2025 K12 Writing Competition Official Rules

OFFICIAL RULES

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN.

BY PARTICIPATING IN THE STRIDE, INC. K12 WRITING COMPETITION ("COMPETITION"), EACH ENTRANT REPRESENTS AND WARRANTS THAT THEY MEET THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS DETAILED WITHIN THESE OFFICIAL RULES AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT FAILURE TO MEET ALL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS WILL RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION. ENTRY CONSTITUTES YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THESE OFFICIAL RULES. ALL ENTRIES (INCLUDING DOCUMENTS) AND REQUESTS BECOME THE PROPERTY OF STRIDE, INC. (THE "SPONSOR") AND WILL NOT BE RETURNED OR ACKNOWLEDGED.

Competition begins at 9 AM Eastern Time (ET) on October 13, 2025, and ends at 5 PM (ET) on January 20, 2026 ("Competition Entry Period").

ELIGIBILITY: Competition is open to legal residents of the 50 United States or the District of Columbia. Contestants must be enrolled in grades K–12 at time of entry ("Entrant" or "You"). Entrant must reside in the U.S. at the time of their entry to be eligible for the Competition. Parents or guardians of students under the age of 13 must submit entries on behalf of their student(s). Employees of Sponsor and its respective parent company, subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising and promotion agencies, distributors, and partners (collectively, "Competition Entities"), and their immediate family members, and/or those living in the same household of each, are eligible to enter or win. Competition is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Void where prohibited by law. Sponsor's decisions are final and binding on all matters.

HOW TO ENTER: Visit https://enrichment.K12.com/writing-competition and follow all onscreen instructions to complete the official entry form. **Submitting an entry by the deadline is required to be eligible for the Competition. All entries must fit into one of the following categories: poetry, fiction, or nonfiction. Submitting a piece of writing is required. Participants will be required to copy and paste their written work directly into the entry form.** The entry must be uploaded in compliance with the Competition requirements. All entries must be received during the Competition Entry Period (effective 9 AM (ET) on October 13, 2025, through 5 PM (ET) on January 20, 2026).

Entries must be created solely by the Entrant. Parents or guardians of students under the age of 13 must submit entries on behalf of their student(s), and the entries should be solely the original ideas and written work of the student entering. **Any entry that has been copied from an existing written work (including a published story, article, script, or advertisement) that was created by someone other than the student is a violation of the Competition rules and will not be accepted.** For the purposes of these Official Rules, receipt of an entry occurs when Sponsor's server (or website) records the entry information (resulting from Entrant clicking on the "Submit" button). Once the entry is submitted, the submission is final and may not be modified or edited. Any automated computer receipt (such as one confirming delivery of entry) does not constitute proof of actual receipt by Sponsor for purposes of these Official Rules. Entrants are subject to all notices posted on the website, including, but not limited to Sponsor's privacy policy.

By submitting a written entry, Entrant understands and grants permission for the written work to be posted on the website for viewing by visitors to the website. Furthermore, Entrant grants permission for any Competition Entity to encourage and allow any form of sharing or reposting the entry on all forms of social media, whether now in existence or heretofore created. Sponsor and Competition Entities are not responsible for any unauthorized third-party use of any entry.

Except where prohibited by law, entry submission grants the Sponsor the right in perpetuity to reproduce, publish, use, edit, adjust, modify, abridge, condense, sublicense, and excerpt the written entry and/or comments in any way, in any and all media, without limitation and without compensation to Entrant. Submission of a written entry to the Competition further constitutes Entrant's consent to irrevocably assign and transfer to Sponsor any and all rights, title, and interest in and to the written work, including, without limitation, all copyrights. The Sponsor may publish and/or promote the written entry or a portion of it. If a written entry, or a portion of it, is selected for publication and/or promotional purposes, it does not imply that it is a winning entry in this Competition, nor does it create a confidential relationship between You and the Sponsor or any of its respective affiliates or subsidiaries.

Written entries must be the original work of the Entrant; may not have been previously published, including but not limited to social media, blogs, online forums, self-publishing forums, etc.; may not have won previous awards; and must not infringe upon the copyrights, trademarks, rights of privacy, publicity or other intellectual property, or other rights of any person or entity. By submitting a written entry, the Entrant (or, if an eligible minor, their parent or legal guardian) warrants and represents that they and/or any persons appearing or who are identifiable in the entry (whether through likeness, physical description, full name, etc.) consent to the submission and use of the entry in this Competition, and to its posting on the website in connection with the Competition. Sponsor reserves the right to request proof of these permissions in a form acceptable to Sponsor from any Entrant at any time. Entrant agrees to fully indemnify and defend Sponsor and the Competition Entities from any and all third-party infringement Claims that may arise out of its breach of these representations and warranties.

