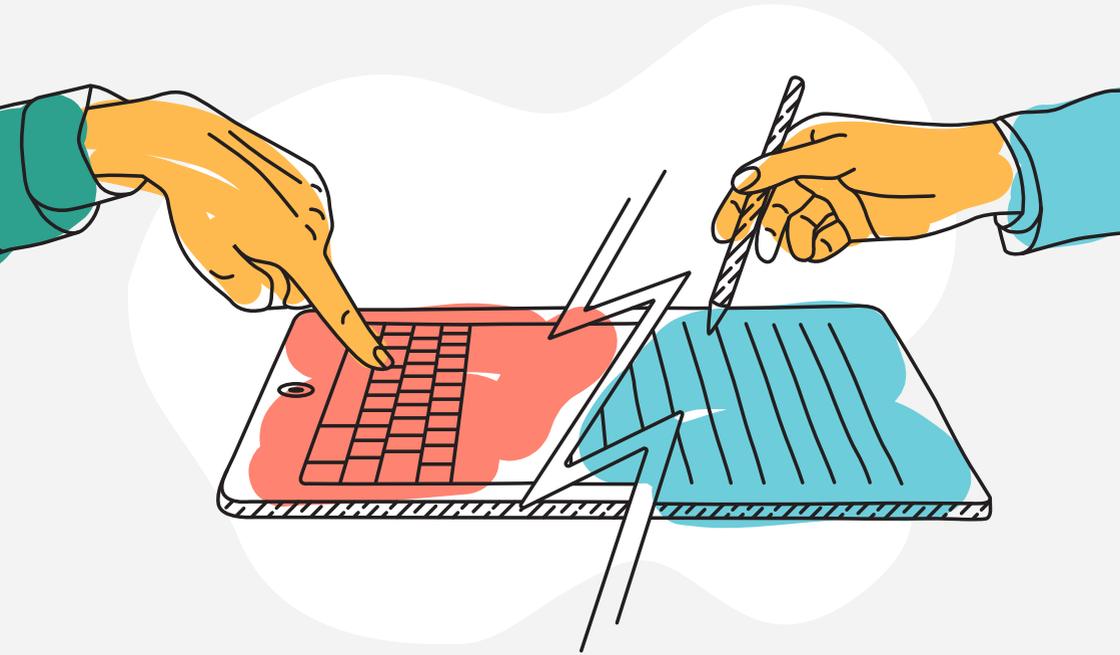


Pinkston.



---

# How To Write An Op-Ed

---

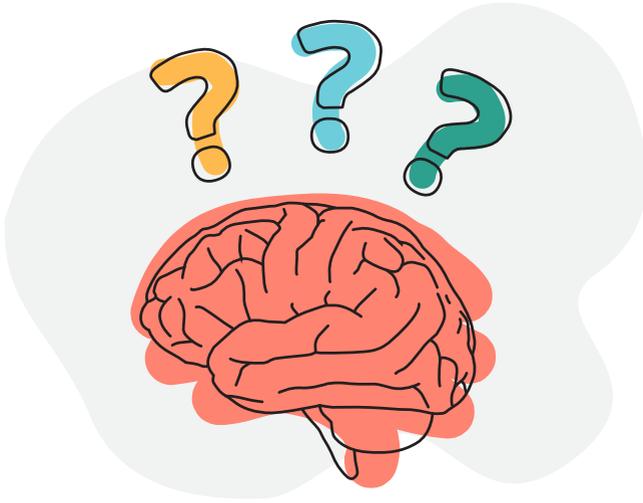
# Contents

- 01 The Basics
- 02 Narrow Down Your Topic And Decide Your Opinion
- 03 The Lede
- 04 The First Paragraph
- 05 Support Your Opinion
- 06 Conclusion
- 07 Review Your Op-Ed [Bonus Chapter]

---

# The Basics

<b>LENGTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 600-800 words.</li></ul>
<b>PARAGRAPHS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer than four sentences each.</li><li>• A few one-sentence paragraphs can also be effective.</li></ul>
<b>SENTENCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use mainly short, declarative sentences.</li><li>• Avoid complex sentences with multiple commas.</li><li>• Use active voice, not passive voice.</li></ul>
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simple. No technical or academic jargon unless it is for a trade publication.</li><li>• Ask: Can this be understood if someone's reading this quickly on their phone?</li></ul>
<b>STATISTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include several of them.</li><li>• Use reputable sources and track down the original source.</li><li>• Always hyperlink your sources.</li></ul>



## CHAPTER ONE

---

# Narrow Down Your Topic And Decide Your Opinion

### KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Read the outlets where you would like your op-ed to be published. Who is the typical reader, and how much would they know about your industry or subject? What events have just occurred that are relevant to your area of expertise?

### MAKE IT CURRENT

Your topic should fall into one of these three categories. Your title, or headline, should state this topic upfront:

<b>A recent or upcoming event</b>	“5G is here. Here’s what the U.S. needs to maintain its lead.”
<b>A new or provocative take on a commonly discussed topic</b>	“As digital finance grows, banking providers shouldn’t lose the art of human interaction.”
<b>A neglected topic that needs to be talked about</b>	“When it comes to global conflict, churches are the best solution we never think of.”

## **HAVE AN OPINION**

Remember that op-eds are not simply educational or explanatory pieces. Your op-ed should always have an opinion or an argument.



## CHAPTER TWO

---

# The Lede

The lede is the opening sentence of your op-ed. It is what will hook your reader and should describe the event, situation or issue that prompted you to write your op-ed in the first place.

