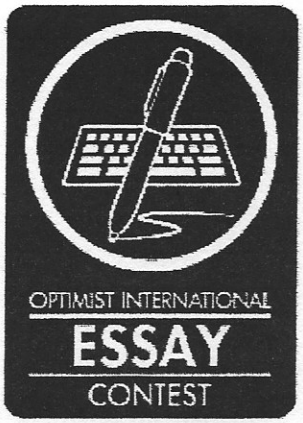


OPTIMIST CLUB
PROGRAM PACKAGE

Project Description – This contest is open to students under the age of 18 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Fiscal Year. There is no minimum age and no grade level requirement. This project is a good way to get publicity and get involved with the school system or other youth groups in your community. It is also a great way to meet youth you can work with in the future and parents who may be interested in joining your Club. The project will take approximately 12 weeks to run from start to finish and will need at least 3-5 Club members working on it.

In this package you will find some tools to help your Club run an Essay contest. You will find job responsibilities broken down by position and a project timeline. You will also find some sample letters and press releases to send before and after the event. Please keep in mind that the responsibility breakdown and timeline are only suggested and can be modified to fit your Club's needs.

CHECKLIST OF JOB RESPONSIBILITIES BY POSITION

Suggested Possible Positions:
Project Chair
Contest Coordinator
Judging Coordinator

ESSAY PROJECT CHAIR:

☐ Club decides to hold an Essay Contest

Club Board of Directors

☐ Optional – Your Club's Board of Directors should decide whether the Club will offer a monetary award (scholarship, savings bond or cash.) If the Club decides to present cash or savings bond awards to student winners, they should first consult with the association for their state or province that coordinates scholastic activities and competitions to determine if such payments would result in the recipient's forfeiture of amateur status. If a student loses their amateur status they may be unable to compete in collegiate athletics and activities. If you need assistance, ask a local English teacher or Debate coach if they can direct you to the appropriate organization.

☐ Print "Club Contest Program Planning Guide" off of the Publications page of the Optimist International website at www.optimist.org

☐ Contact the District Essay Chair to discuss rules and contest procedures. Give the date of the Club Essay contest and find out when the District Contest will be held. If you do not know who the District Chair is, look in the District directory. If they are not listed, contact the District Governor or Optimist International.

☐ Ask the District Chair if there is an entry fee for Clubs to submit a winner to the District level contest.

☐ Ask for volunteers from the Club to fill other positions such as Judges Coordinator and

- ☐ Create a proposed budget for the Essay Contest.
- ☐ Obtain posters and Application Forms. You can create your own posters. Application Forms can be printed from www.optimist.org. These items will promote the contest and encourage students to enter.
- ☐ Purchase Essay contest medallions and participation certificates from Shumsky (U.S. and Caribbean) at 877.678.2582 or Ansell's Awards (Canada) 800.565.7062.
- ☐ Contact the local newspaper and ask them to include contest details in their Community Calendar section.
- ☐ Send press releases to local media outlets – newspapers, radio and TV stations.
- ☐ Contact the Department of Education and ask for a contact name for local home-schooled students and send contest information to them.
- ☐ Contact the local PTA/PTO President to distribute information to parents about contest at a meeting.
- ☐ Each essay should be assigned a number by the Chair. The number should be written on the title page and the first page of the essay. Then the title page should be removed from the essay. The Chair should keep all the title pages. Judges should never see the title pages.
- ☐ If you, as the Essay Project Chair, feel there was an oversight, contact the judge directly to discuss the matter. Contest Chairs cannot change the judges' scores or evaluations!
- ☐ Reattach title pages to the essay entries.
- ☐ The Chair should use the Master Score sheet (page 12 of the Club Contest Program Planning Guide) to determine the winner of the contest.
  - Enter the points allotted to the various entries by each of the judges on the score sheet.
  - After totaling the points for each entry in the total column, rank the entries in the rank column. If no ties occur, the winner can easily be determined.
  - In the case of a tie, the entry scoring the largest number of points in Category 1 shall be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, each succeeding category should be considered the tie-breaker.
  - If a tie exists through category 5, the tied essays should be resubmitted to the judges for a second judging.
- ☐ Announce the first, second, and third place winners to the Club and local media. Invite the media and parents to the awards presentation. Invite the winners to read their essays. Present medallions and monetary awards to the winners. Take photos! This could take place at a Club meeting or special event. Make sure to have all guests sign the guest registry for follow-up contact.
- ☐ Give first place winner details about the next level of competition.

☐ Make sure all invoices are paid.

☐ Send follow-up letter to parents of participants with Club membership information.

☐ Send article and picture to local media about awards presentation.

☐ Complete Evaluation Form (sample included, form in online) and send to either:

Optimist International
4494 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108

Optimist International Canadian Service Centre
5205 boul Métropolitain Est Bureau 200
Montréal (Quebec) H1R1Z7 Canada

☐ Complete the District Essay Contest Form (page 12 of the Club Contest Program Planning Guide). The form must be signed by the student, Club President and Club Essay Chair. Send the District Essay Contest Entry form, birth certificate, winning essay (with attached title page) and entry fee (if applicable) **to the District Essay Chair no later than February 28th.**

ESSAY CONTESTANT COORDINATOR:

☐ Determine deadline for all essays to be received (should be no later than early February) Check with District Chair any time questions arise.

