

Opinion piece

What is an opinion piece?

An opinion piece is an article which is published which contains an author's opinion on an issue; this is usually strongly worded. Opinion pieces can take a number of different forms, the most common of which are articles written by popular or guest columnists (for example: Andrew Bolt's column in the *Herald Sun*). Guest columnists are usually someone who offers a unique perspective or has in-depth subject-specific knowledge on an issue (for example: Jeff Kennett, a former Victorian Premier, commenting on politics in the state). Editorials are another form of opinion piece. This is an article which reflects the newspapers' perspective on a topic and appears in the Opinion section of the paper.

Voice

Opinion pieces are written dominantly in the third person (he, she, him, her, his, her, they, them, their) throughout the text. However, first person (I, we, us) can be used, particularly when composing an Opinion column.

Opinion pieces can be accompanied by a brief blurb about the author called a 'byline'; this allows the reader insight into their perspective and point of view. It can also be used to help establish the credibility of the writer to comment on the issue.

Tone is also an important element of opinion pieces as the author's choice of words can indicate their opinion on an issue. This can also be used as a persuasive device and to appeal to the audience.

Language & Grammar

- Language choice can be either formal or informal depending on the author, topic and type of writing. For example you are more likely to find informal language in an individual's blog and more formal language in an article published in a newspaper.
- Authors can use either active or passive voice in their piece. Active voice is more common but this will depend on the approach taken by the author and the persuasive devices used.
- A blend of tenses can be used depending on whether the issue is current or not. Future tense can also be used when discussing what may be done about the issue or as a 'call to action' for the reader
- As the purpose of the piece is ultimately to persuade the reader, authors need to take into account the needs of their target audience and tailor the piece to them
- A variety of persuasive devices and appeals are also used to help position the reader
- The rhetoric chosen by the author will also indicate some of the language choices which will be made. For example:

- An ethos approach (one which relies on establishing the author’s credibility and authority on an issue) may use more formal language and technical jargon - specialist vocabulary used on a particular topic; for example discussing ‘pedagogy’ when talking about teaching - to establish their expertise and knowledge in this topic.
- A pathos approach (emotional) may use more imagery, figurative and loaded language
- A logos approach (logical) may use lots of evidence, experts and technical jargon

Structure and Organisation

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides key contextualising and background information on the topic or issue ● Grabs the reader’s attention ● Establishes the author’s contention ● Can establish the author’s authority for speaking on the issue (in an editorial this is already established) ● Gives some hint about the direction of the piece and establishes tone
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paragraph length can vary but should only deal with one idea ● The arguments or points made in the paragraphs should build on one another to help prove the contention ● Provides examples, evidence and devices which help position the audience to accept and agree with the argument put forward
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sums up the main points and arguments made in the speech ● Restates the contention ● Finishes with a strong idea or point made to leave a lasting impact on the audience. This could be in the form of a quote or a call to action.

Exemplar Years 7 – 9

Exemplar Years 10 – 12