



# 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 July 2021

1. A writing prompt is provided by e-mail to contacts for registered groups. The prompt is different each year.
2. **Preferred length of essay is 250 WORDS.** The word count should be indicated on the cover page. Because it may be difficult to end a thought, **grace is given up to 300 words in length. IF essay 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 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 one of the following fonts for consistency: Arial, Calibri, Garamond, Times New Roman **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 – PLEASE use!**) 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. Do NOT write student's full name on any additional pages of the essay. In the top right corner, write grade, initials and page number in case pages become separated. Example: 4<sup>th</sup> – BR, page 2
13. **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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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**

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.