



# Youth Contest: How To

The instructions, sample flyer, and sample rating sheet are only provided as suggestions.

These contest materials can be used by any entity under the condition that **all related policies are followed**. Learn and follow all local policies and procedures, **particularly safe environment and parental rights policies**, and obtain appropriate permission before moving forward.

If a participant uses materials from another work, proper permissions **must** be obtained and accompany their submission.

If you have any questions about applicable policies, contact your parish, school, diocese, and/or any other relevant authoritative entities.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development has successfully run a youth contest for decades. To gain insight from their process about best practices, visit [www.goo.gl/6qh8CG](http://www.goo.gl/6qh8CG).

Move hearts and minds with the joyful Gospel of Life by highlighting unique gifts of young people! Hold a contest inviting youth to explore the theme as it relates to human dignity and respect for all human life.

Participants' entries should be original and illustrate the annual theme, and could be judged on understanding of the theme, creativity of the work, and artistic skill.

Basic instructions are provided below. (Depending on your area of ministry, some aspects may not relate to your circumstances.)

## 1. Plan and Prepare

- Meet with people in related areas of church work/ministry to develop a plan to collaborate on the contest together. (Consider connecting with any or all of the following: youth ministry, cultural ministries, Catholic schools, social concerns, religious education, etc.)
- Determine...
  - Important dates (e.g. deadlines, concluding celebration)
 

Possible dates for entry deadlines or concluding celebrations could be...

    - The end of Respect Life Month (October).
    - The beginning or concluding weekend of 9 Days for Life.
    - The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (often venerated as Patroness of the Unborn), December 12.
    - The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.
  - Participant Categories (e.g. grade level or range, age range, school, parish, etc.)
  - Medium Categories (e.g. drawing, painting, video, poster, music, poetry, short story, letter, drama, photography)
  - Guidelines
  - Judging criteria. (See "Youth Contest: Judges' Score Sheet.")
  - Prize categories. Options to consider could be...
    - One grand prize
    - First, second, and third place prizes
    - One or more prizes per multimedia category
    - Prizes for additional categories you'd like to recognize, such as best team project, most creative, most compelling call to action, etc.
- Promotional plan. (See Step 2 for ideas to get you started.)
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Other decisions, as needed.

- Solicit prizes from local businesses, such as gift certificates from Catholic bookstores, popular pizza or coffee shops, bowling alleys, museums, etc.

## 2. Advertise the Contest

- Organizing collaborators could promote the contest at regularly-scheduled meetings of their respective contacts.
- Use the contest materials (reflection flyer, sample letter, text advertisements, bulletin announcements, etc.) that can be found at [www.usccb.org/prolifeyouthcontest](http://www.usccb.org/prolifeyouthcontest). Adapt materials as needed to reflect your parameters, contact information, and deadline.
- Send communications to target audiences via letter, email, text message, and/or social media. It's best to send these communications several times.

(These audiences may vary in nature. For example, an organizing diocese could contact local parish leaders who are helping facilitate the contest, whereas an organizing parish youth minister could advertise directly to potential participants.)

- Provide announcements and ask that they be shared in communications and visible spaces (e.g. parish bulletin, pulpit announcement, diocesan newspaper and/or radio, school newsletter, school classes, email lists, bulletin boards, etc.).
- Follow up with contacts to make sure they have received the contest materials.

## 3. Embrace Opportunity

- Offer suggestions to help leaders make the most of various opportunities provided by the contest—for example, how to...
  - Highlight the connection between relationship with God, respect for life, and our daily lives;
  - Guide and encourage youth in deepening their own relationships with God through this experience;
  - Educate youth about life issues;
  - Raise awareness of local pro-life resources, like pregnancy care centers;
  - Help youth put the theme into action after the contest.
- Encourage schools, parishes, diocesan newspapers, etc. to feature the contest entries, so that the community can share in and celebrate what the students created and gained from the experience.

## 4. Receive and Judge the Entries

- Receive entries by the deadline that you specified in Step 1. (Dioceses may want to ask each participating group to hold its own mini-contest and then submit only the top winner from each category.)
- Hold an event during judging, such as an “entry gallery,” to display and judge entries. Youth could be present to talk about their work, and local media could be invited to attend.

## 5. Honor the Winners

- Hold an award(s) reception or event to recognize the winner(s) and, if applicable, local pro-life groups that inspired the youth. This can be a great opportunity to bring the local community together in celebration of human life.
- Consider inviting to the reception or event:
  - The local (arch)bishop and/or pastor to offer an opening prayer and say a few words of congratulations to the winners.
  - Everyone who has participated in the contest in any way (people who helped promote it, judges, participating groups like schools, parishes, ministries, etc.)
  - Local media, such as the diocesan newspaper, to cover the event.
- Spread the good news! Write a feature article about the contest and winners for your diocesan newspaper, parish bulletin, school newsletter, etc.

