

CFA Communications Corner: August Issue

How to Write and Place an Op-Ed

An op-ed—the term stands for “opposite the editorial page”—is an opinion essay written by either a newspaper’s staff columnist or an outside contributor. Writing and placing an op-ed is a potential means for promoting your work on behalf of your Action Coalition or the broader *Campaign for Action* and for raising awareness of an issue among policy-makers and the public. Here are some suggestions for writing and placing an op-ed:

- **Say Something New:** Stay abreast of the paper’s angle on the subject you want to address. If you provide a new angle, your submission may receive more consideration.
- **Stay Focused:** Hone in on one angle of the issue. Include relevant examples and statistics; provide succinct interpretations of their significance; and if possible, close with a “call to action.”
- **Address Your Target Audience:** Decide whom you want to reach and consider their interests as you write. What are their needs, concerns and likely objections to your points?
- **Avoid Jargon:** Do not use technical or “insider” language. If such a term is absolutely necessary, define it for a lay audience.
- **Edit Your Work:** Submit a carefully written piece, keeping in mind that newspapers reserve the right to edit it further (usually for length and clarity). Newspapers generally limit op-eds to between 700 and 800 words. You might ask a friend or someone outside your field to review the article for clarity before you submit it.
- **Follow the Paper’s Guidelines:** Major newspapers expect exclusivity and will not consider op-eds that have been submitted to, posted to or published by other news outlets, including blogs. Papers typically publish their terms and conditions for accepting op-eds on their Web sites.