

About Op-eds

What is an op-ed?

- An **op-ed is a column** written by someone other than an employee of the news organization that expresses **the strong, informed and focused opinion of the writer** on a current and relevant issue. An op-ed is an original piece about a timely topic that has not been published anywhere else.
- Writing powerful op-eds is an ideal opportunity to frame messages and directly address audiences, while **merging opinion with factual information**.
- Most publications have specific guidelines, such as maximum word count, that should be referenced prior to submission. Op-eds are **exclusive** to the publication.

Characteristics of an op-ed

- Typically between 500 – 800 words.
- Has a clearly defined message and point of view
- Incorporates the strong voice of a credible writer

Basics of writing an op-ed

- Focus on an issue that affects a target audience and demonstrates the writer's expertise on the issue.
- Identify a specific problem.
- Have a clearly defined position and point of view.
- Defend the opinion by providing evidence.
- Propose a practical solution.

Tips for writing a compelling op-ed

- Hook the reader with an **anecdote** or **relevant news story**, as well as a **clear but catchy** headline.
- Be direct in the first sentence and first paragraph.
 - **Be clear and bold in expressing an opinion.**
 - Consider this: If you could print only one sentence, how would you persuade your readers?
- Tell a story that advocates a position **supported by facts and research.**
- Have a clearly defined **topic** as your focus and a **theme** that is the overarching idea of the op-ed.
- Capture the reader's attention and make a compelling argument.
- Make the point of view different from what is already in the discourse on this topic.
- Be clear and **don't use jargon**. Remember that newspapers are geared toward general audiences and technical or field-specific terminology may interrupt your reader's attention.

Op-ed structure

- **Opening:** Grab the reader's attention with an introduction to what you will be talking about. News hooks can make your opening timely and relevant.
- **Thesis:** State your argument directly.
- **Argument:** The core of an op-ed generally has three main points, each with supporting evidence and a conclusion.
- **"To Be Sure" Paragraph:** Acknowledge shortcomings in the argument and address potential counterarguments.
- **Conclusion:** Circle back to the opening.
- **Byline:** Include a name, title and a brief (two-to-three sentence) bio about the op-ed author.

Op-ed Template

Below please find a sample outline for those interested in writing an op-ed for a local or national publication calling on lawmakers to protect their right to build a family.

Download Template as Word Document

Start with an anecdote: Consider opening the op-ed with a personal story (with names omitted if needed for privacy) of a local person or couple who have dreamed of starting a family, have been emotionally devastated by infertility and have turned to IVF or other reproductive technologies to achieve their dearest hope.

State the problem: Like [name], everyone should feel safe and supported in their pursuit of building a family. However, [proposed/recent/existing/etc.] laws restricting reproductive health care are a [new and] serious threat/danger to people trying to have a baby.

[Name the law and its repercussions]

The legal confusion created by these [proposed/recently-passed] laws surrounding reproductive health care are [creating/have created despair] for those of us who have turned to science to fulfill the dream of a healthy baby, and have created fear that these important medical interventions will be criminalized.

Lay out the argument: For too many, there are challenges on the journey to parenthood — challenges that can be enormously difficult, painful and isolating to navigate. For many would-be parents, [fertility treatment] is [their/our] last best hope to conceive, carry through a pregnancy and deliver a healthy, deeply wanted child. Healthcare that supports family building cannot be criminalized.

State why this is important: With [proposed/recent/potential] laws endangering family building, we need [insert name/elected officials] to make it easier — not harder — for people to have their baby and fulfill their dream. Laws aimed at restricting safe abortion care access may inadvertently or perhaps deliberately threaten those in pursuit of wanted pregnancies, too. Our elected representatives must ensure that laws surrounding pregnancy protect the safety and security of people trying to have a baby. The full range of health care options must remain available to protect those who are trying to build their family.

The best decisions to protect [my/someone's] health and future fertility options are decisions made between [me/an individual] and [my/their] doctor or health care provider. And lawmakers who want to protect family building have committed to protecting all medical options for those trying to have a healthy baby. They are our allies in making parenthood possible.

Call to action: Tell [insert names of legislators] they can support your dream for a healthy pregnancy and baby by passing laws that protect your wellbeing/the wellbeing of family builders — and vote down those that don't.

- We need allies who make family building possible.
- We need legislators on the side of families.
- Let's remove the obstacles. Let's help create healthy families.

Closing: It is heartbreaking to face obstacles when you long for a healthy baby. And right now, these dangerous threats to medical care will make it harder or impossible for those [like the people in the opening] who deeply want to build their family. We can't allow legislation restricting medical care to make it more difficult for us to bring our babies home — we need lawmakers to put families first. Help us defend our dreams, our health and our hopes to complete our families.