4.9: Editorial Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to write an editorial?

When you are asked to write an editorial, you are expected to share your educated opinion on a current and often controversial or debated topic or issue. It is sometimes referred to as an opinion or perspective piece, but what distinguishes it from a purely opinion piece is that it is written from an assumed knowledge base – the author has expertise on the topic. Within an editorial, you may find yourself combining other types of writing. For example, you may draw upon a critical voice or analytical voice in which you compare and contrast or evaluate an issue, or use a persuasive style of writing to compel and convince the reader.

Editorials may be written for newspapers, blogs, or websites. You may also need to write editorials for nursing magazines and journals. Often, each issue of a healthcare journal begins with an editorial written by the editor or someone like you with an educated opinion on a current healthcare issue.

How to do it?

Where do you start and how do you write an editorial related to the healthcare field? Here are some steps to consider:

1. **Choose a specific topic** that is current, timely, and controversial in the nursing and healthcare field. Avoid topics that are too broad or ones that hinder your ability to write comprehensively about your topic in a concise manner. For example, writing about the need for seatbelts in cars is no longer a current topic; it hasn’t been for decades. However, writing about seatbelts on buses is a timely health-related topic with some controversy surrounding it.

2. **Always consider the audience** because they will influence the language you use and the points you emphasize.
You may be writing an editorial that your instructor will read as an evaluative component of a course. But remember – although your instructor is the reader, they are not necessarily your audience. Your audience is the person or group that you are trying to influence. For example, it may be local government or key stakeholders that you are trying to influence about the need to open harm-reduction clinics in urban areas.

3. Think about your purpose in writing the editorial. It is important to know what you want to convey and stick with it. An editorial’s purpose can generally be categorized into two types. The first type is to express your opinion about an issue. For example, you might express your opinion about the need for a guaranteed basic income for adults regardless of employment status. Here, you need to state your opinion and clearly argue it. The second type is to propose a solution to an issue. For example, you might argue that a solution to workplace stress is to develop and implement meditation programs. Here, you need to describe the problem and why your solution is best. Whatever the purpose of your editorial, note it at the top of your paper as you begin writing, so that you can keep it in mind and ensure that your writing always aligns with your purpose.

4. Based on your informed opinion, choose a side and state your position early in the editorial. You should clearly state your opinion in the first paragraph.

5. You should structure your editorial similar to other types of writing. Begin with an introduction that describes the topic and your opinion. Next, write the body of the editorial: describe both sides of the issue, explain why you disagree with one side of an issue, and then provide a sound argument to support your opinion. Finally, finish with a conclusion that really grabs your audience. This might include a call to action that prompts the audience to immediately respond to the issue.

What to keep in mind?

As you write an editorial, keep in mind the following points:

- Write using a professional tone.
- Think about how you can present your idea constructively, without suggesting a cure-all.
- Choose clear and simple language and avoid jargon and slang. Don’t make your reader “work” to understand what you are talking about.
- Create a short title that emphasizes your main point – it should be catchy and maybe provoking.
- Do your research and make sure your facts are correct. It is important that you can support your argument and use examples to explain your points.
- Keep it concise. The length will depend on the publication that you are writing for. Editorials usually range from 500–1500 words, but if you’re writing as part of a course’s evaluation component, refer to the assignment guidelines.

Student Tip

**Persuading the Audience**

In an editorial, you need to persuade your audience that your opinion matters. You should support your opinion with a sound argument and believable evidence. Don’t simply reject one side of an issue; instead, provide clear explanations on why you disagree with one side of an issue, and then provide evidence to support your opinion. But be careful – although you may need to include statistics, you don’t want to overwhelm your audience with too many facts and statistics.