

## Straight reporting – News Analysis – Opinion pieces – Op-eds – Editorials

### How to understand the difference

To understand the difference between editorials and op-eds, it helps first to understand a thing or two about a newspaper's "voice," and where it comes from.

**Is it that of the publisher and/or what is called an editorial board** - which might include the publisher, one or more editors, and even people from the community at large. They formulate the newspaper's "voice" by agreeing to take **particular stands on particular issues**. Columnists, guest columnists or guest editors may vary and they usually express more personal, diverging views. They may share their expertise (say on history, foreign affairs, science, the economy or demographics) or relate their personal experience etc.

**Editorials** (leaders, leading articles) are written by people on the paper's payroll, make a persuasive case supporting the stand taken, and are typically grounded in moral, ethical, and/or other concerns raised by issue at hand. The best editorials explore the potential ramifications of the issue for their readership, and offer ideas for remedying particularly egregious or dangerous outcomes likely to result if the issue goes unaddressed or is inadequately addressed (the opioid crisis, the separation of families at the border, the threat to the freedom of the press, misinformation, the threat to institutions for example). In the case of The Economist, they are called "**Leaders**".

In addition to voicing its own stands on the editorial page, many newspapers accept submissions from people with particular training or expertise for consideration as **op-eds** on given topics.

**An op-ed piece** derives its name from originally having appeared opposite the editorial page in a newspaper. Today, the term is used more widely to represent a column that represents the strong, informed, and focused opinion of the writer on an issue of relevance to a targeted audience.

Partly, a **column** is defined by where it appears, but it shares some common characteristics

- Typically, it is short, between 750 and 900 words.
- It has a clearly defined point.
- It has a clearly defined point of view.
- It represents clarity of thinking.
- It contains the strong, unique voice of the writer.

While columns and op-ed pieces allow writers to include their own voice and express an opinion, to be successful the columns must be grounded in solid research. (Research involves acquiring facts, quotations, citations, or data from sources and personal observation).

**News analyses** are typically written by a newsroom editor or a pair or team senior writers. They attempt to connect the dots—to put all the facts uncovered by "**straight news**" reporting on a particular topic in one place—and to reach some potential conclusions about what, taken together, they might mean, and/or where the story might be going. While news analysis pieces often appear alongside the "straight" reporting in the paper's news columns, they should always be prominently marked as "**Analysis**" or "**News Analysis**."

The best such pieces, while more subjective than straight reporting since they attempt to draw conclusions, should *not* reflect the writer's personal politics, let alone include accusations or conclusions that cannot be supported by confirmed facts. The only place for that kind of conjecture (in any newspaper worth its salt) is on the Opinion page, whether in an **editorial** or - more often - the work of a columnist.

**Reviews** are opinions about the aesthetics and sensory effects of various diversions; books, art, music, movies, food, wine—written by a reviewer or critic, paid specifically to produce such work, and usually with specialized training in and/or years of experience with the subject.