

**1. Definition:**

A letter to the editor is a business letter written to a newspaper. Most letters are now sent by email.

**2. Purpose and Role of Writer:**

to express an opinion on an issue

**3. Generic Features:**

**a) Structure and Organisation**

- use business letter format if sending by mail
- if emailing use the greeting: *Sir /Madam* or *Dear Sir /Madam*
- introduction outlines the topic and the writer's opinion e.g. *We are living in a new age...*
- body paragraphs develop the argument logically, point by point, including rebuttal
- topic sentences provide clear signposts e.g. *Much of the sickness of western society...*
- conclusion restates opinion, or is a call to action or solution e.g. *It's time we returned to an era...*

**b) Language**

- formal / impersonal e.g. *Elective plastic surgery enables the rich to indulge themselves...*
- vocabulary appropriate to the issue raised
- informative but also forceful and persuasive e.g. *Today it's all about being propped up...*
- use of examples
- use of statistics e.g. *Counselling is one of the biggest growth industries*
- dramatic, emotional, or use of irony to provoke a response from readers
- topic sentences as signposts e.g. *People shell out huge amounts of money...*

**c) Grammar**

- complete and correct sentences and paragraphs
- present or past tense e.g. *So, it's not surprising...*
- first person is acceptable, as is second and third person. Second person (You) or first person plural (We) may be used as a form of persuasion e.g. *It's time we returned...; ...committing yourself to a luxury limo.*
- Hypothetical questions are effective e.g. *Whatever happened to independence and self reliance?*

standard greeting

Sir/Madam

clear opening statement presenting point of view / use of examples / persuasive language / hypothetical question posed to readers

We are living in a new age of *me-ism*, of the self centred *me* generation. Extreme makeovers, personal training and life coaching are just some of the new indulgences of western society. Today it's all about being propped up by a selection of 'professionals' who'll take responsibility for our beauty, health, and emotional well-being. Whatever happened to independence and self reliance?

topic sentence identifies aspect of argument to be discussed

Elective plastic surgery enables the rich to indulge themselves in the beauty myth while average Australians wait in queues for surgery for life threatening medical conditions. The same 'beautiful people' may bake in a solarium as well, and later expect to be treated for the melanomas that may result in being tanned and beautiful.

examples lead back to argument in final clincher sentence

People shell out huge amounts of money for gyms and personal trainers when walking and jogging are free. Gym membership is like paying for a smart car, but personal training is like committing yourself to a luxury limo. And why? Because western society lacks the self discipline, the persistent motivation to go it alone.

Much of the "sickness" of western society is based on abuses that are the products of affluence. In the middle aged it's heart disease and cancer, based on the overindulgence of sedentary lifestyles. Is that why we need counselling? Counselling is the major growth industry in Australia. So it is not surprising that now we have life coaches, who will organise and direct our lives for us. What sort of expectations are we providing for the next generation?

It's time we returned to an era where there was more to life than shopping and other material pursuits. Imagine how the present soft Australian would fare in a national emergency or a state of war. Would s/he have to right outfit to wear? Would s/he cope without a cappuccino or café latte. I doubt it.

Concerned, Brisbane

argument develops from physical "props" to emotional ones.

final paragraph presents a solution and a call to action: uses examples and questions to convince the reader