



## Patriot's Pen Rules and Eligibility

### Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

### What Are the Rules?

You must write your own essay.

All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5-word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay. Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.

Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).

The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestants. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

### How Am I Judged?

#### **Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:**

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

#### **Theme development is worth 35 points:**

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

#### **Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:**

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

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