



The Arc Connecticut *Families for Families* Organizing Tool Kit

“How to Write a Letter to the Editor”

1. **Read instructions provided.** Most publications provide guidelines. Look over the first few pages of your publication for a set of suggestions and guidelines and follow them carefully.
2. **Include your name, address, email address and phone number at the top of your letter.** Editors often require this information because they will need to verify your identity. You can state that this information is not to be published.
3. **Be concise and focused.** Write your letter in pithy, clever statements, but remember that this is not so easy to do! You will probably need to write several drafts of your letter to condense your message.
4. **Limit your writing to two or three paragraphs.** Try sticking to the following format:
 - In your first paragraph introduce your problem and sum up your objection. If you are responding to an article or letter, say so right away. Name the article in the first sentence of the body of your letter.
 - In the second paragraph include a few sentences to support your view.
 - End with a great summary and a clever, punchy line.
5. **Proofread your letter.** Editors will ignore letters that contain bad grammar and poorly-written rants.
6. **Submit your letter by email if the publication allows it.** This format enables the editor to cut and paste your letter.

Tips:

1. If you're responding to an article you've read, be prompt. Don't wait a few days or your topic will be old news.
2. Remember that the more popular and widely-read publications receive hundreds of letters. You have a better chance of getting your letter published in a smaller publication.

3. If you don't want your name to be published, state so clearly. You can put any direction or request like this in a separate paragraph. If you are a minor, inform the editor of this as well.
4. Since your letter may be edited, you should get to the point early. Don't bury your point inside a lengthy argument and don't appear to be overly emotional. You can avoid this by limiting your exclamation points and avoiding the use of insulting language.
5. Remember that short, concise letters sound confident. Long, wordy letters give the impression that you're trying too hard to make the point.