Entry must be created solely by the Entrant and fit in one of the following categories:

- **Poetry:** All grade levels must submit entries **between 10 to 200 words**.

  Poetry includes written work that explores themes through verse, rhyme, or freeform structure. Examples include:
  - **Free verse:** Poetry that flows without fixed meter or rhyme, allowing writers to express ideas in a natural, unrestricted style.
  - **Sonnets:** Structured poems, often 14 lines, that explore different themes.
  - **Haikus:** Short, evocative poems typically following a 5-7-5 syllable pattern.
- **Fiction:** All entries must follow the word count range listed below:
  - **Grades K–2:** 50–350 words
  - **Grades 3–5:** 100–500 words
  - **Grades 6–8:** 200–700 words
  - **Grades 9–12:** 300–900 words

  Fiction includes genres such as fantasy, science fiction, mystery, historical fiction, realistic fiction, etc.) Examples include:
  - **Flash fiction:** Short, impactful stories capturing a moment, twist, or emotion with brevity and precision.
  - **Short stories:** Fully developed narratives that explore characters, settings, and conflicts in a compact format.
  - **Creative vignettes:** Brief, descriptive scenes or moments that offer insight into a character, setting, or theme.
  - **Science fiction:** Narratives that explore futuristic, technological, or speculative concepts, often set in alternate realities or distant futures.
  - **Fantasy tales:** Imaginative stories set in magical or otherworldly realms, often featuring mythical creatures or supernatural elements.

- **Nonfiction:** All entries must follow the word count range listed below:
  - **Grades K–2:** 50–350 words
  - **Grades 3–5:** 100–500 words
  - **Grades 6–8:** 200–700 words
  - **Grades 9–12:** 300–900 words

  Nonfiction includes writing that reflects real experiences or ideas with clarity, authenticity, and purpose. Examples include:
  - **Personal essays:** Reflective pieces that explore personal experiences, insights, or beliefs with authenticity and emotional depth.
  - **Memoirs:** Narrative accounts drawn from the writer's life, focusing on meaningful events or themes.
  - **Opinion pieces:** Persuasive writing that presents a clear viewpoint on a topic, supported by reasoning and evidence.
  - **Investigative articles:** In-depth explorations of real-world issues, events, or phenomena, grounded in research and factual reporting.
  - **Travel writing:** Descriptive accounts of places, cultures, or journeys, often blending observation with personal reflection.

    - **Mini or short biographies:** Brief profiles of real people's lives or achievements. Writers may tell their own stories or write about someone they know personally—but they must have permission to write about anyone else. No celebrity bios unless you have a personal connection and consent.

- **Entry must have been created by the Entrant after July 1, 2025.**
- Entrants cannot publish their written work(s) online prior to the announcement of the winners (e.g., social media, blogs, online forums, self-publishing forums).
- Each entry must be original in concept, design, and execution and may not violate U.S. copyright laws. Any entry copied or derived from existing written work (including a published story, article, script, or advertisement) that someone other than the student created is a violation of the Competition rules and will not be accepted.
- Content cannot be sexually explicit or suggestive; unnecessarily violent or derogatory of any ethnic, racial, gender, religious, professional, or age group; profane or pornographic; or contain nudity.
- Content cannot promote alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, firearms/weapons (or the use of any of the foregoing), any activities that may appear unsafe or dangerous, or any particular political agenda or message.
- Content cannot be obscene or offensive, or endorse any form of hate or hate group.
- Content cannot defame, misrepresent, or contain disparaging remarks about the people or companies.
- Excepting that of the Sponsor, content cannot contain trademarks, logos, or trade dress (such as distinctive packaging or building exteriors/interiors) owned by others, or advertise or promote any brand or product of any kind, without permission, or contain any personal identification, such as license plate numbers, personal names, email addresses, or street addresses.
- Excepting that of the Sponsor, content cannot contain copyrighted materials owned by others (including excerpts from published books, articles, scripts, or other written works; or text taken from websites, television, movies, or other media).
- Content cannot contain materials embodying the names, likenesses, photographs, or other indicia identifying any person, living or dead, without permission.
- Content cannot communicate messages or images inconsistent with the positive images and/or goodwill to which Sponsor wishes to associate.
- Content cannot depict and cannot itself violate any law or otherwise.
- Plagiarism will result in disqualification.
- Entrants are strictly forbidden from using Artificial Intelligence to write or generate any part of their entry. However, using AI tools for idea generation or brainstorming is permitted, as long as the final written work is entirely created by the Entrant.
- All entries will be screened using automated tools to detect AI-generated content and plagiarism. Submissions must be original and created by the student. Any entry found to contain AI-generated material or plagiarized content may be disqualified.
- By submitting written work, **Entrant certifies that the entry submitted is an original work of authorship by the Entrant** and that it is not copied or derived from, nor does it include, any other person's copyrighted work.
- **All entries must be received no later than 5 PM (ET) on January 20, 2026.**

