



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 contestants under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 – September 30) **and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent, including CEGEP students in Québec, Canada.** There is no minimum age. 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.

Application for 2020-2021 Optimist International Essay Contest Due 11/13/2020

Name _____ M F
 Address _____
 City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____
 Telephone () _____
 E-mail _____
 Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____ Age _____

Have you participated in any other Optimist Club's Essay Contest this school year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contestant Agreement:

I have studied the rules of the contest, and I will be bound by all of the requirements.

Contestant's Signature _____ Date _____ / _____ / _____

Parent or Guardian Permission:

I give my permission for my child/ward to participate in this contest.

Signature _____ Date _____ / _____ / _____
 Relationship _____
 I, _____ grant the Optimist Club/International my permission to use a picture or video of my son/daughter _____ for their public relations purposes. Optimist Club/International may use the photo in any publication they see fit.
 Sponsoring Optimist Club Name _____ Sussex County Optimist Club, Delaware
 Sponsoring Optimist Club Number _____ 33353 Email: sussexoptimist@gmail.com

Language: ☐ English ☐ French

Please send application to address below:

Official Topic: "Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism"

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3. Contestants must compose an original essay with limited guidance from others. Webster's dictionary defines an essay as an analytic or interpretative literary composition. Works of fiction or poetry will not be accepted.
4. All District-level competitions 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 contestants under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 - September 30) and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent, including CEGEP students in Québec, Canada. There is no minimum age. Students must enter in the District in which they reside. U.S. students attending school on military installations outside the U.S. are eligible to enter in their last home of record.
2. Contestants are eligible for only one Club's contest during any given year.
3. No student who has previously won a District Optimist Essay contest scholarship will be

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 and Timing

1. Judging will be completed by a panel of three qualified judges. At the Club level, judges may be Optimist Members, who are not acquainted with the contestants. At the District level, judges must be non-Optimists.
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 essay bearing only the assigned number.
3. Judges will not discuss or compare essays being judged.
4. Only judges can assign a penalty or award points.

Section V - Scoring

- 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
 3. Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling: 20 points
 4. Neatness: 5 points
 5. 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 or fraction based on degree of identification.
5. Self-identification: 5 points or fraction of based on degree of identification

Section VII - Awards

1. Club level - medalion
2. District level - plaque and a \$2,500 college scholarship for the first-place winner
- A. Scholarships are funded by the Optimist International Foundation in the U.S. and Caribbean or the Canadian Children's Foundation in Canada. Scholarships awarded are for use at a college, university or trade school only.
- B. All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International.
- C. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International.
- D. Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.

For more information contact:

Contact Person: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone or Email: _____



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

Only Optimist International awards obtained from Shumsky or Ansell are to be given at all Club and District level contests.

1. Club level - medallion

Clubs are allowed to give monetary awards of up to \$500 per winner for the Essay contest in addition to the official medallions. The Club level awards may be given in the form of a scholarship, savings bond or cash prize but are completely discretionary.

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.



Optimist Club of Sussex County

Talking Points for the Optimist Essay Contest SY 2020-2021

1. The essay contest is open to all students **under the age of 19** as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Contest year (October 1 – September 30).
2. The topic this year is: **"Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism"**
3. Essays must contain at least 700 words but less than 800 words. Title, footnotes and bibliography are not included in the final word count. Hyphenated words count as one (1) word. Essays should be run through a plagiarism checker at the local school before being forwarded to the next level. (See rules for specifics)
4. All contestants and their parent/guardians must complete the application for 2020-2021 Optimist International Essay Contest and sign and date where designated. Award winners are required to submit a copy of their birth certificate or passport with their winning entry. (See #9 below)
5. Essay contest rules must be read thoroughly and followed. **Section V and VI** share the scoring of the contest and penalties.
6. **Each school may submit only the best 10 entries for the contest and the deadline for entries to the school representative is November 13th, 2020.** The school representative will then make **three copies of each essay packet, single page-no backing of pages**, and the Optimist representative will pick up the original essay packet(only 10 entries) and the three (3) copies between **November 16th-November 18th, 2020**. Copied essays should have no mention of the student name or school. All copies of student papers and application must be **singled sided only**.
7. Three judges will review the essays based on a rubric provided by Optimist International and will score accordingly. The essay chairperson will then tally all scores and determine the winners. Only the essay chairperson will know the results. Contestants may not review the rubrics of the judges.
8. The Optimist Club of Sussex County will award \$500 for first place, \$250 for second place, and \$125 for third place. **The three winners will then be announced by the end of January 2021 and the student and schools will be contacted to present awards.** At this time, there is no award dinner planned.
9. The first-place winner will have their essay forwarded to the District level for judging (February 2021). The District contest winner will receive a \$2500.00 scholarship. The school will need to secure any additional student information necessary so that a completed packet may be forwarded to the District Level. An Optimist member will contact the school representative and the winner to secure the signatures, contestant information and copy of birth certificate or passport. The District Level winner will be notified in June 2021 by the Optimist District Award Committee.