



Ready Writing Handbook

For Contest Directors, Coaches and Contestants

2023 • 2024

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University Interscholastic League

Ready Writing Handbook

The details in this handbook expand upon the information in the UIL Constitution & Contest Rules. In addition to this handbook, coaches, contestants and contest directors should read Sections 900-906 for information pertaining to all contests. See also the Academic Quick Reference Chart found at the end of this handbook and on the UIL website.

From the UIL Constitution & Contest Rules:

Section 948: HIGH SCHOOL READY WRITING CONTEST

(a) **THE CONTEST.**

- (1) Purpose. The Ready Writing Contest builds students' skills and helps refine writing abilities through writing expository compositions, which explain, prove or explore a topic in a balanced way, allowing the argument and the evidence given to be the deciding factor in the paper.
- (2) Format. This contest gives contestants a choice between two prompts, each an excerpt from literature, publications (past and present), or speeches from which to write an expository composition.
- (3) Use of Computers. If contestants choose to use their own laptop/computers, they shall bring a portable printer, associated hardware, software and paper. Spell check, thesaurus and dictionary functions may be used if available on the computers. Students who opt to compose their entries on computers accept the risk of computer malfunction. In case of computer malfunction, the contestant may use the remaining allotted time to complete the composition in handwriting or compose on another computer (if available). When printing the contest on an electronic printer, the print command shall be started by the time contest time expires. Once time has expired, participants and coaches shall not disconnect or connect computer equipment or enter new commands in an effort to print the entry. District or regional host sites may provide computers for contestants but are not expected to make those provisions. Computers will not be provided at state, but contestants by use their own laptops and portable printers.
- (4) Writing By Hand. Contestants who are handwriting their compositions shall use their own standard 8 1/2 x 11-inch ruled white notebook paper or typing paper or the paper provided by the host school. Contestants shall write or print the composition in ink and on only one side of the paper.
- (5) Thesaurus and Dictionary. Contestants may use a printed thesaurus and dictionary or may use spell check, dictionary and thesaurus functions of a laptop during the contest. No other resource materials may be used during the contest.

(b) **ENTRIES.**

- (1) Individual Competition. Each member high school may enter as many as three individuals in the district meet.
- (2) Team Competition. There is no team competition in this event.

(c) **QUALIFICATION.** Individuals qualify for the next level of competition according to Section 902.

(d) **TIES.** There can be no ties in this contest. Judges shall rank papers in order of their excellence: 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.

Ready Writing

Contest Rules and Procedures

1. **CONTEST ROSTER.** A contest roster listing contestants will be created from schools' online entries and provided by the contest director
2. **NUMBERING CONTESTANTS.** Each contestant will be assigned a number. This number should be indicated on the contest roster and included on the contestant's topics, papers and essay.
3. **ROLL CALL.** The contest director will call roll from the contest roster and replace any contestant who is not present with a certified substitute at district and the certified alternate at regional and state. All persons except participating contestants, the contest director, assistants and monitors will be excluded from the room during the contest.
4. **SUBSTITUTIONS AND ALTERNATES.** Schools may replace individual contestants on the official district meet roster with a substitute as long as the substitute presents the contest director with the appropriate documentation. Alternates may compete at region and state only in the absence of an individual who won first, second or third place in the preceding competition. See the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules Section 903-905 for clarification.
5. **SEATING.** Contestants will be seated sparsely around the room.
6. **LATE ARRIVAL.** Except in emergencies, the UIL does not recommend allowing contestants to enter the room after this contest has begun. The decision to allow late entry rests with the contest director.
7. **MATERIALS.** Contestants shall furnish their own pens or pencils and writing paper. Contestants may use computers or write by hand and use a thesaurus or dictionary. See Section 948 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules for specifics. District and Region host sites are not forbidden to provide computers for contestants, but are not expected to make those provision. Computers will not be provided at State.
8. **TYPED ENTRIES.** Typed entries should be single-sided and double-spaced, using any standard 12-point font and 1-inch margins on regular 8 1/2 x 11-inch white paper. The print command shall be entered prior to the time the contest expires.
9. **MANUSCRIPT INSTRUCTIONS.** Contestants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to include the following.
 - a. Title. The title should be centered at the top of the first page of writing.
 - b. Margins. Consistent left margins of approximately one inch should be used. However, contestants who compose on computers should not be penalized for variations in margins.
 - c. Page Numbers. Pages should be numbered on the upper left-hand corners, without parentheses, to distinguish the page number from the assigned contestant number.
10. **TEST DISTRIBUTION.** Distribute the topics face down to the contestants and explain that they should choose one of the statements and write an essay on a clearly related topic. Contestants shall not turn the page over prior to instructions from the contest director.
11. **ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Following roll call and prior to the start of the test, contest directors shall read aloud to the contestants the section of this handbook titled Announcements Prior to Conducting the Contest.
12. **START AND STOP SIGNALS.** Contest directors will give the signal to start. After exactly two hours, the contest director will give the verbal notification to stop. The contest director should give a verbal notification when 15 minutes of contest time remain. However, responsibility for keeping up with time rests with contestants.
13. **ELECTRONIC DEVICES.** Cell phones, smart watches or any device other than a laptop that can

