

## *PRES Guidelines for Writing Letters*

1. Think carefully about why you are writing the letter. All letters should have a positive purpose. They should never be written just to “let off steam” or to embarrass or humiliate another person or persons.
2. Direct your letter to the appropriate person or persons. In general, if you are trying to influence public opinion, write a letter to the editor of a newspaper in the appropriate region. If you are trying to influence public policy or government action, write to the appropriate politicians or government officials.
3. Research the facts BEFORE you write your letter. If you need help with this, ask someone for assistance or contact our organization.
4. Never include any statements of fact that you cannot verify.
5. It is okay to express your opinions and feelings. That is why you are writing a letter. But these should be based on accurate facts and/or experiences.
6. Check the spelling of the names of people and places & dates if you use them.
7. Don’t be wordy. Keep your sentences and paragraphs relatively short.
8. Use common, everyday language. Where technical terms are necessary, explain them.
9. Don’t try to express too much in one letter. It is better to have one main point and support it well than to have numerous points that are unsupported.
10. Send your letter at the appropriate time. If you are commenting on new legislation, get your input in BEFORE the legislation passes third and final reading. Likewise, it is not helpful to send a brief to government after the deadline for receiving briefs has passed.
11. Don’t make unreasonable requests. For example, it is quite reasonable to ask citizens to vote in the next election. It is not reasonable to ask them to stop driving their cars.
12. Get at least two people to look over your letter before you send it. This usually results in a much better letter!
13. If your letter is directed to an elected body, corporation, or community group, remember to carbon copy your letter to other people, organizations, government and opposition parties which you feel need to be informed about your concerns. Remember to finish this type of letter with a request for a reply such as “*Looking forward to your reply*”.
14. Writing an effective letter takes time and effort but it is well worth it.