



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 Competition?

Poetry Out Loud® lifts poetry off the page, creating community and connection. Through this program, high school students across the country participate in a dynamic poetry recitation competition that is designed to improve their public speaking skills, help build confidence, and teach them about literary history and contemporary life. A partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and state and jurisdictional arts agencies, Poetry Out Loud® provides free lesson plans and other educational materials to teachers and organizers, including an online anthology of 1,200 classic and contemporary poems.

The program starts at the local level with a school or participating 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 judges' scores based on the Poetry Out Loud Evaluation Criteria. Poetry Out Loud takes place in all 50 states, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.4 million students and 81,000 teachers from 20,000 schools across the U.S. have participated in Poetry Out Loud.

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, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to assist with expenses of program coordination and the state final event.

What is the structure of the National Finals?

The 2024 Poetry Out Loud National Finals will take place May 1 and 2, 2024, at Lisner Auditorium, George Washington University, in Washington, DC. The state and jurisdictional finalists will compete in one of three regional semifinals on May 1. The top three competitors from each semifinal will advance to the national finals on Thursday, May 2. At the finals, all nine will compete in two rounds of recitation. The top three will advance to recite a third poem, and the competitor with the highest scores from all three rounds will be named Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

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:

- \$20,000 for the National Champion
- \$10,000 for 2nd place
- \$5,000 for 3rd place
- \$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 the three national semifinal 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/organization.

State Level:



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- \$200 for each first-place winner
- \$500 for poetry materials for each first-place winner’s school or organization
- \$100 for one runner-up in each state
- \$200 for the purchase of poetry materials for each runner-up’s school or organization.

The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. 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 and travel and accommodations requirements are available in the [rules and eligibility](#) section of the website.

What are the judging criteria?

All competitors are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Physical presence
- Voice and articulation
- Interpretation
- Evidence of understanding
- Overall performance
- Accuracy

For more information regarding these criteria, please consult the [teacher’s guide](#).

Who can participate in the official Poetry Out Loud competition?

The official Poetry Out Loud competition is administered at the state level by state and jurisdictional arts agencies in all 50 states, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. 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](#).

Are schools that are not part of the official competition 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 1,200 classic and contemporary poems, teachers’ guide, lesson plans, and video and audio on the art of recitation. These free resources are available at [PoetryOutLoud.org](#).



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How can I get more information?

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