

Thomson Reuters Foundation guide to blogs and op-eds

The Thomson Reuters Foundation welcomes opinion pieces that offer a fresh perspective, insight or solution related to our coverage, ideally in connection to current events. They should not exceed 700 words.

We look for pieces from authors with expertise in or direct experience of the issues they are writing about.

We do not publish promotional material, book excerpts, press releases or thinly veiled PR. We do not publish opinion pieces that are part of a political campaign.

Below is a basic guide to writing opinion pieces for the Thomson Reuters Foundation. If you have any questions, please contact Magdalena.mis@thomsonreuters.com or news.foundation@thomsonreuters.com.

- **The most important part is the first paragraph**
If you haven't captured the reader's interest by the end of the first paragraph you'll lose them.
- **Headlines need a lot of thought**
They need to be short, catchy and highly clickable as this may be the only thing that readers see on search engines or social media. Ask yourself: if I saw this headline, would I want to click on it? The maximum length for headlines is 66 characters, including spaces.
- **Keep it colourful and chatty**
Imagine you are talking with friends over lunch. You wouldn't speak in chronological order - you'd start by telling them what was most interesting. Let your personality come through if you wish - readers like to feel a connection with the writer.
- **Keep the sentences and paragraphs short**
Readers are likely to give up if they see long sentences and paragraphs.
- **Cut the jargon**
Use the everyday language you use to talk to family and friends.
- **Avoid abbreviations that most people won't understand**
If you need to use them, explain what they mean at first reference. A lot of abbreviations in an article are alienating even when the reader does know what they stand for. Try to find alternative words or phrases – eg you could talk about 'people uprooted by war' instead of 'IDPs'.

- **Never assume your readers have prior knowledge**
Weave in essential background, but keep it simple. For example, if you're writing about climate change and mention the 'Paris climate accord' you'll need to say what that is.
- **Be specific, use concrete examples and the latest data**
Anecdotes can bring an abstract subject alive.
- **Check name spellings and figures**
And then check them again. These are the easiest things to get wrong and an error will discredit your piece.
- **Pictures**
If you'd like to submit pictures to illustrate your piece, make sure you own the copyright or can provide a copyright release from the author. Please include the captions that describe what's happening in the picture, including names, date and location where the pictures were taken. Please note we are unable to use photos without clearing the copyright.

When you've finished ask yourself:

- 1) Is the piece interesting? You can test it on a friend or a colleague.
- 2) Can I make the first paragraph and headline better?
- 3) Have I got a good head and shoulders photo of myself to send? (see the website if you need a reference).

Please note that if an op-ed is critical of specific people, organisations or companies, we may require that the author gives those mentioned a right to comment ahead of publication.

Three main tips to get your blog published:

- It's short (up to 700 words)
- It says something new and interesting
- Is on a topic people and/or media are talking about.

Three main reasons why blogs don't get published:

- Self-promotion
- Jargon or complicated language
- They don't say anything new