

Essay Contest Rubric

1. Thesis or Introduction

20 Points: Excellent – Directly addresses prompt or question, clear, coherent, & focused; includes a counter-claim and a strong hook.

15 Points: Good – Addresses the prompt or question with a generally clear and coherent thesis, but is less focused, or includes a counter-claim that is underdeveloped or only briefly mentioned.

10 Points: Satisfactory – Partially addresses the prompt or question; lacks clarity, coherence, or focus; counter-claim is either absent or so vague it doesn't set up meaningful rebuttal.

5 Points: Unsatisfactory – Does not address the prompt or question; thesis is weak, unclear, or unfocused, and no counter-claim present.

2. Well-Written

20 Points: Excellent use of grammar and syntax such as word order, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; well-constructed, clear and concise sentences; logically organized and focused paragraphs.

15 Points: Good use of grammar and syntax such as word order, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; mostly well-constructed, clear and concise sentences; mostly logically organized and focused paragraphs.

10 Points: Satisfactory use of grammar and syntax such as word order, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; or sentences are not well-constructed, clear or concise; or paragraphs aren't logically organized or focused.

5 Points: Unsatisfactory/poor use of grammar and syntax such as word order, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; and poorly written sentences; and unorganized and unfocused paragraphs.

3. Originality & Creativity

20 Points: Excellent – Original, interesting and very engaging; creative and/or novel presentation of topic.

15 Points: Good – Fairly interesting and engaging; shows some originality and creativity in presentation of topic.

10 Points: Satisfactory – Ordinary/routine presentation.

5 Points: Unsatisfactory – Uninteresting.

4. Research & Factual Accuracy

20 Points: Excellent – Includes a works-cited list and in-text citations (direct attributions or parenthetical citations); thorough and relevant research supports the thesis; all facts are accurate.

15 Points: Good – Includes a works-cited list and in-text citations (direct attributions or parenthetical citations); research supports the thesis; all major facts are accurate.

10 Points: Satisfactory – Includes a works-cited list but not in-text citations, insufficient research to support the thesis, or research is not directly tied to the thesis. Most facts are accurate.

5 Points: Unsatisfactory – Includes neither a works-cited list nor in-text citations; insufficient research to support the thesis, and/or includes significant factual errors.

0 Points: Missing – Includes neither a works-cited list nor in-text citations; relies on assertion rather than evidence, or sources appear fabricated.

5. Depth of Understanding

20 Points: Excellent – fully addresses prompt or question; demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the topic; conclusion aligns with thesis.

15 Points: Good – directly addresses prompt or question; demonstrates substantial knowledge of the topic; conclusion aligns with thesis.

10 Points: Satisfactory – addresses prompt; goes beyond a superficial explanation; conclusion indirectly aligns with thesis.

5 Points: Unsatisfactory – does not address prompt or question; demonstrates only a superficial understanding of the topic.

0 Points: Demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the topic.