



2026 OPT/PBS KIDS® Writers Contest Rules

The OPT/PBS KIDS® Writers Contest (the “Contest”) is produced by Ozarks Public Television and based on the Reading Rainbow® Young Writers and Illustrators Contest, a concept developed by WNET. The Contest begins on or about February 1, 2026 and ends on April 24, 2026. This Contest consists of one round of local judging. To enter the contest, you may submit your entry in person, via email, or mail to Ozarks Public Television. All entries must be postmarked by April 25, 2026 to be eligible. This Contest is void where prohibited.

Mailing Address

Ozarks Public Television
Missouri State University
Strong Hall Rm. 102
Attention: KIDS Writers Contest
901 S National Ave
Springfield MO 65897

Email Address

events@optv.org

Note: If submitting electronically, please provide full-color scans of each page, correctly ordered, in a PDF file format.

Physical Address

Ozarks Public Television
Missouri State University
Strong Hall Rm. 102
900 S Holland Ave
Springfield MO 65897

New This Year

Winners will have the optional opportunity to be interviewed and filmed reading their story. These recordings may be featured in Ozarks Public Television broadcasts and online platforms to celebrate and showcase the creativity of our talented young writers and promote contest participation. Participation in filming is **not** required and will not affect judging or eligibility. Families may choose to opt out of this opportunity.

Eligibility & Entry Guidelines

- Entrants must be children in kindergarten, first, second or third grade.
- Children of employees of Ozarks Public Broadcasting are not eligible.
- Only one entry per person will be accepted in this contest; all subsequent entries will be disqualified.
- Only single author stories qualify (no co-authored stories).
- Stories can be fact, fiction, prose or poetry.
- Any failure to adhere to these Contest Rules may result in disqualification from the Contest.
- No purchase is necessary.

Word Count Requirement

- Kindergarten and first grade stories must have a minimum of 50 words and a maximum of 200 words.
- Second and third grade stories must have a minimum of 100 words and a maximum of 350 words.
- The word count includes “a,” “an,” and “the,” but not the words on non-story pages such as the title page or those that enhance the illustrations.
- Text must be printed or written legibly or typed.
- Children who cannot write may dictate their story to be printed, written legibly or typed.
- Text may be integrated into the illustration pages or on separate pages.
- Non-English text must be translated on the same page, and the translated text (English text) must adhere to word count.
- Invented spelling is accepted.

Format & Illustrations

- Stories must have at least 5 original, clear and colorful illustrations.
- Original art can include drawings, collages, and 3-D art created by the author or photographs taken by the author.
- Stories must be created on one side of the paper and numbered somewhere (front or back) of each page.

Official Entry Form

- Each entry must include the official [OPT/PBS KIDS® Writers Contest Entry Form](#), with the required signature of a parent/guardian (and, if appropriate, the optional signature of the sponsoring teacher), consenting to allowing their child/ward to enter the contest, confirming that the story and art are original, and granting certain rights to the entry materials.
- The entry form must be complete and legible to be eligible.

Judging, Awards & Notification

All entries submitted to the contest will be judged using the judging criteria and percentages below by a panel of no fewer than 3 judges selected and coordinated by OPT. Judging will occur on or about May 1st. The judging criteria and percentages shall be scored and graded using a rubric based on the following criteria as follows:

- 40% Creativity and originality of plot and/or themes
- 40% Story structure and use of literary devices
- 20% Relevance, quality and originality of illustration

All decisions of the judges are final and binding and not subject to appeal or review. Winners will be as follows: (1) the entry with the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the First Place winners; (2) the entry the second to the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the Second Place winners (3) the entry with the third to the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the Third Place winners. In the event of a tie the entry with the highest score in the creativity and originality category from among all tying entries will be deemed the winner from among all tying entries. Winners will be notified on or before June 1, 2026.

Prizes

Prizes of nominal value will be awarded at an awards banquet on July 23, 2026 to **Four (4) First Place Winners** (One (1) First Place winner per grade); **Four (4) Second Place Winners** (One (1) Second Place winner per grade); and **Four (4) Third Place Winners** (One (1) Third Place winner per grade). OPT will select the prizes of nominal value, at the sole discretion of OPT. Prizes are not redeemable for cash, non-transferable, and non-substitutable, except at the sole discretion of Sponsor.

Return of Entries

The Contest administrators will make every effort but are not required to return mailed entries unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope of an *appropriate* size. OPT is not responsible for late, lost, stolen, misdirected, damaged, mutilated, incomplete, returned, or illegible entries, or postage-due mail.

Rights Associated with Contest

Submission of the Entry Form constitutes permission from the participant's parent/legal guardian for OPT to use the participants' name, likeness, biographical information, information and materials contained in the Entry Form, photographs, and any statements or remarks made about the Contest in advertising and promotion without further compensation or permission, except where prohibited by law. All entries, and any copyrights therein, become the sole property of OPT. By entering, entrants' parent/legal guardian agree to abide by the above stated rules and warrant that their child's/ward's entry is their original work and does not infringe upon or violate rights of any third party, and grant to OPT the right to edit, publish, promote, and otherwise use their entry materials without permission, notice or compensation. No royalties will be paid at this or any time. By submitting an Entry Form, each participant's parent/legal guardian, on behalf of participant, agrees to be bound by these Contest Rules. OPT reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate, suspend or otherwise cancel the Contest at any time. Income and all other taxes are the responsibility of the prize recipient. OPT and PBS/KOZK are not responsible for any expenses incurred in connection with participation in the Contest.

Privacy: Unless otherwise specified, any and all information connected in connection with this contest will be used by Sponsor solely for the purpose of administering and promoting the contest and station.