**Tips on How To Write a Letter to the Editor or**

**Political Representative (harrigan f11)**

Perhaps you have a strong and passionate point of view, or you're responding only to the fact that you have this class assignment. In either case, you can use these guidelines to draft a letter to the editor of a newspaper or to a political representative

1. **Select a topic.** If you are motivated to write a letter about a particular topic, then you already have a starting place. However, if you are having trouble finding a topic, you can use the list provided by the instructor, or you can start by reading a publication that is likely to contain articles that interest you. It is a good idea read the local paper (like the “Olympian” or “Seattle Times”) to look for issues that matter to you.
2. **Read instructions provided for letters to the editors. Go to the website of the paper and find the Opinion/Letters to Editor section.** Most publications provide guidelines for writing a letter to the editor. Look for guidelines and follow them carefully. Your assignment is to write at least 200 words, the limit for length at the “Seattle Times.”
3. **Include your email address and phone number at the bottom of your letter under your name.** Editors often require this information because they will need to verify your identity. Representatives might want to respond to you by phone or email. Adding your phone number and email address make your letter a little different from the standard business letter format we looked at in class. If you are writing to a newspaper, you can state that this information is not to be published. (Say something like, "Please note: I do not want my full name or contact information to be published with this letter.")

If you are responding to another article or letter that you read in the newspaper you write to, say so right away. Name the article in the first sentence of the body of your letter.

1. **Be clear and focused.** This is not always easy to do! You will probably need to write several drafts of your letter to condense your message.

**5. Limit your letter to two or three paragraphs.** Try sticking to the following format:

\* In your first paragraph, introduce your problem and state your concern.  
\* In the second paragraph, include a few sentences to support your view (with at least two facts or points for this assignment).  
\* End with a short summary and a clever “punchy” line that the reader might remember.

**6. Type your letter if you know how.** If you can’t type, write (consider printing if your cursive isn’t great) in ink, and re-write until it looks perfect.

**7.** **Proofread your letter.** Editors will ignore letters that have bad grammar or spelling, and dismiss rude rants. Representatives will take poorly written letters less seriously. Remember that short, concise letters sound confident. Long, wordy letters give the impression that you're trying too hard to make a point.