10 TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE OP-EDS

1. **Write for a specific audience** – Which news outlet or type of news outlet are you writing for and how will this impact the way the piece is written? Who is the general audience for this outlet? Imagine demographics – geographical region, age, interests, etc. What do they care about, and will your piece connect with them?

2. **A strong intro –** Your op-ed should get to the point from the lead paragraph and answer some of the following questions:
   a. Why does your topic matter?
   b. Why should it matter *today*?
   c. Why should the reader care what you, of all people, have to say about it?

3. **Connect with the reader and make it plain –** Op-ed readers will be eager to learn something from you, provided they can readily understand what you're saying. Avoid using superfluous jargon to establish a deeper, more meaningful connection with the reader. First person language is powerful, such as "I know this first-hand because…," "I work with people every day who…," etc. Readers of most mainstream publications don't speak legalese. Translate!

4. **Have a strong opinion** – Op-eds shouldn't be an analysis of the news or weigh up alternative views. They require a clear thesis, backed by reliable evidence, in the pursuit of a convincing argument. Avoid writing as a generalist on a given topic and convey a hard-hitting, lively stance on the opinion you are trying to persuade the reader to adopt.

5. **Provocative or contrarian viewpoints are more likely to grab editors' attention.** Provide a new viewpoint or new argument. Avoid what's already being said in the news. How will your ideas and arguments contribute to the conversation, and be helpful to your audience? How does your background or role uniquely lend itself to this viewpoint?

6. **Avoid the passive voice** – Lead with declarative sentences that are void of empty words such as "apparently," "understandably" or "indeed." Project a tone of confidence, which is the middle course between modesty and pomposity.

7. **Anticipate the opposing reaction** – Address any major objections to your argument early in your op-ed. Consider offering the other side's strongest case, as doing so will sharpen your own case and earn the respect of your reader.

8. **Dodge the clichés** – Avoid using clichéd phrases to get your point across; the editor will thank you for it.

9. **Aim for a length under 800 words.** Every sentence counts. There's often a lot to say on a topic, but make sure you're using the most compelling information. Clarify your three main goals for the piece prior to drafting – this will help you be your own best editor.

10. **Encourage action** – Conclude with a clear call-to-action to the reader or someone else (ex. "The Senate needs to X," "Corporations must X"). Offer your readers information on how to support a cause.