wirelessly connect to the internet, electronic tablets, music players, headphones, etc. may not be used in the testing room. These and all other electronic devices not allowed in the contest should be turned off and should not be accessible during testing.

14. **TURNING IN PAPERS.** Contestants may turn in papers and exit the contest room as soon as they complete their paper.
15. **JUDGES.** Impartial judges exclusive of the coaches whose contestants are represented in the contest will be selected to judge. Prior to judging, the contest director should discuss thoroughly with judges the criteria for evaluating the compositions.
16. **BRIEFING JUDGES.** See Instructions for Judges.
17. **PLACES AND TIES.** Contestants can qualify to the next level of competition as individual first, second and third place winners according to Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules. Judges will rank the papers through sixth place. There are no ties in this contest.
18. **VERIFICATION PERIOD.** Following grading and input of unofficial results into the online entry system, contestants and coaches shall be allowed a time period to identify papers (see After the Contest, Verification Period). Judging decisions and rankings are subjective and shall not be subject to protest. Coaches or contestants not present for the viewing period forfeit the opportunity to identify entries and accept final results as official.
19. **ANNOUNCING OFFICIAL RESULTS.** Following the verification period, the contest director should announce, as official, the names and schools of contestants through sixth place. Official results, once announced, are final.
20. **RETURNING THE PAPERS.** If results are final and all test questions resolved, district papers may be returned no sooner than the end of the last contest day of the district week. Regional papers may be returned no sooner than late Saturday of region weekend.
21. **NOTIFYING ALTERNATES.** If an individual qualifier cannot compete at the next higher meet, the alternate shall be notified by the school whose student cannot compete and allowed to compete.
22. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** Coaches, contest directors and contestants shall maintain confidentiality of contest material until the official release date. Transfer of information relative to the test shall be considered a violation of the Academic Contest Ethics Code and subject to penalties as outlined in the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.
23. **SWEEPSTAKES POINTS.** Points are awarded through sixth place and to first and second place teams according to Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.
24. **PUBLICATION OF COMPOSITIONS.** Compositions of contestants in the State Meet become the property of the League and may be printed and circulated or otherwise used by the League in promotion of the contest.

BEFORE THE CONTEST

ROOM

Secure a room of adequate size for the number of contestants expected. The room should have chairs and desks or tables of proper height. Sufficient electrical outlets should be available for students wishing to compose on the computer.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

The contest director will provide:

- Accurate clock for timing and clock which contestants can see during the contest
- Paper clips, stapler, scissors, extra ink pens
- (DISTRICT Recommendation) One 8 ½ x 11 envelope per school entered, for returning materials

CONTEST PACKET

The UIL office will provide:

- A copy of the UIL Ready Writing Handbook
- Copies of the writing topics
- Ready writing judging rubrics
- Suggestions for grading procedures
- (REGION) State Meet information cards for state meet qualifiers and alternates (7)

The meet director may schedule a specific time and place for contest directors to pick up the test packet before the contest. Contest officials should inventory the contents before the contest. The packet should be checked to verify the correct materials are enclosed and the number of copies included is sufficient for the number of competitors. The test packet should then be resealed and not opened again until just prior to the beginning of the contest.

PERSONNEL

Coaches of competitors may serve as contest directors, assistants and monitors.

- Contest director.
- Assistant to the contest director.
- Room Monitor.
- Judges. Select properly qualified and impartial judges exclusive of the coaches whose contestants are represented in the contest to be judged. A minimum of three judges is recommended.

