There are a number of reasons why you may want to write an opinion article: to contribute to the debate on an issue, draw attention to a topic, or raise your organization’s profile. Whatever your reasons for writing, there are several steps you can take to ensure that your article is published, widely read, and meets your goals.

**Identify Target Publications**

In today’s era of digital publishing, opinion articles can take several forms, including a traditional op-ed in a newspaper or news site, or a blog post in an online forum or newsletter. Think about your goals for writing and examine the publications where you may want to publish, using the following questions as a guide:

* Which publications reach your target audience? Do you need to publish in a national outlet, or would a state or local publication better reach the people you want to persuade?
* Can your planned piece match the tone and format of the publications you are considering?
* Is your subject one that will resonate with readers of these publications?
* Has your issue already been the subject of a recent article in any of the publications?

In addition to reviewing the content and readership of your target publications, review any guidelines they offer for how to write and format submissions. These documents will reveal a lot about the types of work that they accept for publication.

**Consider a Co-Author**

An article can draw attention because the authors are high-profile or it is notable that they agree. For example, when former secretaries of state from different parties write on a foreign policy issue, it carries more weight than if one were to write alone. If there is an individual engaged on your topic who has a significant presence or who might form a novel or surprising pairing, consider asking them to be your co-author. However, it is important to be sure that you do truly agree on the points you want to make. Otherwise, the partnership is unlikely to be successful.

**Grab Readers’ Attention**

The title of your article has to compel readers to click through and read. It must announce the topic you will address and suggest you have something interesting and novel to say. It can state your primary conclusion, but it is even better to craft it in such a way that the reader will be compelled to read your piece. Here are a few examples of strong titles from the opinion section of the *New York Times*:

“The Fentanyl Trade is Killing Americans. We have the Means to Combat It.”

“Why Financial Markets are Like Toddlers”

“What’s Happening in Louisville Could Solve a Housing Crisis”

Once people begin to read your article, you still must consider their attention spans. Most people do not read articles all the way through to the end, so state your conclusion at the beginning. From there, you can build out your argument.

**Find a hook**

Ask yourself, how does what I want to say connect to what people are reading in the news? If the nation (or your state or community) is focused on a particular issue and that issue is being discussed across media platforms, you increase your chances of getting published, especially if your piece touches on that issue in some insightful way.

**Avoid Jargon**

Most publications are looking for pieces that are accessible and free of complicated, academic language. Have friends or family who don’t work in education review your piece to ensure that it is easy to understand.

**Optimize for Search Engines**

As you write, think about the terms that someone interested in your topic would be likely to use to search for information. Be sure your article—and especially its title—includes those key terms to help drive it to the top of search engine results.

**Data are Important, But Don’t Over-do it**

Publications want you to substantiate your claims, but do not approach your article like a research paper. For example, instead of providing a traditional citation, embed substantiation in the narrative text (“according a 2019 study by NIH…”). Also, just as in interpersonal advocacy, a story that illustrates your larger point will be more memorable – and persuasive – than data and research.

**Prioritize Your Submissions**

It is wise to assume that you will have to submit your article to more than one publication. However, many publications will not consider articles that have already been published or accepted for publication elsewhere, so prioritize and time your submissions so that you are not in the enviable–but embarrassing–position of having to tell a publication that you have already been accepted by another organization.

**Promote Your Article Through Social Media**

Today, more people are likely to read your article because they saw a post about it on social media than because they are a regular reader of a particular publication. Use your title and your hook to craft compelling social media messages that are ready to go as soon as the article is published. Prepare a graphic and/or video that you can include in your postings, since text-only posts are far less likely to be noticed. Encourage your network to repost so that you can spread the word about your article. See the guide to using social media for advocacy for more information.