

2006 Guidelines

Technical Writing Competition for Florida High School Students

Eligibility

The competition is open to all Florida high school students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. In addition, 8th grade students who are enrolled in classes that carry high school credit are eligible. Each student may submit only one entry, and entries must not have been previously entered in any other STC competition. There is no entry fee for the competition.

Entry requirements

To enter the competition, a student must submit an original report, essay, expository article, or research project on a technical or scientific subject of his/her choosing. The paper may be written for a course or may be written especially for the competition. The emphasis in the competition is more on clear and concise writing than on advanced scientific knowledge.

The paper should allow the reader to understand a concept or process, form an opinion, or reach a decision. Objectivity is very important. To meet the standards of objectivity the student must clearly state and support premises; support conclusions with facts; test personal observations under controlled conditions; acknowledge and reference data or conclusions taken from other sources; and ensure that those data or conclusions are verifiable.

Topics

Each student should write about a topic in which he or she has a personal interest. The only restriction on a topic is that the paper must treat the subject from a technical perspective. Topics such as “Solar Energy” or “Biology” are too broad. Choose a topic to suit the length available. Last year’s winning titles were:

- Fighting Spam
- Managed Growth in Response to Suburban Sprawl: Merits, Negatives, and Potential Solutions
- The Resistance from Microscopic Rebels: The Invisible Assassins
- Embryonic Stem Cells: The Good, The Bad, The Nebulous
- The Merciless Killer
- Nuclear Power Plants
- Antidepressants: A Risky Remedy
- Chess, The Thinkers Sport
- Sleep Apnea
- Fuel: From the Harvest to the Engine
- Hydrocephalus
- Blue-Green and Red Hot
- Overclocking: Getting More From Your Computer
- Genetically Modified Organisms: A Step Forward For Mankind?
- Swim Fast!
- Fuel Cells: Power of the Future
- VO2 Max: All About the Oxygen Baby!
- Crohn’s Disease: Diagnosis and Treatment

Submission Requirements

Entries must conform to the following requirements:

How to Enter	<p>The competition does not accept paper entries by mail.</p> <p>You must use the online Competition Entry Form on the STC-Orlando website: <p style="text-align: center;">http://www.stc-orlando.org/hscomp.htm</p> <p>The form requires you to enter information about yourself, your school, and your paper. In addition, there are mandatory “Purpose of Paper” and “Intended Audience” sections that count toward 20% of your score.</p> <p>To ensure unbiased, objective judging, you must not show your name, school, or teacher on any page of your paper.</p> </p>
Length	Approximately five pages for a non-research paper; up to 30 pages for research projects.
Format	<p>Entries must be in English, printable on 8 ½- by 11-inch paper. The preferred file format is PDF (Adobe Acrobat), where the fonts are embedded so they can be reproduced on other computers.</p> <p>Pages should be numbered in the upper right corner or bottom margin.</p>
Deadline	<p>The online entry form will not be available until November 15, 2006.</p> <p>The deadline for entries is January 15, 2007. The online entry form will be disabled after that date. Exceptions will be made only under special circumstances, such as software or website problems.</p>

References

Students must acknowledge and reference all sources cited in a paper. References should include author, date, title, publisher or journal/periodical, city, and state. Internet URLs are also acceptable references, as long as they are verifiable and do not constitute the only source material.

Questions

Any questions regarding the competition or its guidelines should be submitted by e-mail to hscomp@stc-orlando.org.

Judging

A panel of professional writers, editors, and educators will judge the entries. Each entry will be numerically rated using these criteria:

1. **Subject and Purpose** (Score: 0-10). The writer provides a paper on an appropriate technical, science or scientific subject and clearly states the main idea of the paper.
2. **Audience** (Score: 0-10). The writer identifies and describes the audience (on the entry form), and effectively makes the content interesting and helpful to readers in the target audience.
3. **Scope** (Score: 0-10). The writer provides a depth of detail appropriate for the purpose of the paper.
4. **Organization** (Score: 0-10). The writer effectively arranges the main supporting ideas as well as the supportive detail under each main idea.
5. **Content** (Score: 0-10). The writer provides appropriate examples, details, descriptions, definitions, comparisons, analogies, etc.
6. **Style and Tone** (Score: 0-10). The writer conveys a strong sense of his or her own habitual language choices. Word choice, sentence length and variety, paragraph length, etc., and the writer's attitude toward the subject and audience are appropriate.
7. **Grammar** (Score: 0-10). The writer avoids serious errors in grammar (for example, subject-verb agreement, comma splices, run-on sentences, pronoun case).
8. **Mechanics** (Score: 0-10). The writer avoids errors in mechanics (punctuation, spelling, abbreviations, numbers, capitalization).
9. **Design and Illustration** (Score: 0-10). The writer provides good margins, clear headings, effective typefaces or fonts, appropriate lists or other reader aids throughout the paper. If appropriate to the purpose of the paper, illustrations (for example, graphs, charts, photographs, tables) are provided and are effectively displayed.
10. **Sources** (Score: 0-10). The writer uses sources effectively and acknowledges any direct quotations or paraphrased material in a references, bibliography or works cited page.

Notification and awards

The Orlando Chapter of the STC provides five levels of awards for the Technical Writing Competition:

- Distinguished - \$250.00 and a certificate
- Excellence - \$150.00 and a certificate
- Merit - \$75.00 and a certificate
- Achievement - \$25.00 and a certificate
- Honorable Mention - certificate

Multiple awards will be given in each category if judging criteria are met. Awards will be presented at an STC Orlando Chapter meeting in April 2007. Winners and their teachers will be notified by mail before the ceremony.

International Student Technical Communication Competition (ISTCC)

The Society for Technical Communication sponsors an annual International Student Technical Communication Competition. Entries for the international competition are made up of award winners from individual chapter competitions around the world. The Orlando Chapter will submit its Distinguished, Excellence, and Merit winning entries to the international competition.