☐ Contact local schools and provide details about the contest. Ask for permission to hand a poster and rule pad in the school.

☐ Contact the School Principal and ask them to make the Essay entry a part of their curriculum. This will ensure a good number of entries.

☐ Contact local bookstores, libraries, coffeehouses, recreation centers and places where young people spend time and ask if they will display information about the contest.

☐ Contact local youth club associations such as Boy/Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and JOI.

☐ Make sure to ask all participants to submit copy of the birth certificate with their entry. Verify that each participant is under the age of 18 as of October 1, 2017.

☐ Review entries for obvious violations of the rules. If an entry violates the rules so much that the Chair feels it is not worthy of judging, the Chair may disqualify if from the competition (see rules in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).

☐ Optional – Confirm the total number of words in each essay. Remember that the material in the text of the essay is counted; footnotes are not counted. If the student's word count is not correct, note the correct total on a list. This will cut down some of the time it takes the judges to complete their work.

☐ Notify all participants of the winners of the contests.

☐ Return all non-winning essays to the authors. Keep the first place essay to submit to the District.

☐ Send a "Thank You" note or letter to School principal and/or teachers for their participation in the event.

JUDGING COORDINATOR:

☐ Secure three judges for the event. Some possibilities include a reporter, lawyer, judge, editor, author, teacher (not from a participant's school) or politician.

☐ Find a back-up judge to be used in case of an emergency.

☐ Give the judges a copy of the rules and membership information to familiarize them with the organization (included in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).

☐ Give each of the judges a copy of the judging forms (included in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).

☐ Meet or call each of the judges to make sure they understand the judging procedures.

☐ The judging can be handled in either of the following ways:

All three judges meet and evaluate the essays and submit their completed judging forms to the Club Essay Chair. You will need to find and secure a location for the judges to meet and work.

OR

Each judge is sent a packet with copies of the essays to evaluate. They return the essays and completed judging sheets to set a date to the Club Essay Chair.

☐ Judges should never compare scores or comments on the essay entries.

☐ Present the judges with a certificate of appreciation or small gift to show your Club's appreciation of their work.

☐ Send "Thank You" letter to judges with membership information about your Club.

PROJECT TIMELINE

12 Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Club decides to hold an Essay Contest.
- ☐ Create a proposed budget for the Essay Contest.
- ☐ Contact the Department of Education and ask for a contact name for local home-schooled students and send contest information to them.
- ☐ Contact the School Principal and ask them to make the Essay entry a part of their curriculum. This will ensure a good number of entries.
- ☐ Contact local youth club associations such as Boy/Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and JOI.

8 Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Print "Club Contest Program Planning Guide" off of the Publications page of the Optimist International website at www.optimist.org.
- ☐ Contact the District Essay Chair to discuss rules and contest procedures. Give the date of the Club Essay contest and find out when the District Contest will be held. If you do not know who the District Chair is, look in the District Directory. If they are not listed, contact the District Governor or Optimist International.
- ☐ Ask the District Chair if there is an entry fee for Clubs to submit a winner to the District level contest.
- ☐ Ask for volunteers from the Club to fill other positions such as Judges Coordinator or Contestant Coordinator.
- ☐ Purchase Essay contest medallions and participation certificates from Shumsky at 877.678.2582 or Ansell's Awards (Canada) at 800.565.7062.
- ☐ Obtain posters and Applications. You can create your own posters. Applications can be printed from www.optimist.org. These items will promote the contest and encourage students to enter.

6 Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Optional – Club Board of Directors needs to decide whether the Club will offer a monetary award (scholarship, savings bond or cash.) If the Club decides to present cash or savings bond awards to student winners, they should first consult with the association for their state or province that coordinates scholastic activities and competitions to determine if such payments would result in the recipient's forfeiture of amateur status. If a student loses their amateur status they may be unable to compete in collegiate athletics and activities. If you need assistance, ask a local English teacher or Debate coach if they can direct you to the appropriate organization.
- ☐ Contact local schools and provide details about the contest. Ask for permission to hang a poster and rule pad in the school.
- ☐ Contact local bookstores, libraries, coffeehouses, recreation centers and places where young people spend time and ask if they will display information about the contest.
- ☐ Secure three judges for the event. Some possibilities include a reporter, lawyer, judge, editor, author, teacher (not from a participant's school) or politician.
- ☐ Find a back-up judge to be used in case of an emergency.

4 Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Contact the local PTA/PTO President to distribute information to parents about contest at a meeting.
- ☐ Give the judges a copy of the rules and membership information to familiarize them with the organization (rules are included in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).
- ☐ Contact the local newspaper and ask them to include contest details in their Community Calendar section.

2 Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Send press release to local media outlets – newspapers, radio and TV stations.
- ☐ Give each of the judges a copy of the judging forms (included in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).
- ☐ Each essay should be assigned a number by the Chair. The number should be written on the title page and the first page of the essay. Then the title page should be removed from the essay. The Chair should keep all the title pages. Judges should never see the title pages.
- ☐ Make sure to ask all participants to submit a copy of the birth certificate with their entry. Verify that each participant is under the age of 18 as of October 1 of the current Optimist year.

