



## A Student Tool for Webquests

### **How to Write a Comment/Advocacy Letter**

By [MediaWatch](#). Adapted with permission

1. Write as soon as possible - The information will be fresh in your mind and you will be taking advantage of the energy from your initial reaction. Encourage friends and family to write also.
2. Direct your letter to the appropriate contact. Go to [Voice Your Opinions](#) for lists of major networks, classification boards, video game manufacturers, government bodies, and standards councils).
3. Identify yourself - Name, address, city, province, postal code, phone number.
4. Identify the medium and format - i.e. for a TV commercial: when you saw it and on which station; or for a magazine article: which issue, journalist and page. For printed material, include a copy if possible.
5. Write persuasively - Think of your objection letter as a negotiation in which you are trying to sway the reader to be open to your point of view. Ultimately, you want the reader to respect your view and take action.
6. Criticize constructively - Focus criticism on the issue, not the organization or individual, and be specific about what you find offensive and why.
7. Give praise where it's due - If you can find something positive to say about the service or product, the presentation of which you are objecting to, please add these details; the reader is more likely to be receptive to your criticism.
8. Be clear - Explain your position in a clear and concise manner and try not to assume that the reader observes the same negative aspects that you do. Some say that handwritten letters carry more weight than typed ones because they have a personal touch. Whichever method you are comfortable using, personalize your letter whenever possible.
9. Suggest alternatives - If you can think of an alternative image or reference that you would find acceptable, describe it. Some media producers are genuinely unaware of the issues we deal with, and appreciate positive and specific suggestions.
10. Remind the recipient of what's at stake - You, your family and friends are an important market that the advertiser or broadcaster wants to reach. If you are considering a boycott of the station or product involved, mention it in your letter.
11. Ask for a response - Follow up with another letter or phone call if necessary.
12. Copy and circulate - Ask yourself who else might be interested, i.e school board, retail store, trade union, professional association, MP, MLA or community group.
13. Pat yourself on the back. You have taken an important action as a responsible member of your community.