**Expert Advice Column**

**Definition:**

Sometimes called a "Dear Abby" section in the newspaper, an advice column provides the objectivity of an expert in viewing common questions, problems or situations of the public. Initiated by letters, the expert provides advice in the form of a published response.

Advice columns serve the following purposes:

- Answer specific questions; provide insight or solutions to problems or situations
- Delve into implied issues/topics beyond the question, problem or situation
- Provide sound advice and practical solutions
- Reference any applicable resources

**Features/Elements:**

- Focuses on relevant and real topics and advice
- Uses conversational tone
- Directs responses toward writer of original letter as well as general audience
- Acknowledges and validates writer’s question/situation
- Provides qualification of possible discrepancies in understanding of question/situation
- Provides analysis, advice and/or solutions
- Places responsibility for action on the writer
- Maintains a reasonably economic length
- Cites all sources used in compiling the response and any that may be helpful to the letter writer

**How to write an effective expert advice column:**

- Respond to letters relevant to a general audience
- Research background information on question/situation as well as solution/advice
- Rephrase the question to show your understanding/interpretation
- Provide general commentary on the question/situation
- Propose solutions and explain any implications they may have
- Cite all sources

**Sources:**

Writing Tips: [http://www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/bhs/bryan/bryan_advice.html](http://www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/bhs/bryan/bryan_advice.html)
Expert Advice Column Rubric

6  The responses are focused and relevant and answers specific questions. The column clearly and succinctly states insight, commentary and/or suggests a solution, providing accurate and compelling support. Organization is logical, with effective transitions. Language use is concise and fluent, with well-controlled sentences, clear and effective ideas and precise word choice. Writing style is very persuasive. While there may be a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, an outstanding command of language is apparent.

5  The responses are focused and relevant and answer specific questions. Solutions are stated that are clear and fairly concise, providing moderate and relevant support. Some insight, commentary or suggestions are provided. Organization is unified, coherent and transitions are used. Sentences are almost always well-controlled, expression of ideas is usually clear, and word choice is often precise and appropriate. Writing style is persuasive. While there may be a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, a good command of language is apparent.

4  The responses and/or questions are somewhat focused and relevant. An opinion is stated that is not completely clear and/or concise, providing little support. Insight, commentary or suggestions are generally lacking. Organization is generally clear. Sentences are usually well-controlled, expression of ideas is usually clear, and word choice is appropriate. Writing style is not very persuasive. A competency with language is apparent even though there may be some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

3  The responses and/or questions are somewhat focused but lack relevancy. An opinion is stated that is unclear with minimal or irrelevant support. Organization is clear enough to follow without difficulty. Sentences are usually well-controlled, expression of ideas is awkward at times or unclear, and word choice may be inaccurate or inappropriate. Writing style is not persuasive. A basic control of language is apparent even though there may be frequent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

2  The column shows significant problems in one or more areas. The subject lacks focus and relevancy. An opinion is stated that is unclear with minimal or irrelevant support. Organization may not be clear enough, making the writer’s ideas difficult to follow. Sentences and expression of ideas may often be awkward or unclear, and word choice may often be inaccurate or inappropriate for the audience. Numerous errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics demonstrate poor control of language and may at times impede understanding.

1  The column has severe problems in one or more areas. The subject is unfocused or irrelevant. The writer may not offer an opinion or provide support. Problems with organization and lack of focus make the column very difficult to follow. Sentences seldom convey meaning clearly, expression of ideas may be very unclear and confusing, and word choice may be inaccurate or inappropriate. Severe problems with grammar, usage, or mechanics demonstrate very poor control of language and may significantly impede understanding.

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