TIME

Allot 2 ½ hours for the contest: up to 30 minutes for equipment set up, roll call, opening remarks, and exactly two hours for the test. It is critical to stay on schedule as some contestants may need to go to other events.

Allow four hours for grading the essays.

Arrange for and announce the time and place for viewing judges' comments and announcing official results.

EVENT ROSTER & RESULTS WORKSHEET

Obtain a copy of the contest roster from the meet director, which will be generated from the UIL Spring Meet Online Entry System. It will list the school, contestant number, contestant name, district or region number and will indicate the competitors and alternates. You also record scores and/or results on this form to give to the meet director, who will then enter the results/scores into the online system before verification is held for the event.

ORGANIZING MATERIALS

Check all prompts to ensure that all pages are printed clearly and completely. Each contestant will be assigned a number indicated on the contest roster. As an example, the number will be listed on the roster as 6A-17 or 2A-4, indicating the conference and a number. It may be helpful to put the contestant number on each topic page or on an index card to hand out during roll call to assist contestants to place the number on each page of their print out.

(REGION) If there is more than one conference at the meet, it is important to differentiate contestant numbers by conference.

SORTING ENVELOPES (DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION)

Provide and label a large (8.5 x 11) envelope for each school with contestants entered in the contest, and write the name of the school on the envelope. After the verification period, contestants' essays and judges' comments should be placed in the appropriate envelope for return to each school no sooner than late Saturday of the district week. The meet director and the contest director are responsible for deciding whether testing materials can be taken by the contestants and coaches immediately after the contest's verification period is over.

CONDUCTING THE CONTEST

1. Set up the room to best facilitate the monitoring of the room by contest officials.
2. Organize contest materials for easy distribution.
3. Seat the contestants sparsely around the room.
4. Call roll from the roster and provide students with their assigned contestant number. Replace any contestant who is not present with a certified substitute at district and the certified substitute or alternate at regional.
5. Dismiss from the contest room all individuals, except the contestants, contest director and assistants. Instruct graders to report to the grading room with rubrics and surplus prompts.
6. Distribute the contest prompts, face down and remind students to not turn it over until instructed to do so.
7. Read aloud the announcements listed below.

Announcements Prior to Conducting the Contest

- a. Do not turn over the topics sheet until instructed to do so.
 - b. Choose only one of the topics and write an essay clearly related to it.
 - c. Contestants must write or print the composition in ink only, not pencil, and write on only one side of the paper.
 - d. Typed entries must be single-sided and double-spaced, using any standard 12-point font.
 - e. Contestants composing by hand may use a printed or electronic thesaurus and dictionary during the contest. Contestants composing on computers may use spell check, dictionary, and thesaurus functions of the computer during the contest. No other resource materials may be used during the contest.
 - f. Center your title at the top of the first page.
 - g. Consistent left margins of approximately one inch should be used.
 - h. Pages should be numbered on the upper left-hand corners, without parentheses.
 - i. Your contestant number should be placed in the top right-hand corner of each page, and placed in parentheses.
 - j. This is a two hour contest. I will give you a 15 minute warning before the end of the testing time. Do not leave the room prior to turning in your paper except in an emergency situation.
 - k. Verification period will be held in room _____ at _____ a.m./p.m. This is contestants' and coaches only time to verify grading and unofficial results.
 - l. Are there any questions?
8. Give contestants the signal to start. Prevent any communication between contestants, or any reference on the part of contestants to notes, books or any printed matter other than a thesaurus or dictionary. Give a verbal notification when 15 minutes of contest time remain. Terminate the contest at the end of exactly two hours.
 9. When time is called, gather all essays and the topic sheets for the contest so that none

are retained by the contestants, coaches or other interested parties.

