

Women Speak FOR THEMSELVES

Women Speak for Themselves is a national grassroots movement empowering women to speak **in media, local communities and online**, about how women are disadvantaged respecting dating and marriage, especially because of contraception and abortion, and about how to reconnect sex with marriage and children for the good of all people.

Your goal as a member contributing to media is to offer a perspective that:

1. Is honest, thoughtful, and factually accurate
2. Follows a path your reader can understand
3. Is written in a way that your reader will be attracted to (*ie, uses a tone that meets her where she is*).

We generally help WSFT members publish three types of articles:

1. Op-eds;
2. Narrative stories;
3. Listicles.

Here are a few general writing tips before we show you the typical outlines for all.

Settle on a topic: Do you want to put a fresh perspective on a news item? Do you want to reveal a truth about contraception, or the connection between sex, marriage and kids through a story from your life—or something you observed in someone else’s life? Do you want to present a new fact, or analyze a new scientific study, or provide commentary on a recent political decision that affects women’s freedom? *Once you choose your article’s purpose, don’t waver.*

Start small and specific: If it’s a story, it doesn’t have to be a grand, sweeping narrative summarizing your entire life. If it’s an op-ed, you don’t need to analyze the entire political landscape or go through the history of feminism. *What’s often the most meaningful to readers are the little stories or small observations people might overlook in their own lives.* In other words, don’t stress!

Consider your own boundaries: Writing about sexual ethics and relationships, about health or work - even philosophically - can of course become very personal, so please feel free to be as discreet as you like about personal experiences, change names or identifying characteristics, etc.

Before writing answer the following questions and keep each in mind as you construct your article.

- Who is the audience for this piece (i.e., a secular woman in her 20s considering cohabitation, a perhaps-religious person who is unconvinced about your position on federal funding of birth control, etc?)
- How will your article inspire or help the audience?
- If you wanted the reader to remember one thing or at most three things about your piece, what would you want those things to be?

OP-ED STRUCTURE

1. Introduction: Set up the problem/issue you would like to discuss

What new information are you responding to, or what problem/conflict can you clearly identify for the reader? Explain *what* you are correcting (or what new fact you are offering) and *why* it is relevant now. Give the minimum amount of background, then tell us your position within the first two or three lines of your piece.

2. Takeaways

Write three, four, or more paragraphs (your whole op-ed should be between 700-950 words) that back up your argument.

In the body of the article, you can give more background on your topic, then go into your reasons for your position.

Offer clear details that support each claim. You can use research or compelling personal stories. If you use research, cite your sources.

For a challenge, see if you can find positive (as opposed to negative) facts or arguments to include as well.

3. Conclusion

Summarize what you hope your readers will come away with in two or three succinct lines.

NARRATIVE ARTICLE STRUCTURE

1. Introduction: Lead with a personal story

When writing stories, try to include details to help the reader feel like they were with you in the situation. For example, maybe you start the story with something that was said, or details about the location. Capture the exact moment that leads

to what point you want to make, and include descriptive words that describe your feelings.

2. Set up to problem/issue you would like to discuss

Why are you telling us the story you begin to tell in the intro? What problem/conflict can you clearly identify for the reader? Offer details to explain how this conflict/problem affected your life.

3. Takeaway

What did you learn from this event? Looking back, is there something you wish you had done differently? Is there something you now see that you did well? Or is there something that is still unanswered that we want to explore more? Offer details to clearly explain and help the reader relate to you.

4. Conclusion

Summarize what you have learned from your story, what you hope to do or have done moving forward, and what you hope your readers will come away with.

LISTICLE ARTICLE STRUCTURE

1. Introduction: Set up the problems/issues you would like to discuss

What problem/issue can you clearly identify for the reader? Offer a few lines of background in an introduction before you go into your list.

2. List 3 (or more) “Lessons”

Give each lesson a title in bold. Make sure each new “lesson” is distinct and provides insight into the overall goal of the piece. In each “lesson”, clearly explain your position, and provide appropriate support via either facts (must include citations) or brief personal examples (should be amusing or instructive). Try to make the points flow in a way that helps the reader understand and relate back to your overall purpose.

3. Conclusion

Summarize what you know, and what you hope your readers will come away with.