



A partnership of
National Endowment for the Arts and
Poetry Foundation

POETRY OUT LOUD—FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Poetry Out Loud: National Poetry Recitation Contest?

A partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Foundation, and the state and jurisdictional arts agencies, Poetry Out Loud™ is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. The program starts in the classroom/school or at the local level with an area organization. Winners then may advance to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the national finals. Awards and placements are determined solely by the judges' scores based on the Poetry Out Loud Evaluation Criteria. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may also choose to run Poetry Out Loud. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or an organization. Students unable to participate at their school or a local organization should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition. Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.1 million students and 68,000 teachers from 17,000 schools and organizations across the nation have participated in Poetry Out Loud.

Where and where does Poetry Out Loud take place?

Poetry Out Loud takes place in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. High schools and organizations that choose to participate in the official competition conduct their programs and contests between September and February. State contests took place by early March. The 2021 Poetry Out Loud National Finals will take place virtually in May through a video submission-based competition that will be streamed live on arts.gov. All 55 state and jurisdictional finalists will participate in the national semifinals that will stream on Sunday, May 2, with the top nine students advancing to the national finals, that will stream on Thursday, May 27.

Who created Poetry Out Loud?

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation created Poetry Out Loud. State and jurisdictional arts agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to assist with expenses of program coordination and the state final event.

Who can participate in the official Poetry Out Loud contest?

The official Poetry Out Loud contest is administered at the state level by state and jurisdictional arts agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. All types of high schools are welcome to participate, including public, private, parochial, independent, charter, etc., as well as homeschool students. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may choose to run Poetry Out Loud as well. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or an organization. Only schools and organizations registered with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator are eligible for the competition; if you would like to get involved, contact your [state arts agency](#).

No student may be excluded from participating in Poetry Out Loud on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin. More information on Poetry Out Loud rules and eligibility may be found at poetryoutloud.org.



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Are schools that are not part of the official contest welcome to participate in other ways?

All of the Poetry Out Loud program materials are available for free online in the [Teachers & Organizers](#) section of the website. Using these online materials, schools and organizations are welcome to conduct their own “unofficial” poetry recitation competitions and introduce their students to classic and contemporary poetry.

Are program materials available?

Poetry Out Loud offers educators free standards-based curriculum materials, which include an online poetry anthology with more than 1,100 classic and contemporary poems, a teachers’ guide, lesson plans, and video and audio on the art of recitation. These free resources are available at poetryoutloud.org.

What awards are available as part of Poetry Out Loud?

National Level: A total of \$50,000 in awards and school or organizational stipends will be given at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals, including a \$20,000 award for the National Champion, \$10,000 for 2nd place, \$5,000 for 3rd place, and \$1,000 for 4th–9th places. The representing schools/organizations of each of the top nine finalists receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials. There will be one honorable mention in each of three national semifinals competitions. Those students will not advance to the finals, but will each receive a \$1,000 cash award and a \$500 stipend for their school or organization.

State Level: Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and their representing school/organization will receive \$500 for poetry materials. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100; their school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry materials.

The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded. Awards are made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families. Full details on prize requirements are available in the [rules and eligibility](#) section of the website.

What is the structure of the National Finals?

The 2021 Poetry Out Loud National Finals will take place virtually in May through a video submission-based competition that will be streamed live on arts.gov. All 55 state and jurisdictional finalists will participate in the national semifinals that will stream on **Sunday, May 2**, with the top nine students advancing to the national finals, that will stream on **Thursday, May 27**. For the finals, all nine students are judged on two rounds of recitations. The top three are judged on a third poem, and the contestant with the highest scores from all three rounds will be named Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

What are the judging criteria?

All contestants are evaluated on these criteria: physical presence, voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, dramatic appropriateness, accuracy, and overall performance. For more information regarding these criteria, please consult the [teacher’s guide](#).

How can I get more information?

Visit poetryoutloud.org for more information on this program. The website features educational resources for teachers and students, including standards-based educational materials, tips on hosting a school contest, and videos of outstanding performances.