



Writing to the press

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Why write a letter to the editor?

- **Politicians or other targets could see them** - Politicians read papers. Your MP or other representative will likely be keeping abreast of local and national news to help them understand what their constituents care about. As well as gathering support from other readers for your campaign, an open letter could well be seen by the person your campaign aims to influence.
- **They get the message out** - letters are an easy way for anyone to get their opinion seen by a large number of people they might not normally interact with.
- **They generate discussion** - A good letter often inspires responses from other readers, or at least gets people sharing and chatting about it online. This gives you a public platform to launch a discussion, and allows others to show their support for your ideas.
- **They inspire action** - got a campaign action you'd like people to do? A letter can be a great opportunity to name-drop your campaign, allowing others to find it and get involved.
- **They can influence the direction of future reporting** - If a paper receives multiple letters on a subject, or a letter generates discussion, it can give the editors a clue as to what their readers care about and they may choose to cover that issue more in the future.

How to write a great 'letter to the editor'

- **Think about your audience** - national papers might have a bigger reach but they get hundred of letters everyday, so yours will have to really stand out to be published. Local or regional papers might be a better bet as your letter is more likely to be printed.
- You stand a better chance of being published if you are writing a **direct response** to a recent article. If you do choose to write to a national paper, finding a recent debt article is your best bet. Reference the article in the first sentence of your letter.
- Include your **contact details**, as they might want to call and verify your identity. You can list your title as Debt Justice Activist/Volunteer as being part of a group can give you legitimacy.

How to write a great 'letter to the editor'

- Write **simply and clearly and avoid jargon**. You want readers of the paper to be able to understand your argument. Be concise and to the point and aim for a punchy opening sentence.
- Tell readers **why the issue is important**, show some evidence, and propose a solution – new legislation. Your letter is more likely to be published if you are saying something new, rather than simply agreeing with a previous letter or article.
- Generally, letters should be kept to **under 300 words**. **Editors cut from the bottom-up** so essential information should be in the first paragraph.
- Multiple letters, preferably from different people, can help keep the issue on the page for longer.

Key messages

- **Framing the campaign positively:** that justice can be won
- Framing around not allowing banks to profit from poverty was also popular and we should incorporate this in our messaging
- **The classic crisis/opportunity pairing,** which involves leading with a crisis and then explaining how this crisis provides an opportunity for (urgent) action
- **Bringing out the human element** to our messaging and centering the experiences of those most affected
- Educating readers about **how they can help to change the law**
- **Using the term 'lower income countries'** rather than 'global South'
- **Hooking any education messaging to a real person, a real country, and/or a specific event.** It needs to be specific and tangible

Writing your letters

