

STUDENT GUIDELINES

2026-2027 Four-Way Test Essay Contest Sponsored by Rotary International District 5580

Complete essays and Student Information Forms must be submitted through the District portal by November 30,

2026: <https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app>

Students, school counselors and Rotary clubs may use the portal for submissions and contest inquiries. Club-level judging will take place December 1-15, 2026; District-level judging will take place December 16-31, 2026; winners will be announced in early January 2027.

WHAT IS THE FOUR-WAY TEST?

The Four-Way Test of the things we think, say or do is as follows:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

The Four-Way Test is not a code or a creed, but a **stimulus to self-appraisal**. It is not a pledge, but rather a springboard to voluntary self-improvement. It is not a sermon, although any number of sermons has been preached on it. It aims to encourage the ethical instincts in every person and constitutes a simple and practical guide for people of all cultures.

The Four-Way Test has inspired safe driving programs, fire prevention campaigns, crime and drug reduction activities; it has been the subject of countless secondary school essays. It has been translated into more than 100 languages.

WHY DOES ROTARY DISTRICT 5580 CONDUCT THE FOUR-WAY TEST ESSAY CONTEST? Our Rotarians believe that the thousands of dollars committed are an investment in our youth. It is a statement of our interest in the ideas of our young people. It demonstrates our belief that it is important to reward our youth for expressing their views. And, it is our way to encourage youth to apply the Four-Way Test to the world around them.

PRIZES - Local Rotary clubs may offer local prizes. District awards are: 1st place, \$1,500; 2nd place, \$1,000; 3rd place, \$500; and 4th-7th place, \$250 each.

ELIGIBILITY - Open to all students in the final two years of high school.

TOPIC - The essay may treat any subject of interest to the student, specific or general. For example, one might choose a topic relating to world peace, to a special friendship, to the environmental issues in general or to some issue in particular, to a choice of life-style, to a choice of occupation. Creative use of one's imagination is encouraged. Topics from previous contests include "College Tuition", "Life is Full of Choices", "Should you Multi-task?", "Censorship," and "Cyber-Bullying."

SUBMISSION - Each entry of 500 to 1,000 words in length is to be submitted as an electronic Word or PDF copy, double-spaced document, along with the Student Information Form through the District 5580 Essay Contest portal by November 30, 2026: <https://web-production-9a2ad.up.railway.app>. Complete entries must include both the essay and Student Information Form. Late entries, paper copies and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

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

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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. 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.