PATRIOT'S PEN



2025-2026 Theme

"How Are You Showing Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2025

Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 60,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition.

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.)

How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.

- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Oct. 31. You can submit your essay and entry form electronically by email upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to the VFW National Headquarters directly will be returned.

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.

What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2025-2026 theme is:

How Are You Showing Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"

Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight Oct. 31.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to "Find a VFW Post."

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit **vfw.org/contactus** to look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

For assistance contact the VFW National Headquarters at 816.968.2787 Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

2025-2026 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

	Post Commander/Chairperson Signature
Name: First, M.I., Last	VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Sig
Address	Post Address
City, State, Zip	City, State, Zip
Phone Email	VFW Post Email
	No. of participants
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Grade in School Essay Word Count	
School Name, City, State	Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$
Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)	Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (E
To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian (Required even if student is 18 or over) Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)	To Be Completed by the VFW Dist I certify that the student named in the province of the Patriot's Pen Contest Distriction the Department.
Parent/Guardian Signature Date	
	District Chairperson Signature
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone	Address
Parent/Guardian's Email	City, State, Zip
What Are the Rules?	
• You must write your own essay.	Phone Email
 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 	To Be Completed by the VFW Dep I certify that the student named in the prefirst-place winner of the Patriot's Pen De entry into the National Judging.
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.	Department Chairperson Signature () Daytime Phone
• 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 winner O has been O will be (check first-place Department winner on
• 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.	Local VFW Post Information:
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 contest must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the besis of their	Contact:
but the content must remain the contestant's. 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	Phone:

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

• At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

of the Veteran's 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

To Be Completed by the VFW Post I certify that this student has an authorized

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post#

Post Address	
City, State, Zip	
VFW Post Email	
No. of participants	No. of winners
Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships	s awards \$
Amt. of Post/Aux. additional ex	xpenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$
	/FW District d in the previous section is the duly selected ntest District Competition and is our sole entry
District Chairperson Signature	Dist. #
Address	
City, State, Zip	
()	
To Be Completed by the V	/FW Department Chairperson
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activities.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

A Proud Sponsor