



Editorial comment

An editorial is a public attempt by a group of editors to sketch a balanced picture or thoughtful perspective on a current political or social issue. They have discussed this among themselves first. They have listed the various interests, compared different approaches and formulated evaluative standards. Next, they put all this in writing, in a special way. They are not prompted by personal interest but by concern for the common good. They don't use strident, polemical language but cool argument. They don't take sides but seek to offer insight by making visible what is essential, so placing events in a framework that the broad lines and the bigger story stand out from the confusing mass of detail.

We don't need to be editors to write editorial comments. In many different situations a balanced view is required, when we write a review report, a newsletter, about the annual assembly, a committee that investigates a certain case, ...

Approach

1. Choose the issue you want to write about. Ask yourself 'why is it important to present a balanced view? Are there new facts or circumstances, or does the abundance of details confuse us, or is it a new phenomenon to which I need to define my position?'
2. Determine the wider context. Ask 'what is the bigger story behind the issue? What is the perspective from which I think I should approach the issue?'
3. Select a number of interpretations and considerations that you want to refer to and which you want to support? Ask, 'about which ones do I want to demonstrate that they amount to rather little?'
4. Determine which of the available facts are crucial. What is it we should not overlook?
5. Compose the main line or your comment. Think of a title or headline that situates the issue in a wider context. Think of images or metaphors.
6. Write the first paragraphs. A useful structure is the following one:
 - § 1: start with an observation or statement that is commonly accepted. Add a few sentences of explanation.
 - § 2: explain why the issue needs to be analysed and considered from a different perspective and what this perspective is.
 - § 3: bring in a concrete example to explain what this perspective is and how it helps to find the right balance in approaching the issue.
7. Ask others to read your text and make comments.
8. Write the final text.