☐ Review entries for obvious violations of the rules. If an entry violates the rules so much that the Chair feels it is not worthy of judging, the Chair may disqualify if from the competition (rules are listed in the Club Contest Program Planning Guide).

☐ Optional – Confirm the total number of words in each essay. Remember that the material in the text of the essay is counted; footnotes are not counted. If the student's word count is not correct, note the correct total on a list. This will cut down some of the time it takes the judges to complete their work.

☐ Make sure all invoices are paid.

1 Week Prior to Judging:

☐ Meet or call each of the judges to make sure they understand the judging procedures.

Judging:

☐ The judging can be handled in either of the following ways:

All three judges meet and evaluate the essays and submit their completed judging forms to the Club Essay Chair. You will need to find and secure a location for the judges to meet and work.

OR

Each judge is sent a packet with copies of the essays to evaluate. They return the essays and completed judging sheets to set a date to the Club Essay Chair.

☐ Judges should never compare scores or comments on the essay entries.

1 Week After Judging:

☐ The Chair should use the Master Score sheet (page 11 of the Club Contest Program Planning Guide) to determine the winner of the contest.

- Enter the points allotted to the various entries by each of the judges on the score sheet.
- After totaling the points for each entry in the total column, rank the entries in the rank column. If no ties occur, the winner can easily be determined.
- In the case of a tie, the entry scoring the largest number of points in Category 1 shall be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, each succeeding category should be considered the tie-breaker.
- If a tie exists through category 5, the tied essays should be resubmitted to the judges for a second judging.

☐ If the Club Chair feels there was an oversight, he/she should contact the judge directly to discuss the matter. Contest Chairs cannot change the judges' scores or evaluations!

☐ Reattach title pages to the essay entries.

☐ Present the judges with a certificate of appreciation or small gift to show the Club's appreciation of their work.

2 Weeks After Judging:

- ☐ Announce the first, second and third place winners to the Club and local media. Invite the media and parents to the awards presentation. Invite the winners to read their essays. Present medallions and monetary awards to the winners. Take photos! This could take place at a Club meeting or special event. Make sure to have all guests sign the guest registry for follow-up contact.
- ☐ Give first place winner details about the next level of competition.
- ☐ Return all non-winning essays to the authors. Keep the first place essay to submit to the District.
- ☐ Send a "Thank You" note or letter to School principal and/or teachers for their participation in the event.
- ☐ Send "Thank You " letter to judges with membership information about your Club.
- ☐ Send follow-up letter to parents of participants with Club membership information.
- ☐ Send article and picture to local media about awards presentation.
- ☐ Complete the District Essay Contest Form (page 12 of the Club Contest Program Planning Guide). The form must be signed by the student, Club President and Club Essay Chair. Send the District Essay Contest Entry form, birth certificate, winning essay (with attached title page) and entry fee (if applicable) **to the District Essay Chair no later than February 28th.**

3 Weeks After Judging:

- ☐ Complete Evaluation Form (sample included, form on-line) and send to either:

Optimist International
4494 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108

Optimist International Canadian Service Centre
5205 boul Métropolitain Est Bureau 200
Montréal (Quebec) H1R1Z7 Canada

- ☐ Do the Club Evaluation of project. Will your Club do the project again?

PRINT ON CLUB LETTERHEAD OR TYPE IN CLUB NAME

CONTACT CLUB
CONTACT
CONTACT'S NUMBER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE

Local Optimist Club to Sponsor Essay Contest for Students

CITY, STATE/PROVINCE – The Optimist Club of CLUB NAME is encouraging area students to contemplate the phrase "Can Society Function Without Respect?" as part of the Optimist International Essay Contest for the 2017-2018 school year.

The Optimist Club will judge the local students' essays, based on the theme of "Can Society Function Without Respect?" and determine the top winners. Winners will receive AWARDS and the winning essays will be sent to the district level where college scholarships are available for top winners.

"Young students today have so many fresh ideas about the world and their future," Club President PRESIDENT'S NAME said. "As Optimists, it is our goal to encourage them and do

what we can to bring out the best in each of them. This gives them a wonderful opportunity to tap into their creativity and pursue possible scholarships at the same time."

The Optimist Club of CLUB NAME has been participating in the Optimist Essay Contest for NUMBER years and has been active in the community since CHARTER YEAR. Other programs and service projects that the Club is involved in include CLUB PROJECTS.

Students wishing to participate in the essay contest can find out more about the contest by contacting the club at CONTACT PHONE NUMBER.

Optimist International is one of the world's largest service club organizations with 93,000 adult and youth members in 3,200 clubs in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico and throughout the world. Carrying the Mission Statement "By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves," Optimists conduct positive service projects that reach more than six million young people each year. To learn more about Optimist International, please call (314) 371-6000 or visit the organization's website at www.optimist.org.

