**Don't get drawn into an interview unwillingly:** Before starting an interview ask the reporter what the focus of the story is, who else is being interviewed, and the type of questions you are going to be asked. Then negotiate an interview time which gives you at least 30 minutes to prepare.

**Know who you are speaking to:** Note down the journalist's name, the newspaper/agency, and a contact telephone number.

**Respect journalists' deadlines:** Journalists work to deadlines, and they rely on having stories ready very quickly. It is very important to return their phone calls and keep to the deadline the journalist gives.

**Respect all media outlets:** It's best to treat all interviews with the same degree of respect and preparation, as you never know where the story might get picked up elsewhere. The small local papers may also be the best at reaching your audience.

**Preparation is key:**

* Identify a couple of key simple messages you want to get across.
* Rehearse the sentences and answers you want to give. Journalists look for snappy soundbites, so if you can prepare a couple of these in advance that will help in the interview.
* Make sure you have all the information at hand and won't be interrupted when the phone rings.

**Use everyday language:** Avoid jargon, specialist, or highbrow language. Don't say 'equilibrium', when 'balance' is just as effective. Don't use acronyms or abbreviations that the reader won't understand.

**Avoid 'off the record' comments:** Even if you know and trust the reporter, he/she is aiming to get the best story. Don't say anything you wouldn't want to see in print.

**Accept that you can't control what is written:** Once the interview is over, accept that it is out of your hands. Keep in mind that the reporter you have spoken to will not write the headline, the sub- editor of the publication will do this.

**Keep in touch with the reporter/publication after the story has gone out:** Let the reporter know the next time you have some newsworthy work. By becoming a reporter's contact, next time a story breaks relating to your area of expertise, you will be their first point of call.

Letters to the editor (LTEs) provide a powerful tool to educate the public and influence decision makers. Letters are printed on the editorial page, which is one of the most read pages in any newspaper. Even if your letter is not published, it helps to educate the editors and can influence what types of stories get covered. An LTE is a wonderful and free way to share information about the Solarize campaign to whole communities, especially helpful when new solar owners write the letters to tell why they went solar.

Here are some tips to help you write an effective letter and get it printed.

1. **Respond to an article in the paper.** Your letter will have a greater chance of being printed if it is in response to an editorial, op-ed, or front page story that has run in the paper. Begin your letter

by citing the original story by name, date, and author. Responding about a story on energy is a great way to also include the fact that you have recently installed solar on your home or business

and then to mention why you made that decision.

2. **Consider your neighborhood paper**. It’s great to get a letter printed in the large regional papers

– and a bit of a challenge. Don’t forget your neighborhood papers. They’re almost always looking for fresh material.

3. **Follow the paper’s directions**. Information on how and to whom to submit a letter to the editor is usually found on the letters page in the paper. This often includes guidelines on what the paper looks for in LTEs. Follow these guidelines. If you can’t find the information you need, call the paper and ask how to submit a letter. Often you can submit letters by e-mail or on the paper’s website.

4. **Be concise. Be focused. Be brief**. Keep your letters to less than 200 words. Aim for 150. Get to the main point in the first two sentences. Stay positive if you can, and avoid sarcasm. Editors are more likely to publish a letter that has local relevance. Use facts and statistics as well as personal stories. Mention the names of elected officials and urge readers to let officials know their views.

5. **Be timely**. Respond to an article within three days of its publication.

6. **Write the letter in your own words**. Editors want letters to be original and from local readers.

Take the time to write the letter in your own words. Don’t submit your letter to more than one paper at the same time. If you submit it to one paper, give them a week to publish it. If they don’t, then you can submit it to another paper.

7. **Include your contact information**. Be sure to include your name, mailing address, and daytime phone number. The paper will contact you before printing your letter.

8. **Follow up with the paper**. You greatly increase the likelihood of your letter getting published by calling the letters editor, if you haven’t heard from the paper within 48 hours. Confirm that the editor has received your letter, and ask politely when they’re planning to print it. (This won’t

work with the big papers.)