- Sponsor reserves the right to disqualify any entry for any reason, in its sole and absolute discretion. Entry does not guarantee that the entry will be used on any Website or Sponsor social media channel.

JUDGING

At the conclusion of the Competition, winners will be determined by a panel of judges, and by public voting:

Judges Selected Winners:

- For the written **poetry** category**,** a panel of judges consisting of Stride, Inc. personnel and non-Stride, Inc. personnel ("Judges") will determine a 1st place and 2nd place winner per grade level (total of 26 winners) utilizing the following judging criteria:
    - Creativity and originality (25%)
    - Impact and engagement (25%)
    - Organization and clarity (25%)
    - Language and mechanics (25%)
- For the written **fiction** category**,** a panel of judges consisting of Stride, Inc. personnel and non-Stride, Inc. personnel ("Judges") will determine a 1st place and 2nd place winner per grade level (total of 26 winners) utilizing the following judging criteria:
    - Creativity and originality (25%)
    - Storytelling and emotional impact (25%)
    - Organization and clarity (25%)
    - Language and mechanics (25%)
- For the written **nonfiction** category, a panel of judges consisting of Stride, Inc. personnel and non-Stride, Inc. personnel ("Judges") will determine a 1st place and 2nd place winner per grade level (total of 26 winners) utilizing the following judging criteria:
    - Creativity and originality (25%)
    - Evidence and research (25%)
    - Organization and clarity (25%)
    - Language and mechanics (25%)
- If there are not any entries that earn a minimum criteria score of 80% for a grade level, no one will be the determined a winner. Judges' decisions are final and binding. Only winners will be notified.
- Entrants who win 1st place in a category will not be eligible to win 2nd place in that same category or a different category, or vice versa.
- Entrants who win 1st or 2nd place are still eligible to win the People's Choice award in the same category or a different category.

TIES: In the event of a tie, the entry with the highest score in creativity and originality will be declared the winner. In the event of a further tie, the entry from among the tied entries with the highest score received for technical skill will be declared the winner. In the event of further ties, the Judges will make the final determination as to which entry will win.

People's Choice Winners:

- One People's Choice winner will be selected in each grade level through public voting, for a total of 13 winners.
- Public voting will be conducted on the K12 Writing Competition landing page beginning at 9 AM (ET) on January 21, 2026, and ending at 5 PM (ET) on February 20, 2026. Any individual will be eligible to vote and will be allowed to cast three votes per day during the voting period.

The Sponsor reserves the right not to award a prize if, in its sole and absolute discretion, it does not receive a sufficient number of eligible and qualified entries for a given category.

COMPETITION PRIZES & CORRESPONDING APPROXIMATE RETAIL VALUES ("ARV"):

For each of the three categories (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction) there will be a 1st place and 2nd place winner per grade level (total of 26 winners). There will be one People's Choice winner per grade level as determined by public voting (total of 13 winners). Winners will have a choice between cash or an Amazon e-gift card:

- 1st place: $250 (ARV: $250);
- 2nd place: $100 (ARV: $100);
- People's Choice: $50 (ARV: $50).

Total ARV up to $14,300

1st and 2nd place winners will be selected in each grade level and in each category (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction). Winning entries will be published in a K12-branded book. Copies of the book will be shared with the winners and K12 Headquarters and may also be distributed to winners' local libraries where possible. The Approximate Retail Value (ARV) of each prize is $25.

By submitting an entry, Entrants (or their parent/legal guardian if a minor) grant the Sponsor the non-exclusive right to reproduce, publish, and distribute their work in connection with the Competition and its promotional materials. Entrants will not receive compensation or retain publication rights for inclusion in the K12-branded book.