###

PLACE ON CLUB LETTERHEAD

DATE

Dear INSERT NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN,

On behalf of the Optimist Club of INSERT CLUB NAME, please accept our thanks for the opportunity to meet and work with INSERT FIRST NAME OF CONTESTANT during our recent INSERT ORATORICAL, ESSAY, OR COMMUNICATION CONTEST FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING Competition. It is young people like INSERT FIRST NAME OF CONTESTANT, and the promise that they hold for our future, that is the main reason we are Optimist members.

In addition to our annual INSERT ORATORICAL, ESSAY OR COMMUNICATION COMPETITION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING competition, our Optimist Club also sponsors many other programs for the betterment of our INSERT NAME OF AREA OR COMMUNITY youth and community. *OPTION A:* Following are just a few: LIST THREE OR FOUR MAJOR ACTIVITIES, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON ANY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. *OPTION B:* Enclosed is a brochure that tells more about our club and its activities. *OPTION C: BEST OPTION, DO BOTH.*

As a service club focused on "By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves" in the INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY area, we welcome new members who share our goals, and would be delighted to have you join us at a future meeting to learn more about our club and the services it provides. ADD MEETING AND CONTACT INFO.

Thank you again for both INSERT NAME OF STUDENT'S and your part in making our ORATORICAL, ESSAY, OR COMMUNICATION COMPETITION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING competition such a success. We look forward to INSERT HIS OR HER 's continued success, and to seeing you at one of our membership meetings or another of our Optimist youth activities in the very near future.

LETTER SHOULD GO OUT OVER CLUB PRESIDENT'S AND EVENT CHAIR'S SIGNATURES. TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE, IT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED UP WITH A PHONE CALL OFFERING A PERSONAL INVITATION TO ATTEND A MEETING. IF STUDENTS FROM THE COMPETITION WILL BE ATTENDING A CLUB MEETING, THIS LETTER SHOULD PRECEDE THEIR VISIT.

IF YOU HAVE A CLUB WEBSITE, INCLUDE THAT INFO. IF CLUB LETTERHEAD DOES NOT CONTAIN THE OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CREED, INCLUDE ONE OF THE SMALL CREED CARDS AVAILABLE FROM OPTIMISTSUPPLY OR OPTIPROMO. ALSO INCLUDE ONE OF THE LARGE OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS. THEY ARE VERY INFORMATIVE, AND BECAUSE THEY SPOTLIGHT THE ORATORICAL, ESSAY, AND CCDHH COMPETITIONS, THERE IS AN INSTANT LINK TO YOUR CLUB FROM WHICH THE STUDENT HAS ALREADY BENEFITED.

PRINT ON CLUB LETTERHEAD OR TYPE CLUB'S NAME

INSERT DATE

INSERT JUDGES NAME STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE/PROVINCE, ZIP CODE COUNTRY

Dear MR., MRS., MS. INSERT LAST NAME,

On behalf of the INSERT CLUB NAME, thank you again for acting as a judge in our Optimist Club's Essay Contest. Your time and dedication made it possible for us to reward students for their creative efforts.

The Essay Contest is one of many events our Club will be participating in during the year. Some of the other activities we are planning are INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTIVITIES.

As a service club with the mission statement of "Providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves" in the INSERT COMMUNITY OR AREA, we welcome new members who share our goals and would be delighted to have you join us at a future meeting to learn more about our Club and the services it provides. We meet at on INSERT DATE, TIME AND PLACE. If you are unable to attend the meeting or would like more information on our Club, please feel free to contact INSERT MEMBERSHIP CHAIR'S CONTACT INFORMATION.

Thank you again for your part in making our Essay Contest such a success. We look forward to working together again.

Sincerely,

Signature
PRESIDENT'S NAME
TITLE
CONTACT PHONE NUMBER
ADDRESS

Signature
PROJECT CHAIR'S NAME
TITLE
CONTACT PHONE NUMBER E-MAIL
E-MAIL ADDRESS

IF YOU HAVE A CLUB WEBSITE, INCLUDE THAT INFO AS WELL AS THE OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE. IF CLUB LETTERHEAD DOES NOT CONTAIN THE OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CREED, INCLUDE ONE OF THE SMALL CREED CARDS AVAILABLE FROM OPTIMISTSUPPLY OR OPTIPROMO. ALSO INCLUDE ONE OF THE LARGE OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS AND ANY PUBLICITY BROCHURE YOUR CLUB HAS DESIGNED.

PRINT ON CLUB LETTERHEAD OR TYPE IN CLUB NAME

CONTACT
CLUB CONTACT
CONTACT'S NUMBER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE

Local Student Wins Optimist Club Essay Contest

CITY, STATE/PROVINCE – STUDENT NAME, a YEAR IN SCHOOL at SCHOOL, recently won the Optimist Club of CLUB NAME's essay contest based on a theme of "Can Society Function Without Respect?"

STUDENT LAST NAME was awarded AWARD for the honor. In addition, the essay will be sent to the district level to be judged along with winners from other Optimist Clubs in the district. College scholarships are available for top winners at the district level.

"STUDENT NAME did a wonderful job of articulating this year's theme. HE/SHE expressed HIMSELF/HERSELF well through the essay and deserved the honor of first place," Club President PRESIDENT'S NAME said.

