

Writing Good Letters to the Editor and Editorials

In addition to seeking articles through press releases and events, there are two more ways to get your message in the newspaper: letters to the editor and editorials.

Letters to the Editor

1. **Respond to an Article.** Letters to the editor can be rebuttals or comments on articles that appeared in the paper. If you are writing in response to an article, send your reply within 24 hours.
2. **Share an Observation.** While many letters are responses to something that appeared in the paper, not all of them are. You can also comment on what is going on in your community and how America Recycles Day relates to your observations.
3. **Keep Your Letter Short.** While letter lengths vary among publications, most are under 250 words and many limit letters to between 50 and 100 words.
4. **Stick to One or Two Points.** Since you do not have much space, stick to one or two key points. A well-crafted and focused letter is more likely to be printed than one that addresses too many points in too little space. See NRC's "How to Respond to Attacks on Recycling in the Media" in the appendices, it contains lots of facts and figures you can use.
5. **Include Your Contact Information.** Include your name, address, and most accessible telephone number in your letter. Some newspapers verify authorship before printing letters.

Editorials

1. **Check the Opinion/Editorial Pages.** Check your local newspapers to see if they run opinion/editorial (op-ed) pieces written by local residents. Some papers do, some do not. If you see locally written op-eds, contact the editor of the editorial page to pitch your op-ed.
2. **Focus Your Message.** If you are invited to submit an editorial, you will have more space than you would get in a letter to the editor (usually 500-800 words), but you still need to focus your message on a few key points to be most effective.
3. **Problems and Solutions.** A common format for op-eds is to outline a problem and then advocate a specific solution.
4. **Localize the Issue.** Just as you do with your press releases, make sure you clearly connect the national America Recycles campaign to local issues, events, statistics, etc.
5. **Request an Editorial Board Meeting.** If you cannot submit an editorial yourself, you can request that the editor of the paper promote recycling in his or her own editorials. Request a meeting with the editor and supply lots of details on the benefits of recycling. Remember to emphasize the local angle!

**LETTER TO THE MEDIA INTRODUCING AMERICA RECYCLES DAY 2008 OR
LETTER ACCOMPANYING A PRESS RELEASE**

(Your organization's name and/or logo go here)
(Date)

Dear *(Media Contact Name)*:

We have an opportunity right here in *(Community Name)* to join millions of people across America to make a difference. With your help, we can enlist an army of our friends and neighbors to join in an effort to preserve our natural resources, protect our environment, make our economy stronger and instill a sense of pride in the community. And who wouldn't want to do that?

November 15 is America Recycles Day, the culmination of hundreds of activities and events around the nation created to draw attention to the importance of recycling and buying recycled products throughout the year. This annual day of commitment to recycling is organized by National Recycling Coalition and volunteer coordinators in every state across the country. The state of *(Your State Name)* is a partner in this year's program and many of our cities and towns are joining us. But the success of the program is not up to government alone, but relies on individual commitment and participation by all of us.

The theme of this year's campaign is *It All Comes Back To You*. The multiple meaning in this theme is clear. By becoming, an active recycler and seeking out and buying recycled products, you realize direct benefits through a cleaner environment and preservation of resources. At the same time, your recycled products and materials may show up back in your home or car or work in the form of brand new products at competitive prices to those made from non-recycled materials. Finally, it is up to each of us to recycle and buy recycled products. It is an activity that delivers benefits every time we participate.

We think this message and its accompanying activities may be of interest to your audience, and we hope you agree. In the next few weeks, we will be sharing additional information with you about America Recycles Day 2008. However, if you would like more information now about local and regional plans, please contact me at *(your phone number)* or at *(your e-mail address)*. I look forward to working with you on this important effort.

If we are successful, it will all come back to us!

Sincerely,

(Your name)
(Your organization's name)

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR AN UPCOMING EVENT

DATE: (Day of Week), (Month), (Day), (Year)
TO: (Name of Reporter/Editor)
(Name of Publication)
FAX: (Fax Number)
FROM: (Your Media Contact Name)
(Your Business Phone Number)

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: (Clearly state the news)
Example: Mayor Jones will announce the launch of America Recycles 2008 and local activities supporting America Recycles Day.

WHO: (List who is speaking and what they will talk about)
Example: Mayor Joe Jones and Jane Smith, President of Citizens For Recycling Excellence. Citizens will be challenged to pledge to recycle and buy recycled products over the next year.

WHEN: (Month) (Day) (Year) at (Hour): (Minutes) (AM or PM)
Example: November 8, 2008 at 8:30 AM

WHERE: (Location name and complete address; include directions if required)
Example: Hilton Hotel, 100 West Main Street, Congressional Room, Mezzanine Floor, corner of Main and Elm Streets.

