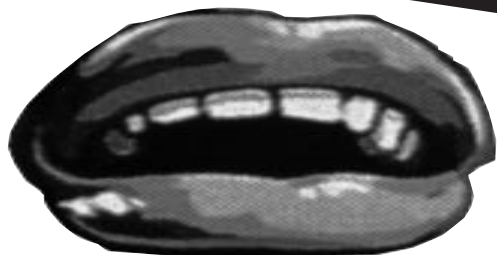


# USING YOUR

# VOICE



# AND

## Tips on Getting Your Point Across

Whether you're meeting with the town council to ask for new traffic lights on Main Street, writing your local paper to raise public awareness on an important issue, or e-mailing the President, here are a few guidelines to help you make your point with authority and precision.

➤ **BE INFORMED**

Know both sides of the issue. The better you know the issue — including the arguments against the cause you're supporting — the more easily you'll be able to "present your platform."

➤ **KNOW WHAT YOU WANT**

Is your goal to inform, persuade and convince, get a commitment, or generate public attention? Sometimes it's a combination of these! A letter to a legislator advances a different goal than an op-ed piece — make sure you understand what you want your audience to do.

➤ **BE CONCISE AND SPECIFIC**

Everyone's time is valuable, from the politician to the copy editor of your local paper. State your points as concisely as you can. If you're writing about legislation, refer to the bill or act by name. Some people find it helpful to prepare an outline or bullet points before writing the actual letter or picking up the phone.

➤ **BE FAIR, POLITE AND POSITIVE**

Harsh criticism will only alienate your reader. While you certainly feel strongly about the issue, make sure your tone is not overly aggressive. If you're contacting an elected official, for example, you may want to thank him or her for specific actions he or she has taken in the past that you agree with.

➤ **HUMANIZE YOUR FACTS**

Make sure your correspondence explains why this issue matters to you. One brief personal anecdote can make for a convincing argument.

➤ **EXPLORE ALL AVENUES**

Remember "lobbying" can also be done with friends, family and acquaintances. One-to-one conversations can sometimes be more effective than an op-ed piece! Don't miss an opportunity to share the facts, and your concerns, about an issue with others who may care. An added bonus: collaborating with other people for change is not only fun, it's effective.

➤ **BE PATIENT AND OPTIMISTIC**

Don't lose hope if a complicated issue takes a while to resolve, or if you don't "win." Most things worth fighting for take time.

Writing a convincing letter is easy as 1-2-3!

1) STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
Here's where you explain what you are writing about and what you want to see changed

2) REASONS FOR YOUR CONCERN  
Here's where you give your personal perspective, supported by a few facts

3) STATEMENT OF DESIRED ACTION  
Here, you explain what you want your reader to do to help bring about change

PREPARED BY THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION. YOU CAN GET THE LATEST INFORMATION — AND TAKE ACTION — ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO YOU AT [HTTP://WWW.ACLU.ORG](http://www.aclu.org) OR AMERICA ONLINE KEYWORD ACLU.