

Opinion Writing

Shortcode	Description
AP: Strong	The writing here shows a strong awareness of writing conventions generally followed by opinion writers. Of course, writers should follow AP style in almost all cases, except in cases when the publication's stylebook dictates otherwise. This kind of writing creates consistency for the reader, putting the emphasis on the content and not variations in punctuation, abbreviations or other usage. Well done with copy editing for style here.
AP: Weak	Journalists strive to write with consistency. The rules that govern this consistency are called "style" generally and the most universally used style is "Associated Press style." Consider how this writing could more closely follow this style, or, if not AP style, then a consistent style dictated by the publication's style guide. Regardless of the guide used, consistency is the goal, so that the reader can focus on argument rather than variations and irregularities in the writing.
Lead: Excellent	Readers of this piece will NEED to keep reading because the lead is excellent at inviting the reader's curiosity. This can be difficult to do in opinion writing. However, it is done well here. The word choices and rhetoric here will attract readers and make it more likely that they will finish the piece. Congrats.
Lead: Weak	If a piece of opinion writing is to succeed, the lead must be a mixture of inviting, striking and perhaps even mysterious. A lead can invite by immediately presenting an issue or conflicts. The lead also might strike the reader with a bold point of view on a topic to attract and hold attention. Finally, a lead might work to withhold details from the reader in a mysterious way that compels the reader to read on. Consider how this lead could better engage the reader from the outset.
Opinion: adjectives	When crafting an opinion piece, it is tempting to simply label things with adjectives according to your opinion: "terrible," "wonderful" and so on. Consider the other tools of an opinion writer to help give perspective. Narrating a short anecdote might help. Or, providing an example. Or, constructing a metaphor to illustrate your point. While labeling with adjectives is clear, the techniques above can provide variety to your writing.
Opinion: Bold	This opinion piece takes a bold stand. This courage can be difficult for any writer, but especially at a high school publication where you likely know most of your readers by name. Kudos on taking a stand for what you believe in.
Opinion: consider local	The topic here is newsworthy. However, consider how you might have chosen a more local topic. Or, perhaps you could have chosen a national topic and connected it to an issue at school or the surrounding community. There is nothing wrong about addressing national issues, of course. But finding a local angle brings it closer to the experience of your readers.
Opinion: not bold	Consider how the perspective here might be more boldly stated. This is not to say that the writer's opinion needs to break down on conventional opinion divide lines (conservative vs. liberal, Democrat vs. Republican). And opinion writing should also allow for subtlety. However, the reader should not be confused about where the writer stands or what position the writer is arguing.
Research: Context	While most readers of this piece will attend the school or be part of the school community, the story could provide more context. Often, writers do so much research that they know the story "too well." The writers for a publication know all of the basic facts, and that can lead to the readers not getting enough context. Instead, consider what background the reader needs. What information would be useful to the reader? Providing background transforms a typical opinion piece into a writing that both informs and persuades the reader.
Research: Strong	To form a winning argument, opinion writers will seek the most trustworthy and persuasive facts. This writing showcases not just basic research that the reader expects, but also unexpected facts from authoritative sources. This kind of work takes time but is rewarded by readers who hunger for an expert to convince them. Nice work with factual research indeed.
Research: Weak	If readers are to trust a writer -- or indeed a publication -- they need specific, trustworthy facts from authoritative sources. Consider how this story could provide that type of research. What sources would have helped to give expert analysis? What numbers or statistics would have helped persuade? What documents, databases or reports provide vital information about this topic? Answering these questions would help here.
Sentences: Strong	Opinion writing depends on strong, declarative sentences that make the argument clear. Verbs must be active and vivid to make the sentences compelling. This kind of writing also requires variety. Some sentences must be short. However, others must be longer and more complicated to fully explain facts and context. This piece of writing showcases those kinds of sentence structures, much to the benefit of the reader.
Sentences: Unclear	At the most basic level, sentences should communicate a singular idea or piece of information to the reader. The failure of a sentence to do so can be the result of poor word choice, misplaced punctuation or simply not having a clear goal for the sentence's purpose. Regardless, the problem can be most quickly and effectively spotted by reading the entirety of the story out loud. Places where your reading of your own opinion piece stumbles will likely be places where the reader will stumble as well.
Sentences: Wordy	Writing concisely has always been a goal for journalists. Consider how this piece of writing could have used fewer words to communicate the same facts and message. Where are excess words usually found within a sentence? A good place to look is within the verb phrase. For instance, "The team should not have been considered as ranked #1" could be "The team is not #1." Making your writing more compact will make it possible to include other persuasive arguments for your reader to enjoy.
Structure: Lead buried	Story structure in opinion writing most often flounders in a predictable way: waiting too long to say what you believe. If writers put the most vital piece of information (their stance) somewhere other than the start of the story, they should have a clear rhetorical reason. Otherwise, the reader is needlessly confused. Consider how the writing could be clearer near the start.

Opinion Writing

Shortcode	Description
Structure: Length	Consider the length of this piece and whether it is too long. Or, perhaps this simple question: if your goal is to persuade, how long should this piece be to be maximally effective at convincing your audience? Most editorials are quite short, columns a bunch longer and op-ed pieces longer still.
Structure: Strong	The story structure here anticipates what the readers want to know and -- more importantly -- when they want to know it. This takes planning and forethought. Feeding arguments, counterarguments and information to the reader often becomes quite complicated. Nice work with this complicated task of structuring the writing.
Structure: Transitions	When a piece of writing switches topics in a particularly abrupt way, the reader feels off balance. Try to locate moments in the writing here that could use even a slight transition to ease the switch in topic. Often a short phrase or brief sentence will smooth the transition easily.
Topic: Strong	Selecting a topic for an opinion piece is often difficult. Writing about a very controversial issue involves the risk of being shunned. Writing about a timid topic risks not being read at all. Congratulations on making a great choice of topic here. A topic like this is excellent for your audience.
Topic: Weak	Consider how to improve the topic of this writing. Most opinion writing topics can be improved by being framed in a more narrow and local way. For instance, voting is very vague. You could write many books about that topic; how can you expect to cover it in an opinion piece? However, what if you wrote about how the junior class needs to start turning out to vote in student council elections if they are going to complain so much on social media about student council? Make "narrow and local" a mantra for finding and framing opinion pieces.