# ROTARY 4-WAY TEST ESSAY CONTEST

The District 5580 4-Way Essay Contest materials are now available and ready for you to open, download and share. The essay contest is open to students in their final 2 years of high school. District awards are: 1st place, $1,500; 2nd place, $1,000; 3rd place, $500; and 4th-7th place, $250 each. Local Rotary clubs may also offer local awards.

Clubs are encouraged to begin contacting their schools and distributing materials as soon as possible. Your club's participation is a statement of interest in the ideas of our young people and demonstrates our belief that it is important to reward our youth for expressing their views in a constructive and meaningful way.

Students in their final 2 years of high school are eligible to participate, preparing an essay of 500 to 1,000 words in length, double-spaced and using a topic of their choice that incorporates the use of the Rotary 4-Way Test:

- **IS IT THE TRUTH?**
- **IS IT FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED?**
- **WILL IT BUILD GOODWILL AND BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**
- **WILL IT BE BENEFICIAL TO ALL CONCERNED?**

The essay may focus on one, two, or all four principles of the Four-Way Test. Begin with a 1-3 sentence preamble briefly explaining how the topic relates to all four questions. Explain how the topic made a difference in your life or the life of the person you discuss. Include a title, but no student name or Rotary club identification on the essay. Cite outside sources, quotations and adaptations using footnotes or endnotes. The preamble and reference notes are excluded from the 500-1,000 word count. The essay must be double-spaced. See Sample Topic Areas for optional ideas.

**TO DOWNLOAD** the documents you will need, either retrieve them from the distributed email packet, or find them at **www.rotary5580.org** then locate the YOUTH dropdown menu and select 4-Way Essay Contest. Document links are found on the left side of that page.

*A prior video message may remain available on the website as a background resource. For the 2026-2027 contest, follow the current packet documents and the District submission portal.*

Specifically, students will need the **Student Guidelines**. They complete the **Student Information Form** online in the portal as they upload their essay (required); there is no separate form to print, sign or scan. Essay chairpersons will make appropriate adjustments to the poster, press-release and student guidelines documents. Students choose their sponsoring club in the portal, which notifies that club's contact, so please make sure the District essay chair has your club's current contact email. Students with no Rotary club nearby may still enter; the District essay chair will match their entry with a sponsoring club.

Students, school counselors and Rotary clubs should direct submissions and contest inquiries to the District 5580 Essay Contest portal: https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app. Complete entries must include the Student Information Form and essay, and must be submitted through the portal by November 30, 2026. Club-level judging will take place December 1-15, 2026, District-level judging will take place December 16-31, 2026, and club-level and District-level winners will be announced in early January 2027. NO LATE ENTRIES, PAPER COPIES OR ENTRIES WITHOUT THE STUDENT INFORMATION FORM WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Submit entries and direct inquiries through the District 5580 Essay Contest portal: https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app

# ROTARY 4-WAY TEST ESSAY CONTEST

ENCOURAGE YOUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS to promote this opportunity and ENCOURAGE YOUR AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS to participate. Current submissions and inquiries should go through the District portal. We look forward to seeing essays from students across District 5580!

AI Use, Original Work and Disqualification Policy:

Students may use AI tools for brainstorming, research assistance, organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity edits, citation formatting and logic checks. Students must independently verify background information. AI may not write the essay or substantial portions of it, generate paragraphs that are copied or lightly rewritten, replace the student's ideas or ethical reasoning, invent personal experiences, opinions or reflections, or answer the prompt in place of the student's own values and application of the Four-Way Test. Final ideas, analysis, conclusions, words and voice must be the student's original work. On the Student Information Form, identify any AI tools used and explain how they were used, including grammar or spelling assistance. Write 'None' if no AI was used. Plagiarism, undisclosed AI-generated content, or essays that do not reflect the student's own work may be disqualified, and any announced prize placement or prize money may be forfeited.

# Sample Topic Areas

Rotary District 5580 Four-Way Test Essay Contest 2026-2027

These optional examples can help you choose a topic that matters to you. You may choose another topic. Explain its impact on your life or the life of the person discussed, and apply the essay rules in the Student Guidelines.

Youth mentorship and education - tutoring, coaching, career guidance, reading programs, or helping students build confidence.

Food security - food shelves, meal delivery, community gardens, school backpack food programs, or reducing food waste.

Health and wellness - mental health awareness, blood drives, fitness initiatives, substance abuse prevention, or support for local clinics.

Senior support - companionship, technology help, transportation assistance, home maintenance, or intergenerational programs.

Environmental stewardship - park cleanups, recycling programs, tree planting, conservation education, or water quality projects.

Community inclusion and belonging - supporting newcomers, people with disabilities, isolated residents, or groups facing barriers to participation.

Support for disabled persons - accessibility projects, adaptive recreation, transportation help, peer support, disability awareness, or assistance with independent living.

Poverty and basic needs - clothing drives, hygiene kits, housing support, utility assistance, or emergency relief.

Civic engagement and leadership - voter education, youth leadership, public service projects, or volunteering with local boards and nonprofits.

Creating a healthy business community - supporting local businesses, encouraging ethical business practices, promoting entrepreneurship, strengthening workforce development, or helping build partnerships between schools, nonprofits, and employers.

Veterans and first responders - appreciation events, care packages, family support, or fundraising for local service organizations.

Disaster preparedness and response - emergency kits, community safety education, flood/fire response, or recovery support.

Arts, culture, and community pride - public art, local history projects, community events, beautification, or cultural celebrations.

Pay-it-forward projects - small acts of kindness that inspire others, such as helping a neighbor, organizing a donation effort, or creating a chain of service.

# AI Use and Original Work

Rotary District 5580 Four-Way Test Essay Contest 2026-2027

AI may support your writing process, but your essay must express your own thinking, ethical reasoning, words and voice. Disclose any AI assistance, including grammar and spelling tools.

## Permitted assistance

Brainstorming, research assistance, outlining, grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity edits, citation formatting and logic checks. Independently verify any factual background information.

## Unacceptable substitution

AI must not write the essay or substantial portions of it, generate paragraphs you copy or lightly rewrite, invent experiences or opinions, or replace your own research, reasoning or reflection.

## Tell us how you used AI

On the Student Information Form, identify the AI tool(s) used and explain how you used them, including grammar or spelling assistance. Write None if you did not use AI. Sign and date the original-work certification.

Example disclosure: I used an AI tool to suggest an outline and check spelling. I wrote the essay and verified the facts myself.

## Disqualification

Plagiarism, undisclosed AI-generated content, or essays that do not reflect the student's own work may be disqualified. Any announced prize placement or prize money may be forfeited.

Submissions and inquiries: https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app