For award selections involving cash, check, or ACH, all payments must be made to an adult over the age of 18 and will require a W-9 to be sent to the Sponsor to issue the prize. Other paperwork may also be requested from the Sponsor if necessary. [ACH payments will only be made to banks located in the United States.] The Entrant and their parents/guardians are responsible for all tax consequences. Amazon is not, in any way, associated with Sponsor or this Contest. Gift cards will not be replaced if lost, stolen, or misused.

If the winner has also won any other K12 competitions, and their prize winnings total more than $600, the Entrant and their parents/guardians are responsible for all tax consequences. Stride will issue a 1099 where required by law. IRS Form 1099 may be issued and filed, and winners are required to provide all information necessary for the Form 1099 prior to receiving the award. If all necessary information is not received within 7 days of winner notification, the winner forfeits the winning prize amount(s). Winners are solely responsible for all taxes.

WINNER NOTIFICATION:

Winners will be notified by email from competitions@K12.com within five (5) business days of the Winner Reveal on March 11, 2026, on the Writing Competition landing page and may be required to complete and return a notarized Affidavit of Eligibility and Liability and, where permissible, a Publicity Release ("Affidavit/Release"), within seven (7) days of the date specified on notification, as well as some sort of video testimonial about your Competition experience, or an alternate winner may be determined. If an Affidavit/Release and/or if any required document(s) is not returned within such time period, or if a selected winner cannot accept or receive the prize for any reason, or if they are not in compliance with these Official Rules, the prize will be forfeited, and an alternate winner may be determined. All official communication for the Competition will come from competitions@K12.com email.

If a winner is otherwise eligible under these Official Rules but is nevertheless deemed a minor in their state of primary residence, the prize will be awarded in the name of the winner's parent or legal guardian who will be required to execute Affidavit/Release (or any required document) on the minor's behalf. Prizes are awarded within 30 days after winner verification. If potential winners do not respond within 30 days, they will no longer be eligible to receive the prize. Prizes are not redeemable for cash and are non-assignable and non-transferable. No substitutions are permitted except that the Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize, or portion of any prize, with one of equal or greater value in case of unavailability. Winners acknowledge that the Sponsor and all other businesses concerned with this Competition and their agents do not make, nor are in any manner responsible for any warranty, representations, expressed or implied, in fact or in law, relative to the quality, conditions, fitness, or merchantability of any aspect of any prize. Each winner will be responsible for all federal, state, local, and income taxes associated with winning their prize. Incidental expenses on any prize not specified herein are each winner's sole responsibility. Except where prohibited by law, entry and acceptance of prize constitute permission for Sponsor and its agents to use each winner's name, prize won, hometown, likeness, photo, and statements for purposes of advertising, trade, promotion, and publicity (including online posting) in any and all media now or hereafter known throughout the world in perpetuity, without additional compensation, notification, or permission.

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Entrant agrees to these Official Rules and the decisions of the Judges and the Sponsor, and on their behalf, and on behalf of their respective heirs, executors, administrators, legal representatives, successors, and assigns ("Releasing Parties"), release, defend, and hold harmless the Contest Entities, as well as the employees, officers, directors, and agents of each ("Released Parties") from any and all actions, causes of action, suits, debts, dues, sums of money, accounts, reckonings, bonds, bills, specialties, covenants, contracts, controversies, agreements, promises, variances, trespasses, lost profits, indirect or direct damages, consequential damages, incidental damages, punitive or exemplary damages, judgments, extent, executions, Claims and demands whatsoever, in law, admiralty or equity, whether known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen, against Released Parties which any one or more of the Releasing Parties ever had, now have, or hereafter can, shall, or may have, which in any way arise out of or result from Entrant's participation, acceptance and use, or misuse of any prize.

In the event Sponsor is prevented from continuing with the Contest as planned herein by any event beyond its control, including but not limited to fire, flood, hurricane, earthquake, explosion, labor dispute or strike, act of God or public enemy, satellite or equipment failure, riot or civil disturbance, terrorist threat or activity, war (declared or undeclared), or any federal, state, or local government law, order, or regulation, or order of any court or other cause not within Sponsor's control or concerns regarding the safety of any winner or guest, Sponsor shall have the right to modify, suspend, extend, or terminate the Contest. Entrants assume all liability for any injury, including death or damage caused or claimed to be caused by participation in this Contest or use or redemption of any prize.

