



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 it 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?