**Suggestions for letter writers**

The Fresno Bee

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The Fresno Bee has been reflecting, if not contributing to, the increasing dumbing-down of our society by printing letters full of name-calling and personal attacks. Here are a few suggestions for The Bee; convey these guidelines to your letter-writers and reject letters that fail to conform.

No name-calling and personal insults ("idiot," "ignorant," "blabbering nonsense," "get off your high horse"; all these in a single recent letter).

If you disagree with others, either critique their reasoning (first summarize it before refuting it), or refute their facts. If the latter, mention the source of your own facts so as to appear more credible than the person you are criticizing.

Tell someone they are wrong by showing they are wrong. If you disagree with a viewpoint, present stronger arguments or better documentable facts; there is no need to put them down. A personal put-down only makes them defensive and closed to your viewpoint.

Offer new insights. No emotional outbursts; if tempted, consider seeking help in anger management.

These guidelines may reduce the number of printed letters, but that will be the triumph of quality over quantity. The Bee's readers deserve more than the printed version of the "Jerry Springer Show."

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