



Writing a Personal Essay

An essay is a short exposition on a single topic, usually presenting the writer's personal point of view. A personal essay gives the reader an intimate glimpse of the author's experience, thoughts or feelings.

Your "My Turn" essay should be similar in format to the weekly "My Turn" column in NEWSWEEK, in which a member of the public shares an opinion, experience or personal feeling. In some "My Turn" essays, the writers try to persuade readers to take action or agree with a point of view. Other "My Turn" essays simply share experiences, feelings or reflections. The personal experience or observation draws readers into the essay and helps them make a connection with the writer and the ideas.

"My Turn" Competition judges look for direct personal experience and observation with a fresh, original point of view. They want engaging, moving or thought-provoking essays that appeal to a national readership.

When writing your essay, you should follow a

three-part format: the introduction, which includes an engaging lead; the body, which contains the central idea, and a conclusion, which sums up and expands on the main or central idea of the essay.

Within a well-written essay, each paragraph is a group of related sentences that make one major point or express a single idea. Well-written paragraphs share three essential characteristics:

unity: An effective paragraph sticks to the topic. All sentences develop one main idea, which should support the central idea of the entire essay.

coherence: The sentences are presented in a logical order and are linked together in a way that makes it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought.

adequate development: The paragraph includes enough development, such as supporting detail or explanation, for the reader to easily understand its main idea.

All cash winners and honorable mentions in the Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Competition, as well as their teachers, will receive a FREE copy of the new NEWSWEEK Education Program book, "Essay Writing Step-by-Step," published by Kaplan Books.

Official Rules

1) No purchase necessary. To enter, each student must complete the official entry form (or a photocopy) and submit it with 3 copies of the original essay (500—1,000 words) on a topic of the student's choice, where the student shares his or her opinion, experience or personal feeling.

2) The Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Competition is open to any resident of the United States (and its territories and possessions) who, as of January 1, 2004, is a high-school student intending to attend a college or university following high school. All other entries will be disqualified. Prize winners of past Kaplan/NEWSWEEK essay competition(s) and employees of The Washington Post companies, affiliates and subsidiaries are ineligible.

Each student may enter only one essay. The essay must have a title. The essay must be typed or computer-printed, double-spaced and in English. Each copy of the essay must be stapled and the entry form should be stapled to one copy. Handwritten essays or essays presented in any other way will be disqualified. Each essay must include entrant's home telephone number, including area code, in the upper right-hand corner of each page. It must be the same number as that listed on the entry form. **DO NOT put your name on the essay.** Essays must be mailed flat in a 9x12 envelope and must be postmarked no later than **March 1, 2004.**

High-school entrants should mail their entries to: KAPLAN/NEWSWEEK "MY TURN" ESSAY COMPETITION, 888 7th Avenue, 22nd floor, New York, NY 10106. Neither Kaplan nor NEWSWEEK assumes

responsibility for lost, late, misdirected, mutilated, postage-due and illegible entries, all of which will be disqualified. All materials submitted will become Kaplan's and/or NEWSWEEK's exclusive property and will not be returned.

3) Essays must be original and factually accurate, and must not infringe upon any material protected by copyright. Essays will be judged by pre-screening groups consisting of qualified Kaplan and NEWSWEEK employees, and then by a final judging panel. The decisions of the judges will be final. Essays will be judged on the following criteria: (1) effectiveness, insightfulness, creativity and completeness (33 1/3%); (2) organization and development of the ideas expressed, with clear and appropriate examples to support them (33 1/3%); and (3) consistency in the use of language, variety in sentence structure and range of vocabulary, use of proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation (33 1/3%).

4) One high-school student will win \$5,000 for the first-prize winning essay, another student will win \$2,000 for the second-prize winning essay, and an additional eight high-school students will each win a check in the amount of \$1,000, which may be used for future educational needs. Winning essays, as well as 10 honorable mentions (the authors of which are not entitled to any monetary or other award), may be published by the NEWSWEEK Education Program. All winners and honorable mentions will receive a copy of the NEWSWEEK Education Program book, "Essay Writing Step-by-Step." In the event of a tie, the essay with the higher score for creativity will win. In the event of a second tie, the tying contestants will be

required to submit a new essay on a topic of Kaplan/NEWSWEEK's choice which will be judged on the same criteria as the original entries.

5) The likelihood of winning will depend upon the quality of all other entries as judged by the criteria stated above. Prizes are nontransferable. All prizes will be awarded. Competition is void where prohibited or restricted by law. Winners will be solely responsible for any federal, state or local taxes. Within 10 days of the date specified in the notification, winners and their parents/legal guardians will be required to execute an affidavit of originality, eligibility and compliance with rules, a release of liability and grant of publication rights, or prize will be awarded to an alternate winner. Winners must provide a street address.

6) All essays and all rights to their publication become the property of Kaplan and/or NEWSWEEK, which may use, edit and excerpt these entries for promotional or any other purpose, including placing them online (e.g., on www.newsweekeducation.com) without attribution or compensation, additional or otherwise. Kaplan and NEWSWEEK reserve the right to use prizewinners' names and hometowns in any advertising or promotional materials relating to this competition without further notification, permission, or compensation to the winners, except where prohibited by law.

7) Winners will be selected on or about May 15, 2004, and will be notified by mail. For the names of winners, send a separate, stamped self-addressed envelope by June 30, 2004, to: Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Winners, 888 7th Avenue, New York, NY 10106.

ATTENTION HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

Win \$5,000 For College

Enter the Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Competition

To enter, each student must complete the official entry form (or a photocopy) and submit it with two copies of an original essay (500–1,000 words) on a topic of the student's choice that shares an opinion, experience or personal feeling (see "Writing a Personal Essay" on the back cover of this brochure). Also, before applying students need to read and follow the Official Rules, which are also on the back cover.

Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Competition Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Area Code and Home Phone Number _____

Title of Essay _____

E-mail Address _____

Date of Birth _____

Name and Phone Number of Parent/Guardian _____

School Attending _____

Current Grade Level _____

School Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Name and Phone Number of Guidance Counselor _____

Name and subject area of teacher who provided this form _____

Student Signature _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (students 17 or younger) _____

Getting Started:

■ Think about a personal experience that has shaped or motivated you as a person. How can you express this experience so it is interesting for others to read?

■ Take a few moments to write your thoughts and memories of the experience before you begin organizing your ideas into an essay.

■ Read the section "Writing a Personal Essay" in this brochure and several "My Turn" essays in NEWSWEEK as a guide for refining the topic and writing your essay.

■ Study the "Sample 'My Turn' Essay." Use it as a model for writing an effective essay.

■ Show your essay to friends and teachers for their comments. Polish your essay and mail it in!

First Prize wins \$5,000!

Second Prize wins \$2,000

Eight more students win \$1,000

Ten winning essays and 10 honorable mentions may be published by the NEWSWEEK Education Program.

All high-school students are eligible.

Deadline for entry: **March 1, 2004**



www.kaptest.com



www.newsweekeducation.com

TO ALL INSTRUCTORS:

Please make photocopies for each student entry. Entries without forms will not qualify for contest.

PLEASE SEND ALL ENTRIES TO:

2004 Kaplan/NEWSWEEK "My Turn" Essay Competition
888 SEVENTH AVENUE • 22ND FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10106



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