

LETTER-WRITING TIPS

By Nora Kramer

For companies and legislators

- Short and sweet. Don't spend more than a few minutes on each.
- Threaten them with something—boycott/protesting/not voting for them
- Make clear that you are a customer/constituent
- Ask for a response
- Write as many as you can!

For letters to the editor

ABSOLUTE PREREQUISITES:

- Email, email, email! Letters mailed or faxed in are far less likely to be printed. Make sure you have the right email address (usually letters@...)
- Be timely! The sooner after an article is printed that you send in the letter, the more likely it will be printed. Waiting even just a few days decreases the likelihood that it will be printed.
- Be concise! The maximum word count for most papers is 250 words, but longer letters are less likely to be printed. Check on the letters page of the paper you're writing to for their word max, but strive to be shorter than this. By comparison, the NY Times max is 100 words.
- Always give your full contact information! Sign letters as:
 - Name
 - Street Address
 - City, State Zip
 - Telephone number where you can be reached

They will only print your name and city, but they need your info to contact you for verification.

- Be polite—no matter what! For example, if an article is terrible and you are furious, you could say, "I was extremely disappointed to read..."
- Reply to a specific article, and reference the name of the article or the author.
- Have a specific purpose for writing as well as an angle supported by one or two specific points you want to make. For example, maybe your purpose is to convey that going vegetarian is a great way to help animals. Your angle could be that farmed animals are just as intelligent or able to suffer as dogs and cats, that they are unprotected by the law, or that factory farming is cruel, and then give one sentence with one or two very brief specific examples to support this.
- N.B.:If you don't have much writing experience or confidence in your writing, read your letter over out loud and try to see if you can get rid of any unnecessary words or reword more concisely. Also make sure that each sentence is necessary to convey your point. Spell check.
- Subscribe to DawnWatch! www.DawnWatch.com .

Feel good about every letter you send even if it doesn't get printed. Your letter educates the editors, who have some power at their publication, and make it more likely that someone else's letter conveying a similar opinion on the same topic will be printed.