The Optimist Club of CLUB NAME has been participating in the Optimist Essay Contest for NUMBER years and has been active in the community since CHARTER YEAR. Other programs and service projects that the Club is involved in include CLUB PROJECTS.

Optimist International is one of the world's largest service club organizations with 93,000 adult and youth members in 3,200 clubs in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico and throughout the world. Carrying the Mission Statement "By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves" Optimists conduct positive service projects that reach more than six million young people each year. To learn more about Optimist International, please call (314) 371-6000 or visit the organization's website at www.optimist.org.

###

PHOTO RELEASE

I, _____ grant Optimist International my permission to use a picture of my son/daughter _____ for their public relations purposes. Optimist International may use the photo in any publication they see fit.

_____

PHOTO RELEASE

I, _____ grant Optimist International my permission to use a picture of my son/daughter _____ for their public relations purposes. Optimist International may use the photo in any publication they see fit.

_____

PHOTO RELEASE

I, _____ grant Optimist International my permission to use a picture of my son/daughter _____ for their public relations purposes. Optimist International may use the photo in any publication they see fit.

Essay Contest Club Chair Evaluation Form

District Name _____

Chair Name (optional) _____

Are you a first-time or repeating Chair?_____Contest year _____

What was your favorite part of the contest as Chair?

_____

_____

_____

Please list ways your club is able to obtain contestants for your contest.

_____

_____

_____

What was your opinion on this year's topic? Do you have suggestions for future topics?

_____

_____

_____

What recommendations, if any, would you propose for improving the Essay contest?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please share any procedures that worked well for your Club.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please list any changes your Club will make for next year's contest.

_____

_____

_____

This form should be submitted to:

Optimist International Programs Department Attn: Essay Coordinator
4494 Lindell Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63108 or fax to: 314-371-6000

2017-2018 Club Chair Planning Guide

General Information

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 submit essays on the assigned topic to their local Optimist Club. The essays are judged at the Club level and District level.

Eligibility Criteria

The contest is open to students under age 18 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Contest year (October 1 – September 30).

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 the student last resided in. 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.

Topic

"Can Society Function without Respect?"

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 is determined by the sponsoring Club. Please contact your District Chair for more information. The deadline for Clubs to submit their winning essay to the District Chair is **February 28.**

District entries are judged and submitted to the Optimist International Programs Department no later than **April 15, 2018.** District winners will be notified by a letter from Optimist International between April 15 and June 1.

Districts that would like their winner to be notified **after** their 3rd quarter District conference must submit a letter detailing this request to Optimist International by March 1. The District Chair should confirm the winner will not need to redeem their funds immediately. If a letter is submitted, Optimist International will not send a congratulatory letter or redemption materials to the District level winner until June.

Prizes

Scholarships are awarded to students in the United States and the Caribbean in US dollars and in Canadian dollars for Canadian students.

Club and District awards should be ordered directly from Shumsky for US and Caribbean Clubs and from Ansell for Canadian Clubs.

Club level - medallion

Clubs are allowed to give monetary/cash* awards 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. Please contact the Optimist International Foundation or Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation for setting up a Club scholarship.

*Disclaimer - Clubs planning to present cash or savings bond awards to student winners should first consult the association for their state or province that coordinates scholastic activities and competitions to determine if such payments would result in the recipient's forfeiture of amateur status. If a student loses their amateur status, they may be unable to compete in collegiate athletics and activities.

District level - plaque and a $2,500 college scholarship for first place winners.

Districts choosing to increase funding for the scholarships or fund additional scholarships will need to manage those funds through other resources. Optimist International will not handle the awarding of any scholarships not funded by the Optimist International Foundations. The responsibility for record-keeping and awarding of additional funds or scholarships will be the Districts'.

Districts may choose to hold the additional funds in District accounts or contribute those funds to the Optimist International Foundation in the U.S. and Caribbean or the Canadian Children's Foundation in Canada. Individual donors and Clubs will receive lifetime credit for gifts for increased or additional scholarships.

The Foundations will process requests from the Districts to have scholarship funds returned to them. Requests must be in writing and specify the type of scholarship and the amount. The Foundations will not award the scholarships or write checks to the individual scholarship recipients or their schools.

Criteria for Judges

Select three qualified judges who are not acquainted with the writers of the essays. At the Club level, the judges may be Optimist Members. At all other levels of the competition, judges must be non-Optimists (Friends of Optimists are excluded and can be used as judges). Judges should have expertise in creative writing.

Always have a back-up judge in case someone gets sick. Give the judges a copy of the rules and a membership brochure to review and introduce them to the world of Optimism.

Judging the Essays

The Club Essay Chair supplies each judge with the judging materials. 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.

The actual judging can be handled in either of the following ways:

All three judges gather and evaluate the essays and submit their completed judging forms to the Club Essay Chair.

or

Each judge is sent a packet with copies of the essays to evaluate. They return the essays and completed judging forms by a pre-determined date to the Club Essay Chair.

