

## THE OP-ED

### Definition of genre

An op-ed is an opinion piece written by the reader of a newspaper, magazine, or other source, on a topic relevant to the publication's audience. The term comes from "opposite editorial"—"the page of a newspaper facing the editorial page, typically devoted to personal comment and feature articles" (OED).

### Questions to ask as you begin and--do freewriting, a loop exercise, mind map or other pre-writing.

- Consider your audience: Who are they? Are they readers of a small-town newspaper, a technical journal, a national newspaper, an independent activist press, etc.?
- What do they already know about the issue, and what do you need to tell them?
- Why is your issue important?
- What action would you like your readers (or Congress, or City Council, or the dean, or...) to take? Simply stimulating thought from the reader and respectfully invite them to consider your views, is fine.
- Why should readers trust your opinion? That is, why should they find your particular perspective, expertise, or experience worth thinking about?



### Actions to take: In about 900-1000 words:

- Have an opinion: take a stance. *[Include facts/figures (worded as part of the writing) that can be easily verified. jt]*
- Make your point early on. The very first sentence should give readers a sense of what your topic will be, and grab your readers' attention. The first paragraph should make readers stay with you to the end. Op-eds should move on the energy the writer has for the topic.
- Acknowledge and show why opposing viewpoints may be understandable but don't overcome your points.
- Find actual newspapers or news/periodical websites and read the op-ed sections. *The New York Times & @nytimes.com, cnn.com* and many others publications/sites include op-eds from people who do not work for the publication. Anyone can submit an op-ed to a publication. Below is some information on how to do that:

[http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/pressroom/media\\_outreach/OpEdGuide.doc](http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/pressroom/media_outreach/OpEdGuide.doc)

Practical advice on op-eds, including a long list of op-ed guidelines of top U.S. newspapers.