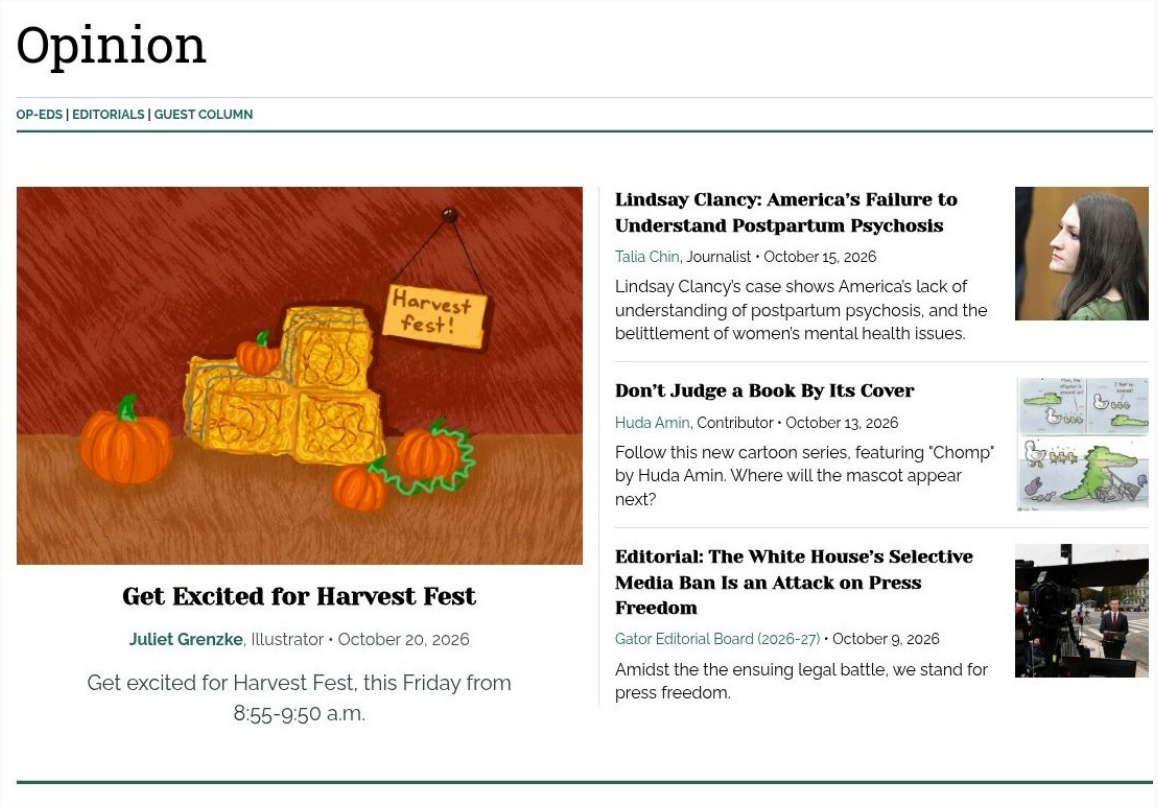
How to write award-worthy opinion articles

Report the issue. Take a position. Offer a way forward.



Open this presentation's resources ↗

David Cutler

Adviser, The Gator · Founder, PSJA

Start with a reason readers should care

Choose a timely, specific question

Connect the issue to people in your community. Explain what is at stake now.

Take a clear position

A reader should be able to state your argument after the opening.

Opening exercise

Bring one opinion piece your staff is proud of. Name its claim, strongest evidence, and proposed action.

Keep asking

Why this issue? Why this audience? Why now?

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Local reporting, a larger question

Matthias Jaylen Sandoval · Tower

Salaam, shalom, serenity

Read the original article ↗

How does the writer connect a broad issue with a specific community?

Slides & resource links ↗

Opinion writing begins with reporting

Interview and verify

Seek people with different stakes. Link to reliable evidence and distinguish a fact from your interpretation.

Address the strongest counterargument

Represent it fairly before explaining why your position holds.

Avoid a list of grievances

Explain a cause, weigh alternatives, and give readers a feasible next step.

Source check

Which part of your claim would change if a key fact turned out to be wrong?

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A staff editorial takes a position

The Gator editorial board

Enough Is Enough: We Support Newton Teachers

Read the original article ↗

Identify the board’s position, its evidence, and the action it asks readers to consider.

Explain what should change

Ben Siegel · M-A Chronicle

We Need Better Holocaust Education

Read the original article ↗

How does the writer move from concern to a concrete proposal?

Personal experience can open a story

Andrew Flint · The Gator

Saying the Right Words: My Journey Through Stuttering

Read the original article ↗

Discuss how a first-person account helps others understand an experience. The publication labels this piece as a feature.

Question an accepted expectation

Cynthia Huang · The Campanile

Society pressures introverts to transform their personalities, conform to standards

Read the original article ↗

What assumption does the argument challenge?

Build an argument on deep reporting

Evan Michaeli · The Gator

Choking Ourselves to Death

Read the original article ↗

This reported environmental package is a model for the evidence an opinion argument might draw upon; it is not itself labeled an editorial.

A review needs criteria and examples

Amelia Bowman · The Gator

A Little Life

Read the original article ↗

What specific choices or passages support the writer’s judgment, rather than simply telling readers whether the book is good?

Slides & resource links ↗

Build the opening

An engaging lede

Start with a telling detail, scene, question, or experience that belongs to this argument.

A clear nut graph

State the issue and your position early. Give readers a reason to keep going.

Evidence arrives early

Support the first claim with reporting or a credible source.

Be concise

The opening should establish the argument without trying to tell the entire story.

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Develop the middle

One reason at a time

Organize the argument around clear points. Use interviews, data, and source links where they do real work.

Show your reasoning

Explain how the evidence supports the claim. Do not expect a quotation or number to make the connection by itself.

Use the right visual

Original photographs, graphics, or illustrations can make an idea clearer.

Edit for the reader

Remove repeated claims. Let each paragraph move the argument forward.

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Write a walk-off that earns its place

Return with new meaning

A connection to the opening can give the ending a sense of completion.

Avoid repeating the introduction

Use the ending to show why the argument matters after the evidence has been heard.

Offer a feasible action

Name who can act and what they should do. A useful proposal is stronger than “something must change.”

Read it aloud

Does the final sentence sound like the writer and give the reader something to carry away?

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Publish with care

Take difficult issues seriously

Do the reporting, seek a response, consider harm, and make an argument you can defend.

Polish the presentation

Use a specific headline, clear prose, meaningful links, and a layout that works on a phone.

Respect people and their work

Credit visual creators, check permissions, and correct factual errors transparently.

Keep ownership with students

Editors coach and ask questions; writers make the revisions.

Open slides and resources ↗

Revise one argument

01 Underline the claim. Circle the strongest fact or quotation. Mark the counterargument.

02 Find one unsupported assertion and one repeated point.

03 Rewrite the ending with a concrete, realistic step forward.

WORKING TIME

15 minutes

YOU WILL PRODUCE

A sharper argument and one reporting task to complete before publication.

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Use your voice responsibly

The purpose

Help your community understand an issue and consider a better way forward.

Keep learning

Read widely, report carefully, and invite a thoughtful response.

Mentor texts and slides

The companion page includes direct links, editable slides, and a PDF.

Contact David

teachercutler.com/reach-out

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