

# Tips on Writing a Letter to the Editor

## Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations Advocacy and Witness Programs



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A letter to the editor is a briefly stated opinion generally written in response to a current issue or a previously published article.

### Tips on Content of Letter:

- If a publication receives multiple letters on the same subject, the editor will choose one that says something in a new way or takes a unique angle.
- Focus your letter on one point on one subject. If you can, **comment on a specific story in the paper**, do so, mentioning the headline and date. Cite the specific reference and sum it up in a sentence to refresh readers' memories. Then point out facts that were left out, or refute or support facts that were stated.
- Be clear and concise. Shorter is better. Most papers want letters of **250 words or less**. Magazines such as *Time* want even less.
- State your point early in the letter and support your point with facts.
- Know the audience of the publication. Technical information and long, multi-syllable words are often not appropriate for a general audience.
- If appropriate, mention your motivation or expertise in writing. For example, "As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe ... and therefore x," or "I direct a social service agency. Here's what my experience has been ... That's why I believe y."

### General Logistical Tips:

- Know and follow the policies and specifications of the publication to which you are submitting your letter. Except as noted, it is OK to send the same or similar letters to more than one publication. But don't submit the same or similar letters to multiple papers in the same media market.
- Always **include your name, address, and daytime telephone number**.
- Include exactly one e-mail address in the To: field. Don't send to editors via Cc: or Bcc:. Send your letter in the body of the e-mail message, not as an attachment.
- Don't submit a letter to a paper that has already run another of your letters in the past month or two.
- Don't send specifically local letters to other localities.
- If your letter ran, get a print version of the letter with the front page banner of the paper's name.
- **Send your letter to your legislators**. Keep copies for future lobbying visits.
- **Send a copy of the printed letter to the group that encouraged you to write** or to the group that is working on your topic so that the organization can follow the bigger picture.