

Persuasive Letter to the Editor

What is a letter to the editor?

The purpose of a persuasive letter to the editor is to state a point of view, justify it and try to influence the reader's views. Letters to the editor are written with the aim of being published and therefore are not usually longer than 450 words. They normally address current issues being debated and may also be written in response to a particular event or another published piece.

Voice

Letters to the editor are written in first person and the use of the personal pronoun 'I' is common as the writer is delivering their own opinion. The voice may be active so that the writer's point of view can be delivered in a very personal manner or passive if the writer prefers to provide the reader with evidence and let this speak for itself. The writer may also wish to adopt a persona, which can be effective in making the letter more persuasive especially when the character created for the persona has some expertise or personal experience with the issue being addressed.

Language & Grammar

The use of a range of persuasive devices will be evident in an effective letter to the editor. The choice of language will depend on the issue being addressed and approach taken by the writer. The writer may want to provoke an emotional response from the reader and therefore use techniques such as appeals and connotative language. Alternatively, they may wish to appear logical and informed and in turn use statistics or expert opinion to support their arguments.

Usually, letters to the editor are written in present tense because they deal with current issues; however they may also refer to the past to draw comparisons or provide examples. They will often use language related to cause and effect such as 'due to, because of or as a result' to link ideas.

Structure and Organisation

Letters to the editor include structural elements such as:

- Date
- Address of the writer
- Editor's name/title
- Name and address of the newspaper
- Salutation (Dear editor)

The organisation of the arguments will normally include

- An explanation of purpose (why you are writing)

- A statement of contention
- A series of arguments to support the contention (written in paragraphs)
- A strong concluding statement which may be a call to action or a final thought to leave the reader with
- Sign off

Exemplar Years 7 – 9

Exemplar Years 10 – 12