



## Poetry Out Loud Rules & Eligibility

### Student Eligibility

- **Grade Level:** Only currently enrolled students in grades 9-12 are eligible, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9th- through 12th-grade class.
- **Citizenship:** Competitors at the state and national finals must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents with a valid tax identification or Social Security number. Tax identification or Social Security numbers are required to receive prizes, including cash payments or travel awards. Students are responsible for verifying their eligibility.
- **State Finals:** A student may not advance to the state finals without competing in a lower-level competition.
- **Homeschooled Students:** Homeschooled students may participate by competing in a contest at a local school (at the school's discretion) or with other local homeschooled students. Contact your state coordinator for specific guidelines.
- **School Not Participating?** Students unable to participate at a local school should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition.
- **Repeat Champions:** Only National Champions are not eligible to compete in subsequent years.
- **Relatives:** Avoiding any potential conflicts of interest (or the appearance of conflicts of interest) helps to preserve the integrity of the contest and make it fair for all students. Relatives\* of national organizers (NEA and the Poetry Foundation) may compete in school, local, regional, and state competitions, but would not be able to advance to National Finals. Relatives\* of State Art Agency Coordinators or affiliated contractors and sponsors may not compete past the school level in that particular state.

\*Relatives for this age group are defined as child, sibling, or any member of the employee's household.

## Poem Eligibility

- **Poem Anthology:** All poems must be selected from the Poetry Out Loud print or online anthology, which is updated every summer. Check the website after September 1, 2015, to view the official POL anthology for the current school year. Only versions of poems from the official anthology may be used in the contest.
- **Can't Find a Poem?** Poems may be removed from the online anthology before September 1, 2015. These poems are no longer eligible for competition, unless they are in the print anthology. However, any poem in the printed anthology is eligible even if it is not online.
- **Poem Criteria:** At the state and national finals, students must have 3 poems prepared. One must be 25 lines or fewer, and one must be written before the 20th century. The same poem may be used to meet both criteria, and may be the student's third poem.

## Competition

- **School Competition:** Schools must hold a competition of at least 2 students to select their champion. If that champion is unable to attend the next level of competition, the runner-up should be sent.
- **Evaluation:** Students must be judged according to the Poetry Out Loud evaluation criteria from the 2015-2016 Teacher's Guide.
- **Rounds:** State and national finals consist of 3 rounds of competition. Competitions at lower levels may have fewer rounds, but students must recite only 1 poem in each round.
- **Poem Order:** The order in which the poems are recited is up to the student, but poem order may not be switched once given to the competition organizer. Competition organizers may not dictate poem order.
- **Judging:** Rankings are based solely on evaluation sheets submitted by judges. Judges should not convene to discuss performances during the competition. Judges may not reconsider their scores after they are submitted. Judges' decisions are final.
- **Scoring:** Scoring is cumulative. The scores from all rounds should be added together to determine the winner.
- **Ties:** In the event of a tie, the tied student with the highest overall performance score should win; if that also results in a tie, look to the highest accuracy score. If scores remain tied, consider having students pick 1 poem to recite again as a separate score to break the tie.
- **Memorization:** Students must recite their poem from memory.
- **Props:** Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.