

Guide: Researching Op-Eds

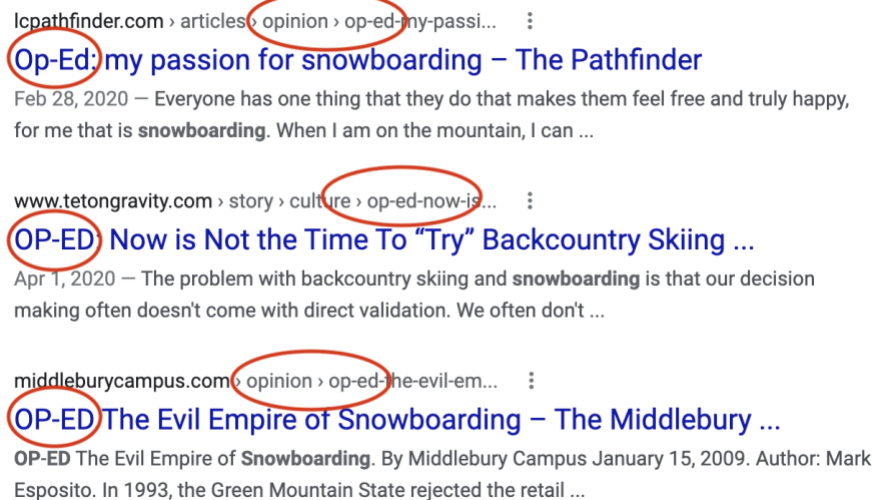
Task: Find 5-6+ opinion pieces written on a community “hot topic” of your choosing.

Assignment Details: The purpose of an opinion piece is to take a stance. In the essay you’ll be writing, you will articulate a distinct viewpoint that attempts to persuade a general reader (not necessarily someone familiar with the community) to listen to, even accept, your view on the matter.

Over the past few weeks, you have defined several potential “hot topic” conversations that are happening in, or about, your community today. Now, in your research, you will collect samples of the perspectives on this topic that are available through published opinion pieces on the internet.

Where to Research: For our current purposes, **Google** will be a good place to start your research.

The simplest search term to use is “op-ed [topic keyword].” For example, if I am interested in the snowboarding community, I might search “op-ed snowboarding” to see what people are writing about. When you do so, your search results will tell you whether a piece is, in fact, an op-ed. See screenshot below, for example:



You can also use [databases](#) from [Snell Library](#), though these may appear more difficult to navigate at first. However, with paywall blocking from major newspapers and magazines, you may find you’ll need to use those databases to view desired articles. You can watch the screencast video below for some instruction on using the databases. *Please note that this screencast was produced for a class last semester, so ignore reference to course-based specifics.*

<https://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/cY6fcJKDJH>

As you research, start narrowing the field. Look for op-eds that respond to the same overarching question or small topic of conversation.

How to Read: While reading your collected op-eds, consider the following:

1. What question is this op-ed trying to answer? Is this the same question as my other sources?
2. What is the perspective of this writer? What side do they take in the debate or conversation?
3. How does this source provide a nuanced perspective that is different from the other sources, either in terms of the argument or evidence?

Taking Notes: When you use a source in your op-ed, it will be for one of two purposes.

1. *Facts:*

When you borrow a fact from a source, whether it be a piece of information, reference to a study, a statistic, or some other type of concrete knowledge, you will need to *paraphrase in your own words or quote directly* this information appropriately and cite where this information comes from. A citation can take the form of a parenthetical reference (Author Last Name) or a [hyperlink](#). Take notes on useful facts that you might use in your op-ed, and keep track of the sources from which each fact appears.

2. *Opinions:*

When you engage an opinion from another writer, you will want to *paraphrase in your own words or quote directly* the writer's claim. While reading, record exact quotations *as well as* your own paraphrase of the ideas and a record of why you feel the opinion is helpful to shaping your own view. The more extensive your note-taking at the beginning, the easier your writing will be later.