

2026-2027 CLUB

GUIDELINES

Rotary District 5580 Annual Four-Way Test Essay Contest Open to High School Students (Juniors and Seniors)

IMMEDIATELY:

Establish contact dates and your local club prizes.

You may want to involve your teachers and school administration in choosing the best time frame. STUDENT SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE THROUGH THE DISTRICT PORTAL BY NOVEMBER 30, 2026. Please plan school outreach early enough for students and counselors to use the portal before the deadline. Local prize amounts are determined by each club but the suggested minimum is \$50 as the first prize awarded by your club. You are free to offer a larger first prize and additional local prizes.

Plan and Promote this Contest.

- ➡ Involve high school administrator Rotarians.
- ➡ Identify and personally contact key English and speech instructors and have them encourage students to participate.
- ➡ Share the current 4-Way Essay Contest materials with counselors and interested students. Materials are available on the District website, and submissions and questions should be directed to the District 5580 Essay Contest portal: <https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app>.
- ➡ Advertise the Contest. Announce the Contest in your local newspaper and use PSA's. A "Sample News Release" is included in your club packet. (This is an opportunity to make your community aware of Rotary's interest in youth.)
- ➡ Involve neighboring communities as well if you wish.

Utilize the poster, making several copies for placement in the schools.

- ➡ Indicate local prizes and the District portal deadline of November 30, 2026.
- ➡ Make sure posters are strategically and effectively displayed.

Communicate with more than one Rotary Club.

- ➡ Decide how you wish to share local schools, coordinate counselor outreach, and identify the club contact who will support assigned entries during club-level judging.

NOVEMBER 2026:

- ➡ Follow up with school administrators and teachers to determine the progress to date. Remind them that complete submissions are due through the portal by November 30, 2026. Express your thanks and invite them to Rotary.
- ➡ Organize a committee of judges to include both Rotarians and teachers. Rotary spouses are also suggested. Club-level judging will take place December 1-15, 2026.

DECEMBER 2026

- ➡ Complete club-level judging during December 1-15, 2026. District-level judging will take place December 16-31, 2026. Recognize local winners after judging is complete, have students present winning essays as part of a club program when practical, and publicize local winners in the media.
- ➡ Recognize and reward teachers who have participated. Include their names in local news releases. Invite them to a club meeting and recognize their work.
- ➡ Use the District 5580 Essay Contest portal for entries, club-level judging workflow and contest inquiries: <https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app>. ONLY COMPLETE DIGITAL SUBMISSIONS IN THE PORTAL WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO PAPER COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Judging will be based on utilization and application of the principles of the Four-Way Test. **Essays that do not incorporate these 4 principles will not be considered.** Student creativity, organization, language and grammar usage will also be considered as part of the overall judging criteria.

Students may use AI tools for brainstorming, research assistance, organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity edits, citation formatting and logic checks. AI may not write the essay, 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 and content must be the student's original work. Any AI assistance must be disclosed briefly on the Student Information Form. 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.

The District Judging Committee will determine district award placements. District awards are: 1st place, \$1,500; 2nd place, \$1,000; 3rd place, \$500; and 4th-7th place, \$250 each. Club-level and District-level winners will be announced in early January 2027.