Letters of support or opposition

Types of letters

There are lots of different types of letters that can be written during a campaign and these are just a few examples:

Open letters of support or opposition to a target

Open letters of support or opposition can be a good way of clearly getting your argument across and showing the support that your campaign. An open letter is a letter than has a specific target but which will usually be shared with a wider audience as well. Usually this would entail someone writing a letter and inviting people and groups to sign it in support. When you can enough signatures, you can send this on to your target.

Another way of doing an open letter is to write it and then send it to specific groups or people who agree to have their name attached and then send this on to your target. This is often useful is you are part of a coalition group or have a number of high profile people who are intending to sign up to the letter.

Letter to editor

Another way of utilising letter writing during your campaign is to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or publication. This is often in response to a feature or news story that might have covered the issue you are campaigning on or just something that is happening in the news that impacts the campaign. You can then write a letter to the editor about that issue and they can publish this in their letters page. This might sound old fashioned but letters pages are a popular part of the newspaper for many readers and are picked up by other media outlets. Many large national campaigns utilise this tactic.

How to write a good letter

- Keep it succinct – Make sure you keep your letter brief and to the point. This is particularly the case if you are writing a letter to editor where space will be even smaller. The Guardian tends to print letters that are around 250 words.
- Don’t be afraid to be passionate or funny – letters are an opportunity to show some personal take on the issue that you are campaigning for.
- If you are referring to a particular event or news story make sure you reference it within the letter.
- Play to your strengths and pick someone from your campaign group that has a flare for writing.
- Think about your audience – this is particularly important for a letter to editor so think about the type of people who would read the publication you are writing to.
- Make it clear as to who your letter is from and include your campaign name.
- Don’t forget to publicise it – If you have a website or Facebook page make sure you publicise the final version of the letter there and if you get any response or coverage make sure you share this too.
- If you are looking to get lots of people to sign it, a good idea would be to use a google doc where you can print the letter and then gather a few bits of personal information about all the people who want to sign up.

Examples

Fawcett Society open letter to BBC executives over equal pay
Open letter to the Principle from Demilitarise Kings