



Writing Contest



An essay contest to enhance writing skills of students
and encourage healthy competition in academics
Contest Support provided by the University of Texas at Tyler School of Education and Psychology

Contest Rules

(Revised August 2018)

1. A writing prompt is provided by e-mail to contacts for registered groups.
2. **Preferred length of essay is 250 WORDS.** The word count should be indicated on the cover page. **Grace is given up to 300 words in length. IF greater than 300 words it will not be judged,** but will be displayed.
3. Writing must be done under the supervision of a teacher during one class period, not to exceed 60 minutes.
4. Entries shall be written by the student without assistance from anyone and judged holistically as first draft writing, at the campus level.
5. Each **CAMPUS** may submit **three** entries per **grade level** of 4th through 12th grades.
6. The prompt may be given to the participating students the day before the writing is to occur for them to begin thinking and doing any necessary research about what they would like to write. Teachers may **not** conduct any prewriting activities with students directly related to the prompt. Students are not permitted to use any notes or writings completed prior to the writing period.
7. After the top three papers in each grade level have been selected, they may be returned to the students for editing. The **student** may edit his/her paper for errors in mechanics and usage. **No major revision of the paper will be allowed.** The editing will take place under the teacher's supervision.
8. Typewritten essays are **preferred**, but handwritten work will be accepted without penalty for using that type of format. Typewritten essays should be in a standard Times New Roman or Arial size 12 font.
9. Essays should be double-spaced for ease of reading.
10. Essays should be hand-written or printed on only one side of the paper.
11. A cover page (Template provided on the Writing page) should include the following information and be stapled to the top of the essay.
 - Name of Student
 - Grade of Student
 - School Attended (For home-schooled students, list name used for school registration.)
 - School District if a public school, or School Designation (private, home school)
 - Word Count
 - Teacher Signature
12. **Two complete (including Cover Page), clean stapled copies of each of the top three entries from EACH GRADE LEVEL (4th through 12th) from each CAMPUS** should be submitted to Academic Rodeo for judging. **Do not** submit rough drafts, illustrations, or any pre-writing activities. The essays should be free of teacher comments or grades.
13. The two copies of the essay should be brought or mailed to the Academic Rodeo Office to arrive by the deadline. **DO NOT** attempt to e-mail the essays. Academic Rodeo will **NOT** print essays that are e-mailed.

14. Score sheets available to teachers are a tool for the teacher in preparing students for writing and helping the student understand how the essay will be scored. These should **NOT** be submitted with the essay.
15. Results will be posted by the deadline listed in the Writing Timeline & Checklist. The winners will be notified through the participating school.

Evaluation Guidelines

Each essay will be evaluated using the following criteria. (See score sheet provided with the writing prompt for specific criteria.)

- Adherence to topic
- Use of vivid detail and descriptive words, etc.
- Use of supportive details, etc.
- Language appropriate to audience – The audience is made up of teachers and other adults.
- Effective paper organization
- Clarity of expression – appropriate sentence structure and vocabulary
- Creativity – originality of idea and expression
- Mechanics – overall usage, spelling, punctuation, etc.

Awards

1st, 2nd, and 3rd places are awarded in each grade level. Elementary winners receive cash awards. Middle School and High School winners are eligible to apply for Academic Rodeo Scholarships. Students who do not place receive a Participation Ribbon.

Tips for Working with Your Students

REMEMBER . . .

Primary communication with Coaches and Sponsors is done through e-mail provided with the School/Group Registration done online. If a coach or sponsor is not receiving e-mail information about the contest, he or she should check Spam/Junk folders on the computer and contact Academic Rodeo for assistance with getting the current information.

Deadlines exist for a reason. Please be aware of them and follow them. The **Academic Rodeo Calendar** in a true calendar format is on the Getting Started and General Info pages. **The Writing Contest Timeline & Checklist** is on the Writing page and gives more detailed information. If you have a problem with a date or deadline, please contact Academic Rodeo, realizing that usually it is not possible to make a change or give “grace” for deadlines. Often judging or other timings are scheduled close to the due date. To be sure your students get to participate, follow the deadlines.

Please read the General Info for All Coaches and Sponsors.

The following tips and suggestions may be helpful to you in working with your students.

- You should receive the Writing Prompt by e-mail no later than the date indicated on the Writing Contest Timeline **if** your school/group has registered with Academic Rodeo. Check your Junk Mail folder and/or contact Academic Rodeo immediately if you do not receive the prompt.
- Provide the student with the scoring rubric when you announce the topic to help them understand how the essay will be judged.
- Please remember to submit 2 **complete copies** of each essay. One copy goes to the judges. The other copy remains with Academic Rodeo as a back-up if needed and to be displayed in the Academic Rodeo display.
- Do not submit rough drafts, illustrations, etc.
- Remind students that appearance is important in the evaluation of the essay. Essays with marked out words do not leave a good impression.
- Also, remind students that font size has been given. Efforts to make an essay appear longer by using a large font do not enhance the judging of the essay.
- When an essay appears to be approaching the 300 grace limit, word count **IS** done and essays exceeding 300 words are NOT sent for judging.