This Contest shall be governed by and interpreted under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, U.S.A., without regard to its conflicts of law provisions. Entrants hereby agree that any and all disputes, claims, causes of action, or controversies ("Claims") arising out of, or in connection with, this Contest shall be resolved, upon the election by Entrant or Sponsor, by arbitration pursuant to this provision and the code of procedures of either the National Arbitration Forum or the American Arbitration Association, as selected by the Entrant. IF ARBITRATION IS CHOSEN BY ANY PARTY WITH RESPECT TO A CLAIM, NEITHER PARTY WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO LITIGATE THAT CLAIM IN COURT OR HAVE A JURY TRIAL ON THAT CLAIM. FURTHER, NEITHER SPONSOR NOR ENTRANT WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN A REPRESENTATIVE CAPACITY ON BEHALF OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC OR OTHER PERSONS SIMILARLY SITUATED, OR AS A MEMBER OF ANY CLASS OF CLAIMANTS PERTAINING TO ANY CLAIM SUBJECT TO ARBITRATION. EXCEPT AS SET FORTH BELOW, THE ARBITRATOR'S DECISION WILL BE FINAL AND BINDING. NOTE THAT OTHER RIGHTS ENTRANT WOULD HAVE IF ENTRANT WENT TO COURT ALSO MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ARBITRATION. The arbitrator's authority to resolve Claims is limited to Claims between Sponsor and Entrant alone, and the arbitrator's authority to make awards is limited to awards to Sponsor and Entrant alone.

Furthermore, Claims brought by either party against the other may not be joined or consolidated in arbitration with Claims brought by or against any third party unless agreed to in writing by all parties. No arbitration award or decision will have any preclusive effect on Claims or issues in any dispute with anyone who is not a named party to the arbitration. Notwithstanding any other provision in this Agreement, and without waiving either party's right to appeal such decision, should any portion of this provision be deemed invalid or unenforceable, the entire provision (other than this sentence) shall not apply. Sponsor is not responsible for any typographical or other error in the printing of the offer, administration of the Contest, or in the announcement of any prize.

Sponsor and Entrant agree that an arbitration award ("Underlying Award") may be appealed pursuant to the American Arbitration Association's Optional Appellate Arbitration Rules ("Appellate Rules"); that any the Underlying Award shall, at a minimum, be a reasoned award, and that the Underlying Award shall not be considered final until after the time for filing a notice of appeal pursuant to the Appellate Rules has expired. Appeals must be initiated within 30 days of receipt of an Underlying Award, as defined by Rule A-3 of the Appellate Rules, by filing a Notice of Appeal with any office of the American Arbitration Association.

LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY FOR WEB ACCESS

The Sponsor is not responsible for any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by Website users, or tampering or hacking, or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or utilized in the Contest, and assumes no responsibility for any error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, delay in operation or transmission, communications line failure, theft or destruction, or unauthorized access to the Website.
The Sponsor is not responsible for injury or damage to an Entrant's or any other person's computer related to or resulting from participating in this Contest or downloading and/or uploading materials from or use of the Website. If, for any reason, the Contest is not capable of running as planned because of infection by computer viruses, worms, bugs, tampering, unauthorized intervention, fraud, technical failures, or any other causes which, in the sole opinion of the Sponsor could corrupt or affect the administration, security, fairness, integrity, or proper conduct of this Contest, the Sponsor reserves the right at its sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify, or suspend the Contest and determine winners from all eligible entries received prior to that action taken.

Entry materials/data that have been tampered with or altered, or mass entries or entries generated by a script, macro, or use of automated devices, are void. Entries made with multiple email addresses, under multiple identities, or using any automated device or artifice to enter multiple times will be deemed invalid. Mechanically reproduced, illegible, incomplete, or inaccurate entries are void. In the event of a dispute, entries (including photos and/or essays) will be deemed to have been submitted by the Authorized Account Holder of the email address provided at the time of entry. "Authorized Account Holder" means the natural person assigned to an email address by an internet access provider, online service provider, or other organization responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted email address. Mechanically reproduced entries are not eligible. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, late, damaged, or misdirected entries.

WINNERS LIST

For the names of the winners (available 5 business days after the Winner Reveal), please visit https://enrichment.K12.com/.

OPT IN/OPT OUT

By entering the Competition or voting in the Competition, Entrants, voters, and the parents or legal guardians of Entrants, consent to the collection and use of their information by the Sponsor and its affiliates and subsidiaries. Such information may be used for future communications via U.S. mail, telephone, text message, or email regarding the Sponsor's products and services, including current offers and promotions, and for the purpose of notifying winners. For details on how to opt out of receiving future communications, please refer to the Sponsor's privacy policy at https://www.stridelearning.com/privacy-policy.html.