# What is an op-ed made of?

*(Adapted from: The OpEd Project,* [*https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics/*](https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics/)*; this is a great resource!)*

**1. A lede**

This is the opener of the op-ed. It needs to be short and punchy to grab the reader’s attention, for example through a compelling example, a surprising statement, or a dramatic anecdote. The lede must draw in the reader, so they want to read the op-ed instead of moving on to the next article. Usually but not always ledes tie to contemporary events: something that happened recently, either in the news or (less frequently) in your own life.

**2. A thesis**

Op-eds are short pieces of accessible public writing; they are not the place to make complex, nuanced arguments. Instead, op-eds must be anchored in a clear, unequivocal position you are taking on an issue. This is what is called the ‘thesis’ – the single main point the argument is going to make. Your thesis may be written explicitly into the op-ed, or it may be the conclusion that the reader comes to after they read it. Whether or not it is explicitly written into the op-ed, it must be crystal-clear in the author’s head.

**3. An argument grounded in evidence**

The thesis’s validity will be undergirded by several points (in the real world, usually 2-4; for this assignment, 3). Each point must draw on credible evidence, such as: statistics, news, reports from credible organizations, expert quotes, scholarship, history, or first-hand experience. Each point must contribute directly towards supporting the overall thesis.

**4. “To be sure”**

The argument should pre-empt possible skeptics and critics by acknowledging any flaws or shortcomings in your argument, and addressing any obvious counterarguments. Effective strategies to do this include:

* **Acknowledge and dismiss**: Acknowledge that a counterargument exists, but argue why that counterargument is not so important.
* **Validate and trump**: Acknowledge that an important counterargument exists, and explain how your argument addresses it.
* **Personal caveat**: Address a personal limitation that may come up (e.g. "As CEO of Google, it might seem that I am biased in my view on algorithmic fairness") and explain why you have credibility anyway

The "to be sure" must be written in a tone that will speak to potential critics, i.e. by trying on the shoes of those who might disagree with you. If you want *them* to listen to *you*, *you* need to make clear you have heard *them*. The "to be sure" must communicate respect and empathy, based in an imagination of your opponent as intelligent and moral (whether or not this is what you actually believe).

**Conclusion**

The end of the op-ed must make a clear recommendation of what should happen differently based on the argument made here. A weak conclusion argues for a general attitude change (e.g. "people should be aware of...") type of conclusion. A strong conclusion recommends something concrete that should be done differently, ideally something your reader is in a position to implement or advocate for immediately.