CONTACT: (Media Contact Name)
Example: Sally Newsworthy
(Phone to call prior to the event)
Example: Phone 123-456-7890 (prior to November 8)
(Phone to call during the event)
Example: Phone 123-456-7899 (during the press event)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Emphasizing the Environmental Angle

Dear Editor,

On November 15, Americans will celebrate America Recycles Day. Recycling is a simple way in which everyone in (*Your State or Community*) can protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation.

When manufacturers make new products out of the materials we recycle, they reduce the water and air pollution normally created and they save energy. For example, it takes 95% less energy to recycle aluminum than it does to make it from raw materials.

Every little bit helps. I invite everyone in (*Your State or Community*) to renew his or her commitment to recycling and buying recycled products this year. Fill out a pledge form at (*insert event name, location, date, time*) or online at www.americarecyclesday.org.

(Your Name)
(Title, Organization)
(City, State)

Emphasizing the Economic Angle

Dear Editor,

On November 15, Americans will celebrate America Recycles Day. Recycling is a simple way in which everyone in (*Your State or Community*) can protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation. According to the National Recycling Coalition, the recycling industry is comparable in size to the auto and truck manufacturing industry. That is a lot of jobs! By recycling, we help keep or create jobs in our communities.

Every little bit helps. I invite everyone in (*Your State or Community*) to renew his or her commitment to recycling and buying recycled products this year. Fill out a pledge form at (*insert event name, location, date, time*) or online at www.americarecyclesday.org.

(Your Name)
(Title, Organization)
(City, State)

Emphasizing Opportunity to Do More

Dear Editor,

On November 15, Americans will celebrate America Recycles Day. Recycling is a simple way in which everyone in (*Your State or Community*) can protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, many easily recycled materials are still thrown away. For example, 78% of glass containers, 60% of aluminum cans, 41% of steel cans, 45% of paper and paperboard containers and packaging are not currently recycled. Demand for these recyclable materials has never been greater and, in many cases, manufacturers are not getting all the recyclables they can use.

Every little bit helps. I invite everyone in (*Your State or Community*) to renew his or her commitment to recycling and buying recycled products this year. Fill out a pledge form at (*insert event name, location, date, time*) or online at www.americarecyclesday.org.

(Your Name)
(Title, Organization)
(City, State)

Emphasizing Buying Recycled Products

Dear Editor,

On November 15, Americans will celebrate America Recycles Day. Recycling is a simple way in which everyone in (*Your State or Community*) can protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation.

Recycling our containers and papers is a great start, but each of us can close the recycling loop by buying recycled products too, at home and at work. When you look at products and the packaging they are in, favor the ones that clearly state on the label how much recycled materials they contain.

Every little bit helps. I invite everyone in (*Your State or Community*) to renew his or her commitment to recycling and buying recycled products this year. Fill out a pledge form at (*insert event name, location, date, time*) or online at www.americarecyclesday.org.

(Your Name)
(Title, Organization)
(City, State)

OPINION-EDITORIAL PIECE

We suggest adding local statistics and information to this op-ed where possible.

On November 15, Americans will celebrate America Recycles Day. Recycling is a simple way in which everyone in (*Your State or Community*) can protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to the economic well-being and security of our nation.

Recycling protects the environment in many ways. When manufacturers make new products out of the materials we recycle, they reduce the water and air pollution normally created by the process. For instance, recycled paper supplies more than 37% of the raw materials used to make new paper products in the U.S. Without recycling, more trees would be cut down.

Recycling also saves energy. For example, it takes 95% less energy to recycle aluminum than it does to make it from raw materials. Making recycled steel saves 60%, recycled newspaper 40%, recycled plastics 70%, and recycled glass 40%. Saving energy and conserving, other natural resources have become issues of national security.

Recycling contributes to our economy as well by creating more jobs than throwing recyclables in the trash. According to the National Recycling Coalition, recycling creates four jobs for every one job created in the waste management and disposal industries. In fact, the recycling industry is comparable in size to the auto and truck manufacturing industry. Recycling creates 1.1 million U.S. jobs, \$236 billion in gross annual sales and \$37 billion in annual payrolls.

When our government agencies invest in local recycling programs, it pays great dividends by creating private sector jobs. For every job collecting recyclables, there are 26 jobs in processing the materials and manufacturing them into new products. By recycling, we help keep these manufacturing jobs in our communities.

Many of us have been recycling for a long time, and it may seem like we are doing all we can. But the reality is quite different. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, many easily recycled materials are still thrown away. For example, 78% of glass containers, 60% of aluminum cans, 41% of steel cans, 45% of paper and paperboard containers and packaging are not currently recycled. And it is not because there is no place for the materials to go. Demand for these recyclable materials has never been greater and, in many cases, manufacturers are not getting all the recyclables they can use.

Please do your part to ensure that we all reap the many benefits of recycling. To renew your commitment to recycling and buying recycled products this year, you can complete a pledge form at (*insert event name, location, date, time*) or online at www.americarecyclesday.org. Every little bit helps, and it all comes back to us.