

The Quick Guide To: Letter to the Editor

presented in an FYI training led by
Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!)
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Goal:

A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is a written response to an article or current event in your community.

- Letters are chosen to be published by the paper's editor
- The LTE section reaches a large and varied audience
- A LTE can raise public awareness about an issue or opinion

Examples:

The Washington Post

Young and Green

Wednesday, September 20, 2006; Page A24

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/09/19/AR2006091901553.html>

In "An Inconvenient Truth About Youth" [op-ed, Sept. 11], Laura Wray and Constance Flanagan contend that the apathy of young people toward conservation will be changed only through government action. Considering the Bush administration's environmental record, we're in a world of trouble if they're correct. Good thing they're wrong.

Far from shirking their responsibility to our planet, young people are leading the way in the fight to stop global warming -- and to open their elders' eyes to the crisis.

Two examples: Students at Western Washington University taxed themselves an extra \$19 in student fees to fund the purchase of renewable energy, and students at Pennsylvania State University -- where Ms. Flanagan teaches and Ms. Wray studies -- gathered more than 4,700 letters asking the administration to embrace the Kyoto Protocol. They have also secured green building standards, a campus wind turbine and a plan to have 22 percent of the school's power come from renewables by 2012.

That is only the tip of the (melting) iceberg. Youth is leading; government should follow.

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www.ssc.org

*FYI is a CEFS initiative with numerous community partners; funded by
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Uses:

Use a LTE to:

- Publicly urge an official or legislator to act
- Rally others to join your effort, movement, or organization
- Raise community awareness of an issue
- Correct an error about an article
- Bring up information not included in an article
- Use your own words to explain an issue

How-To:

1. Be current – respond to a recent article or event
2. Your letter must be short – 100-250 words, depending on the paper
3. Express your opinion, but avoid personal attacks
4. Within the first sentence, reference the article to which you're responding
5. Use facts to get your point across.
6. Make sure to include a "call to action" for your readers.
7. Include your organization's name where people can learn more information
8. Include your contact information with your submission
9. Involve others in your letter writing campaign – the more letters a paper receives on a subject, the more likely they are to publish about that subject!
10. Send letters to multiple sources in your community to get your message across to a more varied audience.

Additional Resources:

Advice on writing a Letter to the Editor and a sample from "Advocates for Youth"

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/sercadv/245?task=view>

How to organize a group of people in a LTE campaign – more effective than just one person writing a letter! By the Alliance for Climate Education

<http://www.acespace.org/act-now/action-teams/tracks/raise-your-voice/LTE>

Tips on writing an LTE, by the Student Peace Alliance

<http://www.studentpeacealliance.org/act/promise-campaign/letter-to-editor/lte-instructions>

If you're teaching others how to write an LTE, here's a lesson plan that you can use as a hands-on activity in your workshop or presentation:

<http://www.layouth.com/how-to-write-a-good-letter-to-the-editor-interesting-analysis-and-persuasive-arguments-set-good-letters-apart/>

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