found it.
- Read what you've written aloud when you're finished. Is that how you talk?
- The reader should emerge clear about what you're saying, what other people have said on the subject, and what they are being asked to comment on.
- Keep your headline simple and direct – it should be seven to 10 words at most, with the most relevant and important words at the start
- Avoid puns and smart headlines, unless it suits the story. Instead, aim for an accurate and engaging label that neatly summarises the content.
- Aim to employ active verbs, which lend muscle and emphasise the “actor” in the story, e.g., “Aspirin cuts cancer risk” or “WikiLeaks reveals flaws in government legislation.”
- Think of ways to distinguish your article from others. Is this a breakthrough? Does it answer an important question or solve a puzzle?
- Would you read it? Remember, you are writing a perspective for non-academic audience. Ask yourself what keywords you would use in a search to find your story in Google. Assuming you find it, would you then feel compelled to read beyond the headline? If not, try again.

## **Referencing**

If you make contentious statements please back them up with research. The same goes for facts and figures. Use online links so your reader can click on. Don't use footnotes or endnotes in the article.

## How to end

The last sentence should aim to summarise or reiterate the point made in your opening paragraph. Or you can just raise the question of what should happen next. Check to be sure you've stayed within the word count.

## Multimedia: Photos, graphs, videos & more

Photos, videos, tables and graphs can bring a story to life – so if you have any of those, it's worth using it in your article. If you have data you can make an interactive and embeddable chart or graphic and get extra mark for it. ■

<b>Due date</b>	<b>Two weeks (14 days) after presentation</b>
<b>Value</b>	15%
<b>Participation</b>	Team
<b>Length</b>	<1000 words
<b>Format</b>	A perspective/Op-ed style writing
<b>Submission</b>	Submit the article in Wattle
<b>Assessment rubrics</b>	See PP2 Rubric on Wattle

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■ Acknowledgement: We borrowed some of the tips and tricks for writing the piece from Guardian and Conversation websites. We encourage you to look into those and other similar outlets to learn about writing an effective perspective/op-ed piece.