

The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition 2023

Guidance Notes

Late or incomplete entries will not be accepted. NSF (UK) will coordinate and submit all entries on behalf of schools and individuals. For submissions from outside the UK, teachers are requested to make a group submission on behalf of their pupils as a group entry.

Only one entry per participant is allowed and no revision can be made once submitted.

Entries must be written in English and in Microsoft Word format.

Word limits apply to all topics and all formats (essay, poem, letter, etc.) Exceeding the word count will result in automatic disqualification.

Plagiarism is not accepted in the competition. Every year students are disqualified because they are suspected of plagiarism. Please see the plagiarism guide before submitting.

1. Participants are expected to show originality and flair, linked to sound academic standards and competent use of English as a written language. This includes a good standard of spelling and punctuation, neat presentation and clear hand-writing or word-processing.
2. Entries must respond to the topic. Each year a few good entrants must be disregarded because they do not fully answer/reflect on what the topic has asked them to do.
3. Entrants are encouraged to be creative in their response to a topic. Entries can be submitted in different formats: for example, a poem, letter, article, story, essay or a short play/script.
4. Illustrations are welcomed, particularly in J junior entries, but they must enhance the written text and add to the overall quality of the entry.

Tips from the Judges

The following guidelines provide some useful insights from previous judges who have had experience recognising what makes a good piece of writing, and may help you get started on your submission:

1. Choose to answer one of the topics, and you are encouraged to interpret this in any way you wish.
2. Think carefully about the form of writing you use to answer the topic. There are a variety of forms and styles to play with.

3. Make sure to use your own voice and your own words. Judges are very good at spotting work that is not original. For more information about **plagiarism**, please read the **Plagiarism Guide below**.
4. We understand that English is a diverse language and there are different and innovative ways of using it around the Commonwealth. We encourage diversity and creativity of language in submissions.
5. Ensure you check grammar and punctuation throughout writing your piece. Do not submit an entry without proof-reading.
6. Presentation is important: think about the visual appearance of the entry as well as the quality of the content.
7. The maximum word counts are 1,500 words for senior entries and 750 words for junior entries. These word limits apply to all topics and all formats (essay, poem, letter, etc.).
8. Exceeding the word count will result in automatic disqualification.
9. Entries must be written in English.
10. Only one entry per participant is allowed. Once an essay is submitted, students/teachers will not have the opportunity to revise it. Please carefully check and improve your writing before submitting the final copy, and ensure that all supplementary information is filled in correctly (name, contact details, topic number, etc.)
11. The final copy submitted for the competition must be the entrant's own work, and cannot be excessively corrected or improved by another person. This does not rule out input or assistance from others but does exclude group entries.
12. By entering the competition, you agree that your personal details including full name, gender, email, school and essay may be sent to your local R C S branch and any Essay Competition partners. See clause 4.1.6 of the RCS ' Privacy Policy for more information. Please note: Winners and Runners-up of the pan-Commonwealth competition will have their full names, schools, essays and photographs displayed on the RCS website and social media channels.
13. Essays can only be uploaded as a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx). The on-line platform does not accept Google Docs (.g doc), Pages documents (.pages) or other word processor formats. Note: if we are unable to find or open your essay file (either through an incorrect format or upload error), your entry may not be counted in the competition.
14. All entrants retain the copyright rights that they have for the pieces they submit, but by entering The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition, each contestant consents to the use of his/her name, and/or pieces or parts thereof in any advertisements, educational materials, corpus research or media and publicity carried out or produced by the Royal Commonwealth Society and its local branches without further notice or compensation. The Royal Commonwealth society can publish or decline to publish; use or decline to use, any submitted pieces at the Royal Commonwealth Society's sole discretion.

15. The RCS suggests that entrants retain a copy of their original work as regrettably we are unable to return or provide copies of submissions.
1. The RCS retains the right to change the prize of the competition if circumstances make this necessary.
 2. The RCS will only be able to publish on our website and in our literature content that is appropriate for a wide and diverse audience, in line with our own policies. Entrants are encouraged to consider this in relation to their use of language when entering the competition.

