



Op-Ed Writing Guide

One of the main pillars of the Good Steward Campaign is bearing public witness around protecting God's creation. There are many ways to do this, but one great way is writing an op-ed – an article which appears opposite a newspaper's editorial page. These are among the most widely-read of all pages in a newspaper. These articles make an impact!

Here are some tips to help get you started.

Step One: Keep it fresh!

There are many topics within the creation care/environmental stewardship arena that are worth exploring. Keep your op-ed "fresh" by writing about a recent event. Examples of this include responding to a well-known figure saying something you strongly agree or disagree with. Or if there is a piece of legislation that you are passionately in favor of or against. Essentially, read the news, find a story relating to creation care in which you have a strong opinion, and go for it.

Suggested topics:

1. How it's wrong to pose the choice of caring for God's creation or helping our economy – through investing in renewable energy we can do both.
2. How climate change is increasing the quantity and intensity of severe weather events such as storms and droughts.
3. Climate change and its impact on the poor.
4. Older generations don't take climate change as seriously as younger generations.
5. Climate change and its impact on food production throughout the world.
6. Looking at more local environmental issues, focusing on how the issue is affecting the poor in the area.
7. If geared towards a more Christian audience, discussing the scriptural authority behind creation care.
8. Reflecting on an experience of yours in nature and how you want to see it protected.
9. The need for a sense of urgency in tackling the climate crisis.

There are many subjects to write about so this is not a strict list of topics. We hope though this can get your brain churning and help get you started!

Step Two: Attack the Blank Page

Anyone who has written anything knows how daunting staring at a blank page can be. A good writing tip though, whether writing an op-ed or a research paper, is to just start writing. Worry about grammar, punctuation and word choice later. Write from the heart and speak with conviction. Don't give yourself a word limit when writing your first draft – let everything spill onto the page. This is often thought to be the hardest part of writing.

Step Three: Create an Outline

Once you have your thoughts on paper it's time to add a framework to your article in order to construct an engaging narrative ---

1. You need a hook. Start with a bold statement, statistic or quote.
2. Dive into the meat of what you want to say. Op-eds aren't long, scholarly essays. Get to the point.
3. If possible, provide a personal touch to the issue you're writing about, whether you reference a story from your own life or someone else's. For example, if you're writing about how climate change impacts the poor, include a real-life example. Put a face on your topic.
4. End with a call to action – whether to church or political leaders, or the average reader, make sure the reader leaves as convicted as you.
5. If possible reference back to your original hook in your call to action.

Step Four: Ferment

Let your article ferment for a day or two – let your thoughts mature. The only time this is a bad idea is if you are responding to a topic in the news and want your voice to be heard right away. It is also key at this stage to think of an intriguing title for the article – many decide whether or not to read your article by the title alone so it's important to think of something attention-grabbing.

Step Five: Peer Reviewed!

Even the best writers benefit from others reading their work. Feel free to send your article to Drew at drew@goodstewardcampaign.org if you want someone to look it over!

Step Six: Get Placed

We want your voice to be heard. After all, that's the point of writing an op-ed in the first place. For some outlets, you might be able to get your article placed by yourself. For example, if you are a student, most college newspapers are in need of student voices, so you can reach out to your college paper. To reach a broader audience however, contact Drew at drew@goodstewardcampaign.org to make your voice heard!

Top 10 Op-Ed Writing Tips

10. Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
9. Word limit should be 400-600 words.
8. Use an active voice. Write in the present, not past tense.
7. Acknowledge the other side, while defending your beliefs.
6. Speak matter-of-factly. Avoid long-winded arguments.
5. Use reason. Logical arguments are always a winning way.
4. Be bold and direct. Don't make excuses for speaking truth. For example, boldly stating "Climate change is not a hoax."
3. Provide a consistent narrative. Your article needs to flow.
2. Engage in empathy. Help the reader understand where you are coming from.
1. Be genuine. Speak with conviction. Nothing is more important than this.