The lede could be:

<b>Something that just happened, is happening or is coming up in current events</b>	“Last week, Google’s parent company, Alphabet, became the fourth U.S. company ever to reach a market cap of \$1 trillion.”
<b>Recently-released research</b>	“New research has found that 38% of troops have less than \$2,000 saved for an emergency.”
<b>A generally relevant topic that people should take note of</b>	“Breaking up big tech only stymies American innovation.”
<b>A personal story or observation that’s relevant to your argument</b>	“When I became a refugee, I walked 40 miles without food through the jungles of the Congo.”



## CHAPTER THREE

---

# The First Paragraph

Make sure your first paragraph (or, at the latest, the beginning of your second paragraph) states your opinion or the argument you will be making. This should be conveyed in one to two sentences.

### EXAMPLE:

It's not Coco Gauff's wins that kids and parents should be paying attention to; it's her losses. The teenage tennis phenomenon could have cried when she lost her fourth-round match at Wimbledon. But instead she ended her run with grace. "I learned a lot," she told *The New York Times*. "I still tried my best."

This op-ed, which was written just after Wimbledon, offers a new take on a celebrity dominating the news, by asking families to consider not just the glories of fame but the lessons of loss.



# YOUR OPINION MATTERS

## CHAPTER FOUR

---

# Support Your Opinion

The middle of the op-ed convinces a reader why your argument or opinion is valid. Aim for 3-6 short paragraphs between your introduction and your conclusion. Each should focus on a specific example to support your claim, such as:

- Statistics (like results from research or surveys)
- Personal stories or anecdotes
- A story about a person affected by the issue
- Problems caused by the status quo
- Details about the solution you're proposing
- Bullet points or a list, if you are offering multiple solutions

**Example of a supporting paragraph for “The opioid crisis is sending more kids to foster care. Here’s what we can do about it”:**

In 2017, no fewer than 96,000 children entered foster care in the United States due to parental drug abuse, overwhelming an already fragile system. After a period of decline in the early 2000s, the number of children in foster care increased by 10 percent from 2012 to 2016, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. At the same time, drug abuse by a parent rose more than 33 percent as the reason for children entering foster care.

**Example of a supporting paragraph for “We need more diverse foster and adoptive parents”:**

My husband and I have seven children, and the oldest four were adopted from the foster care system. We are proud to be black adoptive parents. But the number of minority families pursuing adoption is low.



## CHAPTER FIVE

---

# Conclusion

In your last paragraph, remind readers why this issue should matter to them by offering:

<b>A recap of the solution you're proposing</b>	“People want to be involved in something that matters. By focusing on this idea, a company puts the building blocks into place that will help them make smarter hiring decisions, attract new talent and build up the next generation of talent from within.”
<b>Your advice or a recommendation</b>	“Instead of waiting out crises – particularly ones not of their own making – companies should consider embracing them. Blue Bell should make the point that while they don't condone illegal behavior, the videos of pranksters licking their ice cream in stores could also be viewed as a testament to how good their product tastes – customers just can't wait.”
<b>A call to action</b>	“Tampa needs a leader who will take this problem seriously and commit to putting a plan in place to end trafficking in our city. Come Tuesday's election, I hope the new mayor-elect of Tampa chooses to prioritize ending one of the greatest crimes in this city.”



BONUS CHAPTER

---

## Review Your Op-Ed

- Proofread your op-ed.
- Ask someone who knows little about your topic to read it and make sure your points are clear.
- When an editor rejects an op-ed, their reason usually falls into one of these categories. Does yours?

<p><b>“The op-ed is too long or too broad.”</b></p>	<p>Have you kept your op-ed under 800 words? Have you checked the outlet’s length guidelines? Are you trying to cover too big a topic?</p>
<p><b>“We just published a similar op-ed this week.”</b></p>	<p>You can utilize a communications team or PR firm to check for previously published pieces on the same topic. But it’s a good idea to read what has been recently published by your target outlet.</p>
<p><b>“The op-ed is overly advertorial.”</b></p>	<p>Always avoid being too promotional of yourself or the organization you represent. At the most, you should mention your product or organization only once in the op-ed. Ideally, avoid mentioning it at all and include a link to it, instead, in your boilerplate at the bottom of the op-ed.</p>
<p><b>“The author didn’t cite his or her sources.”</b></p>	<p>Have you hyperlinked all your statistics, recent news articles you mention, or an opposing viewpoint? Are your sources credible?</p>
<p><b>“There’s too much jargon.”</b></p>	<p>Is your language too poetic, too technical, or too academic?</p>
<p><b>“This is stale.”</b></p>	<p>If an outlet rejects your piece because the news has passed, hold onto the piece and update it when a new relevant news hook comes along.</p>



# About Pinkston

Founded in 2001, Pinkston was launched with the goal of creating a new kind of public relations firm that had the flexibility and ingenuity to provide individualized solutions for clients in a wide range of industries. Pinkston is rooted in our founding goal of providing smarter, more strategic public relations services that are focused on positioning individuals, companies and nonprofits as leaders in their fields.

We come to work every day motivated by our intention to see the world changed and impacted in positive ways through the strategies we engage with our clients.

Pinkston is defined by purpose-driven communication. Rooted in experience, we're not afraid to push boundaries. We are current, but not trendy.

## Contact

**PINKSTON INSTITUTE**  
**For Applied Learning**

Victoria Kelly, Director of  
Content and Creative Strategy

[victoria.kelly@pinkston.co](mailto:victoria.kelly@pinkston.co)

David W. Fouse, Partner  
Elisha Brodsky, Director of Photography  
Damir Čirkić, Senior Designer