

Essay Contest Rules 2019-2020

Topic: “Is Optimism the Key to Achieving the Dreams you iMagine?”

Purpose

This contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people room to develop their own views around a central idea. In addition to the opportunity for written expression, participants have the chance to win a college scholarship!

How to Enter

Interested students should mail or email essays on the assigned topic to the DMSB Club Contest Chairperson: Janis LaVigne, 571 Willowspring Dr S, Encinitas, CA 92024 (janis@lavigne.com). Entries must be emailed or postmarked on or before midnight **January 31, 2020**. Include a completed application form and proof of age (copy of passport or birth certificate). Direct any questions to 760-753-2389 or janis@lavigne.com.

Eligibility Criteria

The contest is open to students under age 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Contest year (October 1 – September 30) and is not enrolled as a degree seeking student of a post-secondary institution. U.S. students attending school on a military installation outside the United States are eligible to enter in their last U.S. home of record. The District Chair will receive all entries from students living on U.S. military installations and send them to a Club in the city where the student last resided. If no Club is available, the District Chair will hold an At-Large contest for these students. An At-Large student may not have competed in an Optimist International or District contest in the same year. Students residing in non-Districted areas where there are no Optimist Clubs are not eligible for competition.

Length

700-800 words (Title, footnotes and bibliography are not included in the final word count). Hyphenated words count as one (1) word. Words are to be counted manually.

Judging Deadlines

The deadline for students to submit essays to the Club Contest Chairperson is **January 31, 2020**. Please contact your District Chair for more information. The deadline for Clubs to submit their winning essay to the District Chair is **February 28**. Club Contest entrants will be notified of their status between March 1 and March 15. District entries are judged and submitted to the Optimist International Programs Department no later than **April 15, 2020**. District winners will be notified by a letter from OI between April 15 and June 1.

Judging the Essays

Entries will be judged by three qualified judges who are not acquainted with the writers of the essays. Judges will have expertise in creative writing. Each entry will be assigned a number by the Essay Contest Chair. The assigned number will be placed on the title page and page 1 of the essay. The title page will then be detached and retained by the Essay Contest Chair. The judges will be given the essays bearing only the assigned numbers. Judges will not compare scores or comments on the essays being judged. Contest Chairs cannot change the judges' scores or deductions!

Official Rules

Each contestant must be given a copy of the rules and must complete the entry form. The rules contain information about the contest, judging and awards.

Section I - General Rules

1. The Optimist International Essay Contest is divided into two levels of competition: Club and District.
2. Contestants must enter through a local Optimist Club or an at-large contest if a local Club is not available. An At-Large student may not have competed in an Optimist International or District contest in the same year.
3. Contestants must compose an original essay with limited guidance from others. Webster's Dictionary defines an essay as an analytic or interpretive literary composition. Works of fiction or poetry will not be accepted.
4. All District-level contests must have a minimum of 3 contestants participating.
5. Optimist International will have the right to edit, publish or otherwise duplicate any essay entered into the contest without payment to the author.

Section II - Qualifications for Contestants

1. The contest is open to students under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Contest Year (October 1 – September 30) and is not enrolled as a degree seeking student of a post-secondary institution. Students must enter in the District in which they reside. U.S. students attending school on a military installation outside the United States are eligible to enter in their last home of record. Students residing in non-Districted areas where there are no Optimist Clubs are not eligible for competition.
2. Contestants are eligible for only one Club's essay contest during any given year. (October 1st - September 30th).
3. No individual having previously won a District Essay scholarship will be eligible to compete at any level of the competition again.
4. All contestants at each level of the contest must provide age and identification from their birth certificate or passport before participating. A copy of the document is only needed for District winners.

Section III - Contest Rules

1. Participants must write on the official contest topic.
2. Each entry must begin with a title page containing: topic, number of words, writer's name, address, phone number, name of school and date of birth.
3. At the top of page 1 should be the official topic and the number of words (penalty of 2 points for lack of topic and 5 points for failure to identify the total number of words correctly).
4. Essays must be type-written and double-spaced. (Deduction of 5 points)
5. Essays must contain at least 700 words but no more than 800 words. Every word of the essay is counted. This does not include the title, bibliography or footnotes. Hyphenated words count as one (1) word. (Deduction of 5 points for each 25 words over/under limit – French Essays will allow 50 words over/under limit for the deduction in scoring). Words are to be counted manually.
6. Each page of the essay must be numbered starting with page 1, not the title page. The numbers must be centered at the bottom of each page.

7. Any quotations or copyrighted material used in the essay must be identified properly. For example, use of a specific writer's format (such as MLA) may be specified by the instructor overseeing the contest. Failure to identify non-original material will result in disqualification.
8. No reference can be made in the essay that identifies the student, parents, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. (Deduction of 5 points or fraction based on degree of identification)
9. An essay may be written in either English, French or Spanish if the language used is an official language of the country in which the sponsoring Club is located.
10. The entry must be stapled together in the upper left-hand corner. Covers of any type are not accepted.

Section IV – Judging

1. Judging will be completed by a panel of three qualified judges who are not acquainted with the contestants. At the Club level, judges may be Optimist Members. At the District level, judges must be non-Optimists. (Friends of Optimists are excluded and can be used as judges).
2. In an effort to conceal the identity of each contestant, each entry will be assigned a number by the Essay Contest Chair. The assigned number will be placed on the title page and page 1 of the essay. The title page will then be detached and retained by the Essay Contest Chair. The judges will be given the essays bearing only the assigned numbers.
3. Judges will not discuss or compare essay being judged.
4. Only judges can assign a penalty or award points.

Section V – Scoring of Contest

Scoring procedures at all levels of the contest will be identical.

1. Material Organization (Logical interpretation of the subject, adherence to topic): 30 points
2. Creativity – 10 points
3. Vocabulary and Style (Phrasing and continuity): 30 points
4. Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling: 20 points
5. Neatness: 5 points
6. Adherence to contest rules (prepared in the proper format): 5 points

Section VI – Penalties

1. Failure to list official topic: 2 points
2. Failure to accurately identify total number of words: 5 points
3. Failure to type essay and double-space: 5 points
4. Failure to stay within the 700-800 word limit: 5 points for each 25 words over/under limit. French essays will allow 50 words over/under for deduction. Words are to be counted manually.
5. Self-identification: 5 points or fraction based on degree

Section VII - Awards

1. Club level
 - a. 1st Place – \$250, medallion, advancement to District level
 - b. 2nd Place – \$150, medallion
 - c. 3rd Place – \$100, medallion
2. District level - plaque and a \$2,500 college scholarship for the first-place winner
 - a. Scholarships are paid through the Optimist International Foundations in the United States and Caribbean and the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation in Canada.
 - b. Scholarships awarded are for use only at a college, university, or trade school.

- c. All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International.
- d. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International.
- e. Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.

For more information contact:

Club Contact Person: Don LaVigne

Club Contact Address: 571 Willowspring Dr S, Encinitas, CA 92024

Club Contact Phone or Email: don@lavigne.com 760.753.2389