

# Cracking the Code: Guest Opinions



Guest opinion pieces such as op-eds, guest blog posts, and letters to the editor (LTEs) showcase a writer's unique point of view and can be a powerful means of communicating an idea. A good opinion piece will be timely, support a clear message, and draw on the writer's own personal experiences to tell a compelling story.

## TIPS FOR EARNING OP-EDS AND GUEST BLOGS:

- ✓ **Do your research:** Read past editorials and blog posts and get familiar with the political leanings of the publication before choosing an author and angle.
- ✓ **Find expert authors:** Good candidates include: [green builders](#), supportive homebuilder associations, [building materials manufacturers](#), code officials, [home energy inspectors](#), supportive lawmakers and eco-brokers.
- ✓ **Tell personal stories:** Have the author tell a personal story about why energy codes and energy-efficient homes matter to THEM, and then talk about the broader public benefits of improving codes.
- ✓ **Make it timely:** Relate the article to relevant current events, such as active building code legislation, code commission meetings, the start of heating or cooling seasons, home construction news, or utility rate increases.
- ✓ **Plan ahead:** Find out which editor is responsible for reviewing op-eds and guest blogs and his/her correct contact info. Prepare article 2-3 weeks before approaching an editor to allow enough time for reviewing and editing.
- ✓ **Be persistent:** Pitch the editor your article idea via email about 1-2 weeks before you want it to be placed. Follow up the next day with a phone call. If you don't hear back in 3-4 days, call or email again. If you don't hear back in one week, offer the article to another publication.
- ✓ **Be authentic:** Have the author, not a public relations or other outside organization, contact the editor and submit the article and handle all follow-up communication. They should be prepared to provide a head shot.



## TIPS FOR SENDING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- ✓ **When to use them?** LTEs are generally written in response to recent coverage and are submitted within 1-2 days of related coverage.
- ✓ **What is the format?** LTEs are short, usually no more than 150-200 words and include author contact info. Longer than that and letters can either be rejected or shortened.
- ✓ **How to submit:** Newspapers usually have a general email address or webpage for receiving LTEs. If not, find out which editor is responsible for receiving LTEs and send letters to that person. You may also want to cc the reporter who wrote the story you are responding to. LTEs should be submitted by the author, not an outside organization.
- ✓ **Be persistent:** Try to have 3-4 people send LTEs at the same time, so editors know that their readers care about the issue. Only one might be published, but having several supportive letters on hand helps bring the issue to editors' attention.
- ✓ **Post online comments too:** Consider posting comments online in addition to submitting LTEs. Have your LTE authors check back often and submit additional comments as necessary so that their viewpoints remain at the top.

