

“How to Write Us”

Tips for Getting Letters Published in The Birmingham News

Here are the rules, as listed on the editorial pages of The News:

- Letters should be no longer than 200 words.
- All letters must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number.
- Addresses and phone numbers are not published.
- Letters are edited for grammar, spelling and brevity.

Here are the explanations:

-- Occasionally, the paper will run letters slightly more than 200 words. We try not to, however. Long letters have far less chance of getting into the paper than shorter ones. There are two practical reasons for this: space is limited, and short, precise, clear letters tend to make the point better and are easier to read.

Letter writers who can't make their case in 200-250 words can submit an essay for consideration for our “My Turn” column. However, that's a weekly feature (it runs on Sunday), and there is much competition for that space. Regular writers stand a much better chance of getting a letter into the paper than a “My Turn.”

Writers can also submit columns for our op-ed page, “Other Opinions,” and Sunday's expanded “Commentary” section. But again, the chance of getting published in those sections is slim. Most op-ed columns are from national, syndicated columnists. Most other columns are written by people with a certain expertise or background in the subject matter they're writing about.

- The newspaper does not run anonymous letters or letters written under a pen name. Writers must stand behind what they write.
- Addresses and phone numbers are used for verification purposes. We print only the name and community where the letter writer lives. We sometimes also list the organization the letter writer is affiliated with if it's relevant to the letter.
- We do correct letters for factual errors that we spot. Facts and opinions are different. We don't change letters as to alter the writers' opinion, and we try very hard to keep the

essence of the letter writers' views. If a letter is based on incorrect information, we won't run it.

We accept letters by regular mail, fax or e-mail. Readers can also drop letters off at our office at 2200 Fourth Ave. North in downtown Birmingham. Don't expect face time with an editor, however.

Our mailing address is:

Your Opinions
The Birmingham News
P.O. Box 2553
Birmingham, AL 35202

Our fax number is: 205-325-3345

Our e-mail address is: epage@bhamnews.com.

You can also submit letters through our Web site at www.al.com.

Thanks, and happy writings.