

Ten Tips for Effective Advocacy Writing

- Keep it short and simple!
- Punctuation, spelling, and organization are important; jargon is deadly. • Know the intended recipients of your message.
- Have a clear goal; know why you are writing.
- Understand the environmental context.
- Be sure you know what you are trying to convey.
- Catch them in the beginning. If you don't, they may never get to the middle or end.
- Summarize/introduce, then explain, then summarize/conclude.
- Remember that communication is a process designed to convey messages, information, viewpoints and perspectives, insights, and persuasive reasons.
- Always have someone read your work and give you their thoughts and suggestions.

***Editing and proofreading help you check your writing to make sure that you have tied up any loose ends and clarified all your important points. Reread your final draft aloud to test it for sense and sound. Replace any words, phrases or sentences that are awkward or confusing. Use a dictionary and thesaurus to check for errors in usage, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Ask a reliable friend, family member, or colleague to check your writing for clarity, persuasiveness, or errors you may have missed. Prepare a final copy of your writing, and then proofread the final draft before submitting or sending it.

Addressing Correspondence:

To a U.S. senator:

**The Honorable (John Doe)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510**

Dear Senator (Doe):

To a state senator:

**The Honorable (John Doe)
Florida Senate
Tallahassee, FL 32399**

Dear Senator (Doe):

To a U.S. representative:

**The Honorable (John Doe)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

**Dear Congressman or
Congresswoman (Doe):**

To a state representative:

**The Honorable (John Doe)
Florida House of Representatives
Tallahassee, FL 32399**

Dear Representative (Doe):

When the congressional representative is a committee chairperson or Speaker of the House, the opening salutation should read:

Dear Mr. Chairman:

or

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

or

Dear Mr./Madam Speaker:

(State legislators, mayors and other elected officials are also addressed as "The Honorable.")

****Remember to double check for the elected official's correct address!***

LETTER TO YOUR SENATOR ESSENTIALS

Your Name & Address {PLEASE DO NOT FORGET THIS!}

Date

The Honorable _____

U.S. Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator _____:

1. The first paragraph of the letter should contain your purpose for writing the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it according to its Senate bill number (S. 952). This way, they know exactly what you're talking about.
2. Include information that supports your position and how the proposed legislation or issue affects you personally. Anecdotal evidence is a very effective and persuasive lobbying tool.
3. Offer your expertise if it is relevant. Believe it or not, as a medical student you may have experiential or trained expertise that may be useful to legislators.
4. Use simple language (within reason). Staff workers in Congressional offices are not experts on all issues. An example: the term "kidney doctor" may be more understandable than "nephrologist."
5. Always ask the senator or representative for something. This can be support of a certain bill, co-sponsorship of a bill, or you may want the legislator to introduce legislation.
6. Always thank the senator or representative for something. You can thank them for their time, their effort or for their support of legislation.
7. Be courteous, to the point, and try to keep the letter to one page.
8. Your name and address must be included so that you may receive a response.
9. Personal letters are much more effective lobbying efforts than postcards, petitions or even phone calls because they show more effort!

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your printed name

LETTER TO YOUR CONGRESSPERSON: ESSENTIALS

Your Name & Address (PLEASE DO NOT FORGET THIS!)

Date

The Honorable _____

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative _____:

1. The first paragraph of the letter should contain your purpose for writing the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it according to its House bill number (e.g., H. XXXX). This way, they know exactly what you're talking about.
2. Include information that supports your position and how the proposed legislation or issue affects you personally. Anecdotal evidence is a very effective and persuasive lobbying tool.
3. Offer your expertise if it is relevant. Believe it or not, as a medical student you may have experiential or trained expertise that may be useful to legislators.
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8. Your name and address must be included so that you may receive a response.
9. Personal letters are much more effective lobbying efforts than postcards, petitions or even phone calls because they show more effort!

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your printed name

Example of a Letter to a Governor or Representative or Senator

Date _____

The Honorable _____

Office Address _____

United States House of Representatives/United State Senate or

City, State, Zip _____

Dear Honorable Governor/Representative/Senator _____: I am writing as a voter and the parent of a child struggling with mental illness. Unfortunately for my child, she is "not ill enough" to be eligible for intensive mental health services, and our family can't afford the expensive private programs, so she is on a waiting list. But every day I see her deteriorate. I am afraid that if we don't get help soon, she will get involved in crime and end up in the juvenile justice system. My child is falling through the cracks, and I don't know where to turn. I keep getting referred to different agencies, none of whom can help us. Sometimes I feel that I am headed for a mental breakdown. My hopes were raised years ago when then-Governor Whitman announced the Children's System of Care Initiative for children with mental health needs. She said that this Initiative would reduce barriers for families and would allow children to move between levels of care on an "as-needed" basis without disruption of services. It would establish a team approach to planning for each child with mental health needs. It would expand services, such as mobile crisis outreach and in-home counseling, as well as linkages between facility-based and community-based services to help children as they transition from facilities back into their communities and homes. And it would set up family support organizations in each county, staffed by parents of children with mental health needs, who could support families and share their own experiences and information. It sounded like just what my daughter and my family needed! But now I have learned that there is a problem with the Initiative. I have seen letters from service providers, labor unions, and others who are opposing implementation of the Children's System of Care. I have heard legislators talk about how much the Initiative will cost. And I have read an interview with you where you said you are delaying implementation of the Initiative until you can study it. But every day that you delay this Initiative is another day my daughter goes without help. It's another day that my other children go without my attention because I spend so much of my energy trying to deal with my daughter. It's another day that I wonder whether I will get that call from the police station that I am so afraid of. Please, Governor/Representative/Senator _____, move forward now with the Children's System of Care. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Your Name _____

Your Title _____

Your Address _____

Your City, State, Zip _____

Your Phone Number _____

Chris McCoy
1902 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191

The Honorable John Warner
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

As a constituent and a medical student, I want to express my support for S. 1297, limiting resident-physician work hours.

Physicians-in-training, known as residents, often work up to 36-hour shifts and up to 140 hours per week. I believe that this is dangerous for patients and professionals. A recent study found that after 24 hours of wakefulness, cognitive function deteriorated to a level equivalent to having a 0.1% blood alcohol level. Additionally, sleepy doctors make 36% more mistakes in the intensive care unit than well-rested physicians.

I went to medical school to be able to provide high quality health care, but it discourages me to see medical professionals falling asleep during surgery, being curt with their patients, and making medical errors all because they are not allowed time to sleep.

Recently, 60% of 4,500 OB/GYN residents surveyed said that the hours they work may compromise the quality of care they give. The people who are delivering babies and performing cancer surgery have said they need fewer hours to perform their job competently, yet the professional association responsible for changing the status quo has done nothing!

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education issued new regulations regarding resident work hours, to go into effect July 1, 2003. These regulations, however, provide for many loopholes that may do little to relieve resident fatigue or improve patient safety. This legislation would provide for greater accountability and enforcement than the ACGME's guidelines. The legislation also calls for public disclosure of hospitals found in violation of resident work hour rules, something not included in the current regulations.

Please contact Jon Luick in Mr. Corzine's at (407) 224-4744 to offer your support or Chris McCoy, the American Medical Student Association Legislative Affairs Director, at 703-620-6600 x211 for more information on the topic of overworked residents. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely

Chris McCoy