

New Mandala's op-ed writing tips

- Articles **should be 500 to 800 words.**
- Have a clear argument or point you want to make (and only make up to two points in your article).
- Before you write, think about your audience. *New Mandala* is read by academics as well as policymakers, politicians, government officials, professionals, journalists, students and the general public in both the English and non-English speaking world. This means you shouldn't write like an insider appealing to a narrow interest group.
- You must communicate in accessible way. Avoid jargon that is particular to a specific academic discipline and spell out [acronyms and initialisms](#) in the first instance. Use language that draws your reader in rather than pushes them away.
- It should be clear from the opening paragraph what your article is about; use anecdote, metaphor or current events to grab readers' attention from the outset.
- To help ensure clarity and brevity, think in headlines, tweets or how you would explain the issue to an intelligent 13-year-old (or a slightly inebriated friend at a dinner party).
- Make your point/s with good writing that captures the reader's attention. That means short, sharp, sentences and pithy prose. Choose your words carefully and make sure they convey as much as possible. Verbosity doesn't make you seem smart... quite the opposite.
- Think about your argument; make sure it is clearly expressed and that you are the best person to express it. Ask yourself – why should we care about this? The answer is often the basis for a good op-ed.
- We just don't want your expertise. We want to know what you really think. That means telling us your opinion and letting your personality come through in your writing. *New Mandala* aims to inspire discussion and debate; that means your article should be the start of a conversation, not the final word.
- Be engaging – a dry, academic, cautious and passive style is unlikely to get the attention of our readers... or editors!
- Avoid formality. Write in a personal tone, and as you would speak. But don't be crass.
- No references; we prefer in-text hyperlinks (to open access sources) and avoid footnotes and endnotes.
- Before sending a submission have a look at our website to gauge what we have already published, and the style and tone of our pieces.
- *New Mandala* is a place for new perspectives on Southeast Asia – that means that we are less inclined to publish articles on topics that have already been well covered. Ask if your piece would be better suited as a comment on one of our published articles.
- On the other hand, we do welcome novel insights and takes on old subjects.

- Include a few biographical lines at the end of your article, so our readers and we know who you are and what your expertise is. Attach a head-and-shoulders colour photo to your submission.
- You can send or suggest photos to accompany your article that you have the rights to, or which are licensed under creative commons. A picture speaks a thousand words – so we prefer visually engaging and captivating images.
- Our editors will determine the headline and stand first (blurb) for your article – though you can suggest some options as well.
- Any questions? Email the editor (james.giggacher@anu.edu.au)