10. Check that the correct contestant number is on each manuscript as they are turned in.
11. Deliver all materials to the grading room.
12. Submit the substitution forms/letters to the meet director to update the original entry in the online entry system.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUDGES

1. Allow sufficient time for careful judging.
2. Contestants and coaches shall be excluded from room when judging.
3. Each judge will be provided with an adequate number of rubric sheets and a set of judging instructions. The composition is judged on interest (60%), organization (30%) and correctness of style (10%).
4. The contest director decides whether each essay shall receive one or three judging rubrics. See Judging Essays below. Please do not write on the contestants' papers. Make comments only on the rubrics. Attach the completed rubric(s) to the back of the essay.
5. Check the wording in the rules (contest directors may read portions of this information aloud to contestants):
 - a. Nature. The composition is to be expository in nature. Descriptive or narrative passages may be used to illustrate or reinforce an idea or point that is being explained, but they must be clearly subservient or incidental to the purpose of exposition.
 - b. Length. Avoid wordiness and sparseness indicative of lack of development. There is no minimum or maximum length requirement, but judges recognize well-developed ideas and the use of evidence to bolster main point(s).
 - c. Requirements for writing the essay. Contestants must write essays in ink and on only one side of ruled, or plain white, regular sized paper or type the essay using any standard 12 point font and one inch margins, on a word processing computer. Print computer-generated compositions on unlined paper.
 - d. Recommendations, but not requirements, for writing the essay:
 - i. Title. Center the title at the top of the first page of writing
 - ii. Margins. Follow consistent left margins of approximately one inch.
 - iii. Page numbers. Number pages on the upper left-hand corners, without parentheses, to distinguish the page number from the assigned contestant number.
6. Judging Criteria.
 - a. Interest depends primarily upon substance, i.e., having something to say that is worth saying because of its acuteness of analysis and its originality of thought. It depends next upon clarity and upon including specific details and examples that individualize the composition as an outgrowth of the writer's character and experience.
 - b. Organization has clarity as its main goal. The plan of the whole composition should be such that each part contributes to an understanding of the writer's main idea or thesis, no part being misleading or unrelated to that thesis. The organization of each paragraph should be directed to the logical and full development of one idea.
 - c. Correctness of style includes avoiding errors in sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word usage and spelling that hinder clear communication.

7. Judging Essays.
 - a. Judges shall read all of the compositions and without marking on the papers. Scan the papers first and award a plus (+) or minus (-) at the bottom of the last attached UIL judging rubric. Either one or three rubrics will be attached to the back of each essay, depending on the contest director's choice of judging procedures. There are three possible methods for providing responses:
 - i. One judge may give written response in the space provided on a rubric;
 - ii. All three judges may collaboratively provide responses on one rubric; or
 - iii. All three judges may write separate responses on separate rubrics.
 - b. Gather the essays and separate papers into (+) and (-) stacks.
 - c. Redistribute the (+) papers to judges.
 - d. Judges read and give preliminary ranking to the (+) essays. Judges may award a total of 30 points on the rubric by circling the appropriate numbers in each of the three major areas of consideration: interest, organization and correctness of style.
 - e. The judges should discuss the papers contending for rank, and may alter decisions as a result of the discussion, to concur on rankings.
 - f. Judges are to reach a consensus on the rankings of the top six essays. Rank, from highest to lowest, only the top six essays. There can be no ties in this contest.
 - g. Give at least one rubric assessment for each essay (both the + and - papers) entered in the contest.
8. Judges should prepare comments on the Ready Writing Judging Rubric for each entry. Comments should reflect the UIL philosophy on judging. First identify and comment on the positive aspects of the essay. Then offer constructive criticism aimed to help students overcome areas of weakness or error. The comments need not be long, but should be specific rather than general because specific references are more beneficial. Evaluate each composition by checking the areas of content designated on the rubric and tabulate a score for each contestant. Scores should reflect the outcome of the consensus ranking of compositions.
9. Attach judging rubric(s) to the contestant's essay and return (with rubric) during verification, or immediately thereafter.

AFTER THE CONTEST

REPORT TO MEET DIRECTOR

Individual contest directors shall give the contest roster/results form to the district director immediately after the contest papers are ranked. The district meet director is responsible for entering results into the online entry system. All ranks must be entered into the online entry system prior to verification and announcement of results. Enter only the top six ranks. Provide at least one copy of the unofficial results from the online entry system during verification.

VERIFICATION PERIOD

Announce that no one present may use writing or erasing instruments during the verification period. The contest director shall allow the contestants and coaches a time period not to exceed 15 minutes to look at all of the following items:

- Contestant's papers
- Rubrics
- Display of ranks after entry into the UIL Spring Meet Online Entry System

Do not allow anyone to take papers from the room. During this period, the contestants and/or coaches shall verify that they have the correct papers and look for possible errors in online entry or mistakes in contestant numbers. Judging decisions and rankings are subjective and shall not be subject to protests.

