



Written or Video Essay Contest Guidelines

“What the 4-H Center Means to Me”

- **Submission:** Written essays should be submitted via email to Arkansas4h@uaex.edu with *4-H Center Essay Contest* in the subject line. Video Essays should be sent to the email address above with the same subject line above with a YouTube link to the video. Each participant may submit *one* entry for consideration.
- **Deadline:** This essay is due on April 5 at midnight.
- **Length:** Essays should be between 500-750 words.
- **Eligibility:** The contest is open to youth currently enrolled in the Arkansas 4-H program. Youth must be a Junior (9-13) or Senior (14 to 19) in good standing and enrolled in the [4-H enrollment system](#).
- **Original Work:** A county agent or 4-H leader may provide pre-writing activities and appropriate review, editing, and translation support, *but* the ideas, content, structure, and style of the actual essay must come from the 4-H member.
- **Titling Documents for Submission:** To help us organize and manage the essays submitted, please use the following guidelines when titling your written essay document.
 - Name the file “**LastnameFirstInitial.county.age category.2021.**” For example, our Associate Department Head for 4-H, Dr. Angie Freel’s submission would be titled “FreelA.saline.sr.2021.”
- **Winners:** A panel of judges will review the entries in the following age categories:
 - Junior 4-Hers: ages 9-13
 - Senior 4-Hers: ages 14-19
- **Prizes:** The winner of each age group in each category will receive a gift card for \$125 and a certificate of recognition from the Arkansas 4-H program.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Essays will be evaluated using the following criteria:
 - **Addresses Prompt** – The essay effectively considers, either literally or metaphorically, the entirety of the prompt. The essay should make an earnest attempt to address the prompt.
 - **Focus** – The thesis or main message is clear and supported throughout. The essay does not stray from the main message.
 - **Organization & Structure** – The essay is organized and well-structured. Author demonstrates command of grammar, spelling, and mechanics.
 - **Voice/Originality** – The essay uses a highly engaging and personal style. The 4-H’er finds fresh or interesting ways to convey ideas and approaches the prompt from a personal perspective.

Essay Contest Rubric

	5 - Excellent	4 – Very Good	3 – Average	2 – Needs Improvement	1 - Unacceptable
Addresses Prompt	The essay directly answers the prompt with a thesis or main idea sentence. The thesis or main idea is carried throughout and supported by relevant details.	The essay answers the prompt with a mostly focused thesis or main idea & is supported by some relevant details.	The writer of the essay loosely answers the prompt & has some details that follow the main idea.	The thesis or main idea of the essay is not well developed or supported.	The essay has no clear thesis or main idea. The writer rambles some or jumbles up details relating to the prompt.
Focus	This essay is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant details & quotes enrich the central theme.	This essay is mostly focused & has some good details & quotes.	The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.	Topic is not well-defined and/or there are too many topics.	The essay has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the essay, the reader must make inferences based on context or missing details.
Organization & Structure	The organization enhances & showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure of information is compelling & moves the reader through the text.	Essay (and paragraphs) are mostly organized, in order, and makes sense to the reader.	The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.	Sentences within paragraphs make sense, but the order of paragraphs does not.	The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure.
Voice & Originality	The essay has a clear voice & personality carried throughout. The writer has included original stories, details, or memories to support the main idea.	The writer of the essay has included some original voice & personality. They have used one or two personal anecdotes to support.	The voice & personality included in the essay is loose & inconsistent.	The essay has a weak voice & not many personal stories, details, or memories are included.	The essay lacks a clear voice or personality. There are little to no personal details included as support for the main idea.