In either case, judges should never compare scores or comments on the essays being judged. If the Club Chair feels there was an oversight, contact the judge directly and discuss it for re-evaluation. Contest Chairs cannot change the judges' scores or deductions!

Getting the Contest Started in Your Community

The most common approach is to go to the local high school and ask the English teachers to work with the students on an essay for the contest. There are several other easy ways to reach the young people in your community:

- Contact the Department of Education and get a contact name for home-schooled students.
- Contact the local private and parochial schools.
- Contact the local PTA/PTO president to distribute information to parents at a meeting.
- Contact local youth Clubs such as Boy/Girl Scouts and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Be sure to supply everyone contacted with a Club contact's name and phone number!

After the Club Contest

- Announce the winner to the Club and local media. See Optimist website for press releases (before and after) and other suggestions.
- Invite the winner to the next Club meeting to read their essay.
- Re-attach the cover page of the winning essay and send it to the District Chair with the following items:

_____ Completed District Essay Contest Entry Form (pg12)
_____Copy of Birth Certificate or Passport (will be required for District Winner to be awarded scholarship)
_____Copy of Essay
_____Entry Fee (if applicable)

All the items must be received by the District Essay Chair no later than February 28, 2018!

If you don't know who the District Essay Chair is, ask your President to check in the District's directory. If they are not listed, contact the Governor to obtain their contact information.

Do not send the Club's winning essay to Optimist International! Sending the essay and paperwork to the wrong person could accidentally cause the essay to miss being judged at the District level.

Application for 2017-2018 Optimist International Essay Contest

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 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_____
Sponsoring Optimist Club Number_____

Please send application to address below:

Official Topic: "Can Society Function Without Respect?"

Essay Contest Rules

Each contestant must be given a copy of the rules and 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 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 students under age 18 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International Contest year (October 1 – September 30).
   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 eligible to compete at any level of the competition again.
4. All contestants at each level of the contest must show proof of age before competing. Optimist Clubs may require a copy of birth certificate or passport before participating if offering a Club scholarship separate from Optimist International. District winners must provide a copy of birth certificate or passport with the District entry documentation..

Section III - Contest Rules

1. Participants must write on the official topic.
2. Each entry must begin with a title page containing: the official 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 typewritten 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 1 word (Deduction of 5 points for each 25 words over/under limit).
6. Each page of the essay must be numbered starting with page 1 of the essay, not the title page. The numbers must be centered at the bottom of each page.
7. Any quotations or copyrighted material used 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 references 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 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 – medallion
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:
_____

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): 40 points
2. Vocabulary and Style (Phrasing and continuity): 30 points
3. Grammar, Punctuation, 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 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.

Club Chair's Planning Timeline

July-August 2017

- Attend the International Convention for training and advice, if available!
- Present the program to your Club.
- Review the contest package program on the Optimist website.
- Contact schools and organizations for participation in the upcoming school year's contest. Give them time to include it in their plans!

September 2017

- Set the Club contest date — Clubs can hold their contest anytime between October 1st and early February.
- Give participating schools and organizations posters, applications and contact information so they can start to spread the word!
- Present the budget.

October 2017

- Contact the District Essay Chair and find out if there is an entry fee to submit the Club winner's essay to the District contest.
- Put up posters in areas where young people gather to publicize the contest.
- Publicize the contest in the local media.
- Choose three qualified judges who are not acquainted with the contestants.
- Order Club award medallions, certificates and any other items needed for the contest from Shumsky or Ansell's Awards (in Canada).

November 2017 - February 2018

- Have essays turned in by early February so you have plenty of time to have them judged.
- Conduct judging and select a first, second and third place winner.
- Submit the District Entry Form, copy of the birth certificate or passport, first place winning essay and entry fee (if required) to the District Essay Chair. It must be received by February 28, 2017.
- Present the first, second and third-place awards at a Club meeting or special dinner and have the winners read their essays.

March 2018

- Complete the Club Chair Evaluation form in this guide and submit to Optimist International.
- Return the non-winning essays to authors.
- Circulate a press release and photos of winners to the local media.
- Present a final report to the Club.

Visitor Sign-In Sheet

Name:_____ Home phone:_____

Business phone:_____ Cell phone:_____

Address: _____

City:_____ State/Country:_____ Zip Code:_____

Notes: _____

_____

Name:_____ Home phone:_____

Business phone:_____ Cell phone:_____

Address: _____

City:_____ State/Country:_____ Zip Code:_____

Notes: _____

_____

Name:_____ Home phone:_____

Business phone:_____ Cell phone:_____

Address: _____

City:_____ State/Country:_____ Zip/Code:_____

Notes: _____

_____

Name:_____ Home phone:_____

Business phone:_____ Cell phone:_____

Address: _____

City:_____ State/Country:_____ Zip Code:_____

Notes: _____

_____

Bringing Out the Best in Kids. . . Join Today!
www.optimist.org

Instructions to Judges

The Judges Score Sheet, along with a copy of the rules, should be given to each judge.

Points

Material Organization

In this category, the interpretation of the subject, a clear presentation of the writer's concept, dedication to research and the logical organization of the supporting facts should be considered.

Maximum point award is 40 points.

