

THE ESSAY 2026

Thank you for your interest in this year's Washington Youth Tour's Essay Contest. The TOPIC for the Essay is:

As a young person, in your opinion, what are the three main issues affecting your generation? Please be clear in naming the issues and offer how each may be addressed.

1. The essay requirement is worth 100 points out of the 300 to determine the finalists. Your essay should be at least 500 words long.

The essay is due at the TOUA office by **4:30 pm on Wednesday, January 21, 2026** along with the completed Biographical Information Sheet signed by your guardian.

3. The essay must be typed (double-spaced) and should NOT have your name on it, nor should the content identify you in any way. (A code will be assigned to your essay when you turn it in.)

The Essay Format is 12 pt. font in either Times New Roman or Arial with 1 inch side margins and 1 inch top and bottom margins.

4. A panel of judges will evaluate the essays based on the following four criteria:

~ Format (as stated above) 20 points	~ Correct grammar 20 points
~ Originality 20 points	~ Content 40 Points

5. You will be notified by **Friday, January 23, 2026** if you are a finalist for an interview.

THE INTERVIEW

1. The Interview is worth 200 points out of the 300 to determine the finalists. You will be given an opportunity to speak about your essay.
2. The Interview portion of the competition allows judges to learn more about you, your background, activities, goals and interests. It will also demonstrate how well you present yourself to others.
3. Be prepared to be interviewed by a panel of judges who will ask each finalist the same pre-determined questions. The entire interview process will last at least 15 – 20 minutes.
4. The judges will score your interview on five factors:

~ Appearance 40 points	~ Community/School Involvement 40 points
~ Personality 40 points	~ Responsibility 40 points
~ Effective communication 40 points	

NOTE: Past judges said they are impressed by confident, enthusiastic students who are involved in their school and community and who have an awareness of themselves and the world. The best advice is to be yourself and take the opportunity to allow the judges to learn about you.

GOOD LUCK!