Plagiarism: what is it and how can it be avoided?

The judges of The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition take plagiarism very seriously. To prevent any accidental or deliberate plagiarism, we have created this explainer to clarify what plagiarism is, why it matters and how you can avoid it.

What is plagiarism?

At the most basic level, plagiarism is taking someone else's work and calling it your own without giving the original author the credit they deserve. What are some examples of plagiarism?

Many young writers think plagiarism is just copying someone else's work. However, plagiarism comes in many forms, including:

- Working with someone else without acknowledging their contribution,
- Copying from another source (including a website) without properly referencing,
- Taking words or ideas from someone, whether you know them or not, and passing them as your own, including by summarising, and
- Using famous quotes without proper referencing.

Why shouldn't I plagiarise?

Plagiarism isn't fair. Taking someone else's work and calling it your own is a type of theft and doesn't give credit to those who truly deserve it. It's also unprofessional, unacademic, and is grounds for dismissal from most jobs, schools and universities. If you are caught plagiarising, you will be automatically disqualified from the competition.

Finally, plagiarism doesn't allow your ideas and words to shine through. Trust that you are a strong enough writer and thinker not to need to take someone else's work. We know you are!

How do I avoid plagiarism?

Avoiding plagiarism doesn't mean avoiding research – it just means referencing properly. There are lots of guides online that can help you with referencing, such as Imperial College London's guide to

Harvard style references, the MLA style guide, and the University of Western Australia's Oxford referencing examples. Some of these use footnotes and some use in-text citations. We've included some examples on the back of this sheet to get you started. You can use any style of reference for the competition and your Works Cited or Bibliography and referencing footnotes or endnotes do not count towards the word count.

If you are doing a piece of creative writing and haven't looked in any books, on any websites, or taken ideas from anyone you know, the chances are you won't need to reference at all.

Need help?

We encourage you to ask your teacher or parent for help if you need it. We are also always at youth@nsf.community to lend a hand.

Examples of referencing

Please note that these are just a few examples of how to reference. There are many styles to choose from and we encourage you to research how to reference to be sure you get it right.

All items listed in red should be included in your reference. All items listed in blue should be adapted to your source. All italics, "quotation marks", and punctuation must be applied and included when you reference. Examples have been given in black.

Original Source: Website

MLA Referencing - Author Surname, Author First Name. "Individual page name." Date published, website URL. Accessed [date accessed].

Johnson, Betty-Sue. "Commonwealth Essay Competition." 02 Nov. 2011, www.commonwealthessaycompetition.co.uk. Accessed [22 Feb. 2017].

Harvard Referencing - Author Surname, Author First Initial. (Year Published). Individual page name. [Online] Available at: website URL [Accessed Date Accessed].

Johnson, B. (2011). Commonwealth Essay Competition. [Online] Available at: www.commonwealthessaycompetition.co.uk [Accessed 22 Feb. 2017].

Oxford Referencing - Author Surname, Author First Initial., 'Individual page name', website URL, date published, (accessed [date accessed]).

Johnson, B., 'Commonwealth Essay Competition', www.commonwealthessaycompetition.co.uk, 02 Nov. 2011, (accessed [22 Feb. 2017]).

Original Source: Book

MLA Referencing - Author Surname, Author First Name. Title of Book. City: Publisher, Year Published. Print. Meyer, Stephanie. Twilight. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2004. Print.

Harvard Referencing - Author Surname, Author First Initial. (Year Published). Title of Book, Publishing city: Publisher. Meyer, S. (2004). Twilight. New York: Little, Brown & Company.

Oxford Referencing - Author First Initial. Author Surname, Title of Book, Publishing City, Publisher, Publishing year. S. Meyer, Twilight, New York, Little, Brown & Company, 2004