Vocabulary and Style

The choice of words, use of descriptive phrases, clear sentence structure and illustration of the topic are considered. Use of figures of speech, similes, metaphors and quotations are important factors.

Maximum point award is 30 points.

Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling

Consider such factors as subject and verb agreement, plurals of nouns and tense.

Maximum point award is 20 points.

Neatness

General appearance of the essay is a vital part of the presentation. Legibility and spacing in handwritten essays are to be considered.

Maximum point award is 5 points.

Adherence to Contest Rules

The ability to follow instructions and observe rules is important. The rules detail the format for the essay.

Maximum point award is 5 points.

Total of points awarded should be compiled and placed in the indicated space on the form.

Penalties

Failure to list the official topic

The official topic must be listed at the top of page 1 of the essay.

Deduct 2 points for lack of the topic.

Failure to identify total number of words and doing so correctly:

The number of words is to be indicated at the top of page 1 of the essay. The total must be accurate and in the proper place to avoid penalty points.

Deduct 5 points for incorrect total or indication in the wrong place.

Failure to Type Essay and Double Space

All essays are to be type-written and double-spaced. Deduct 5 points.

Failure to stay within the 700-800 word limit

The word limit does not include the title, footnotes or bibliography. It applies only to the text and includes every word, regardless of length. Hyphenated words count as 1 word.

Deduct 5 points for each 25 words over or under the limit. French Essays will allow 50 words over/under for the deduction. Words are to be counted manually.

Self-Identification

Students cannot identify themselves, parents, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. "My father the mayor" is considered a violation.

Deduct 5 points or fraction of based on degree of identification made.

Selection of the Top Three Winners

1. Each judge ranks the best essays from 1 to 5. Ties in points and ranking are not allowed. Re-evaluate essays if necessary.
2. The Club Essay Chair will enter each judge's score on the Master Score Sheet.
3. The grand total of the three judges is determined for each essay. The entry having the largest grand total of points is declared the winner.
4. In case of a tie, the entry scoring the largest number of points in category 1 is declared the winner. If a tie still exists, each succeeding category is considered the tie-breaker.
5. Should a tie still exist through category 5, the tied essays will be re-evaluated by the three judges and judged a second time.

Scores and totals are only available to the Contest Chair. No one else is permitted to see the point totals or rankings! Scores are confidential.

Judge's Score Sheet

Optimist Essay Contest **Judge #_____**

Categories to be judged	Entry Number 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Material Organization *Maximum point award 30 points*															
Creativity ***Maximum point award 10 points***															
Vocabulary and Style *Maximum point award 30 points*															
Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling *Maximum point award 20 points*															
Neatness *Maximum point award 5 points*															
Adherence to Contest Rules *Maximum point award 5 points*															
Total Points Awarded															
Penalties															
Failure to list official topic *Deduct 2 points*															
Failure to identify total number of words and doing so correctly *Deduct 5 points*															
Failure to Type Essay/Double Space *Deduct 5 points*															
Failure to stay within the 700-800 word limit *Deduct 5 points for each 25 words over/under the limit. French essays will allow 50 words over/under*															
Self-Identification *Deduct 5 points or fraction based on degree of identification*															
Total Penalties Deducted															
Final Total *Total points awarded minus total penalties deducted*															
Ranking of top 5 essays NO TIES ALLOWED															

Signature of Judge_____ Date____/____/____

Instructions for Master Score Sheet for Club and District Chairs

As Essay Chair, you will have two important responsibilities BEFORE turning over your entries to the judges:

1. Review entries for obvious violations of the rules. If non-conformity to the rules is so extreme that you feel the entry is not worthy of judging, as Chair you may disqualify it from further competition.
2. Number each title page and place that same number on each page of the essay. Next, detach the title page and keep it for your records. This will free the judges from any suspicion of prejudice or subjectivity.

OPTION:

Many Essay Chairs have passed this helpful hint along to the Programs Department: For each essay to be judged, confirm the total number of words in the essay.

Remember, the material in the text of the essay is counted, not the footnotes at the bottom of the page or end of the essay.

Example: [1] The Book of Dreams, page 6-10, Steven Smith. This would not be counted in the word total, however in the text: "Dreams are an important part of a person's development."[1] The quotation would be counted.

Remember words like: a, and, the, ARE counted in the word total.

Remember: hyphenated words count as one (1) word.

If the number of words is not correctly identified, note it on a list. This will cut down on some of the time it takes judges to complete their tasks.

Example:

Essay	Words Correctly Identified	Correct Count
1	yes	
2	no	805
3	no	605

Two Additional Points to Keep in Mind:

1. In compiling scores, these should be kept in your confidence and should never be revealed, displayed or discussed.
2. In the event you have a large number of entries you may want to have a preliminary judging (separate judges) to reduce the number to a workable field. This is the decision of the Contest Chair; it is not mandatory.

Using the Master Score Sheet

Enter the points allotted to the various entries by each of the three judges on the master score sheet. After totaling the points allotted for each entry in the total column, rank the entries in the rank column. If no ties occur, you can easily determine your first, second and third-place winners.

In the case of a tie, the entry scoring the largest number of points in category 1 shall be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, each succeeding category shall be considered the tie-breaker.

