



Writing a Letter to the Editor

It is now possible to send a letter to the editor of many newspapers in Alabama via e-mail. Studies have shown that people actually read letters to the editor more often than they read editorials written by journalists. Furthermore, leaders in the community, as well as policymakers, read letters to the editor to gauge the public's attitude about current issues. That is why it is important that editorials, letters to the editor, and articles be published in magazines, newsletters, and newspapers on a regular basis.

Be brief, clear, and concise: always check the newspaper's guidelines for submitting letters, which are usually stated on the editorial page. Be sure you have included your name, address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address in your letter. Anonymous letters to the editor are not accepted. Begin your letter with, "Dear Editor." The letter should never be longer than one page (most guidelines state less than 250 words), and should never cover more than one subject. Be sure to state the purpose of your letter in the opening paragraph.

Your letter has a better chance of getting printed if you write about issues or legislation that is current. Write the letter in support of or against current legislation at the local, state, or national level.

If your letter is not printed: don't be discouraged. Most newspapers, magazines, etc., receive more letters than they can possibly print. They will often print one letter on a particular subject that is representative of others they have received. Keep trying! Even if your letter is unpublished, it is still read by the editors. This can help sway their decision of what topics to cover more thoroughly in their paper.