Display or unofficially announce the top six contestant's ranks, preferably by displaying the printed page from the online scoring system after ranks were entered. This will allow data entry of score to be reviewed by contestants and coaches during the Verification Period.

If errors are found during the verification period, the contest director shall make the corrections.

After resolving all questions, or the end of the 15 minutes, the contest director should announce that the Verification Period has ended.

ANNOUNCING OFFICIAL WINNERS

The contest director should make any necessary announcements regarding the return of papers if necessary and any instructions regarding the awards ceremony. The contest director will announce official results with the name and the school of each contestant who places individually first through sixth. These results, once announced as official, shall be final.

QUALIFICATIONS TO REGIONAL OR STATE

Contestants can qualify to the next level of competition as individual first, second and third place winners as described in Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.

RETURNING PAPERS

If papers are not being returned, pick up all entries, prompts and rubrics so that none remain with a contestant or coach. Place the materials in the sorting envelopes by school. At the district meet, papers may be returned no sooner than the end of the meet on the last day of the district week. If the region meet is held on Saturday, the test, answer keys, scoring charts and answer sheets may be returned to the contestants on the day of the meet.

READY WRITING QUICK REFERENCE CHART

Note: Grading time varies. For most events, allocate a minimum of two hours.

Contest	Study Material	Computer Usage
<p>ROOMS 1 – testing (can use same room as spelling) 1 – grading</p> <p>SET UP—30 PREP TIME — 20 TEST TIME — 2 hours</p> <p>CONTEST MATERIALS UIL Packet: topics, rubrics, grading suggestions</p> <p>Director Provides: contest roster and results form (generated from online entry system), contest rules, clock, paper clips, stapler, scissors, and one 8 1/2 x 11-inch envelope per school.</p> <p>PERSONNEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director• 1 or 2 room monitors• 3 judges (minimum) <p>NUMBER OF ENTRIES (District) 3 per school (Region) 1st/2nd/3rd individuals per district.</p> <p>TIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual — No ties. <p>GRADING/JUDGES Panel 3-5. Judges may not be a coach of an entrant. English/language arts teachers or professional writers preferred.</p> <p>AWARDS Individual medals: 1st through 6th</p> <p>POINTS 1st — 15 2nd — 12 3rd — 10 4th — 8 5th — 6 6th — 4</p> <p>ADVANCE Top 3 individuals</p>	<p>Shop the UIL Online Store at store UILTexas.org to purchase study materials. Some materials are available for free download.</p> <p>The Academics homepage of the UIL website contains a variety of additional forms needed for academic programs, including the Professional Acknowledgment Form for all sponsors, coaches and directors of academic events and the Substitute Eligibility Form needed for contestants not listed on the original entry form for UIL meets.</p> <p>The ReadyWriting Handbook includes a description of the current UIL contest format, rules and procedures. It is available as a free download. http://www UILTexas.org/academics/resources/contest-handbooks-manuals</p> <p>The Ready Writing Manual features the judging rubric, recommendations for judging and previous winning essays from each conference with judges' comments. The handbook also includes a section of notes for judges and sample judges' remarks.</p> <p>The generic forms needed to host invitational meets, such as grading rubrics, answer sheets and contest results form are posted, as are the Academic Meet Director Manual, the conflict pattern and various checklists for academic coordinators. Check the different web pages for Speech and Debate, Journalism, Theatre and the A+ Program for current information and forms specific to those contests.</p>	<p>If contestants choose to use their own laptop/computers, they shall bring a portable printer, associated hardware, software and paper. Spell check, thesaurus and dictionary functions may be used if available on the computers.</p> <p>Students who opt to compose their entries on computers accept the risk of computer malfunction. In case of computer malfunction, the contestant may use the remaining allotted time to complete the composition in handwriting or compose on another computer (if available).</p> <p>When printing the contest on an electronic printer, the print command shall be started by the time contest time expires. Once time has expired, participants and coaches shall not disconnect or connect computer equipment or enter new commands in an effort to print the entry.</p> <p>District or regional host sites may provide computers for contestants but are not expected to make those provisions. Computers will not be provided at state, but contestants by use their own laptops and portable printers.</p>



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