Should a tie still exist through category 5, the tied essays shall be resubmitted to the judges for a second judging (no ties permitted, as before).

Remember scores are strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone.

Master Score Sheet for Club and District Chairs

Optimist Essay Contest

Entry Number	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Point Total	Rank
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

District Essay Contest Entry Form

To Be Completed By the Club Contest Chair

This form is to be sent with the Club winner's essay, copy of their birth certificate or passport and entry fee (if applicable) to the District Essay Chair to be received no later than February 28, 2017.

Contestant Information

Name _____

Address _____

City_____State/Country_____Zip Code _____

Home Phone # (_____)_____Age _____
(must be under 18 years of age as of October 1, 2015)

E-mail Address: _____ ☐ Male ☐Female

Statement of Originality

I have studied the Official Rules of the Optimist International Essay Contest and fully understand and agree to be bound by them. Furthermore, I have prepared my own essay with limited assistance. I have given proper credit for any non-original material used. I have not competed in any other Optimist Club Essay Contest this year. I understand that any omission of proper credit or violation of the rules on my part shall mean immediate disqualification.

Contestant's signature_____Date_____/_____/_____

Instruction to Club Chair

1. Re-attach the title page to the essay before submitting to the District Essay Chair
2. Type or print the name of the sponsoring Club on the title page
3. Submit the essay along with this form, contestant application, copy of winner's birth certificate or passport and entry fee (if applicable) to the District Essay Chair to arrive no later than FEBRUARY 28, 2017.

Number of youth in **Club** contest _____

For Club Chair's signature

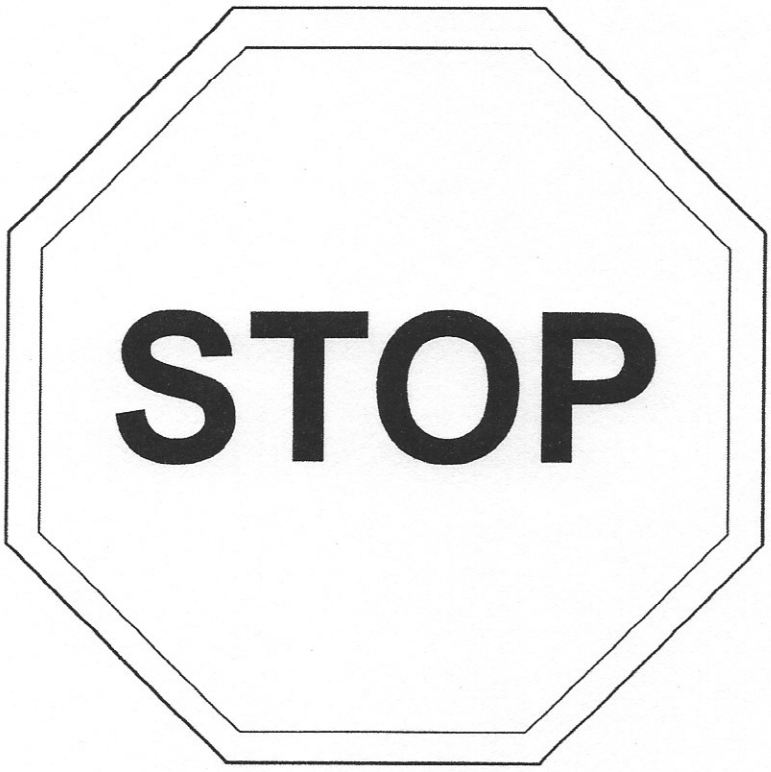
"We, the undersigned, in full compliance with the Optimist International Essay Contest rules, enter this contestant in the District Contest. We understand that this form, the essay and a copy of the birth certificate or passport must be submitted to the Contest Chair before this contestant competes in the next level of the contest."

Optimist Club of_____District Name_____

Club Number _____

Club President's Signature_____

Club Contest Chair's Signature_____



In order for the Club winner to be eligible to participate in the District level contest, the Club Chair must submit the following:

_____District Essay Contest Entry Form (page 12)
- Must be signed by contestant
- Must have number of students that participated in the contest
- Must have appropriate signatures

_____Application for 2016-2017 Optimist International Essay Contest

_____Birth Certificate or Passport (can be a copy, if legible)
- Other age verification documents will **not** be accepted

_____Printed copy of essay

_____Entry fee (if applicable)

To be received no later than February 28, 2018!

Essay Contest Club Chair Evaluation Form

District Name _____

Chair Name (optional) _____

Are you a first-time or repeating Chair?_____Contest year _____

What was your favorite part of the contest as Chair?

_____

_____

_____

Please list ways your club is able to obtain contestants for your contest.

_____

_____

_____

What was your opinion on this year's topic? Do you have suggestions for future topics?

_____

_____

_____

What recommendations, if any, would you propose for improving the Essay contest?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please share any procedures that worked well for your Club.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please list any changes your Club will make for next year's contest.

_____

_____

_____

_____

This form should be submitted to:

Optimist International Programs Department
Attn: Essay Coordinator
4494 Lindell Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63108 or
fax to: 314-371-6006