

2026 Student Essay Contest

Introduction

The North American Young Generation in Nuclear (NAYGN) is thrilled to announce our annual Student Essay Contest, designed to engage young minds like yours in the vibrant field of nuclear science and engineering. This contest is a unique platform for high school aged students to research, reflect, and write about the pivotal role of nuclear technology in shaping a sustainable future.

This contest is an opportunity for students to showcase their ability to think critically about the role of nuclear technology in shaping a better future. We look forward to your insightful and thought-provoking essays that explore the transformative potential of nuclear advancements in our society.

The top 3 submissions will win the prizes listed below, as well as the opportunity to have their essays highlighted on the NAYGN website and social media platforms.

Topics

We ask that you use the following prompts to explore how nuclear technology has and continues to have a profound affect on society. In addition to selecting one of the following topics, we ask that you incorporate a personal story about you, your community, or someone you know, and how the selected topic affects you personally, or questions or concerns that you have:

1. **Nuclear Technology and Clean Water**

How could nuclear-powered desalination help provide safe, affordable drinking water to communities facing drought or limited freshwater supplies?

2. **Nuclear Technology in Medicine**

How have medical radioisotopes improved the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and how could future advancements improve patient care and quality of life?

3. **Nuclear Energy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**

What role could nuclear energy play in meeting the growing electricity needs of artificial intelligence, data centers, and an increasingly digital society?

4. **The Future of Nuclear Fusion**

How could successful nuclear fusion change the cost, reliability, and environmental impact of energy for future generations?

5. **Nuclear's Past, Present, and Future**

What is a young professional's perspective on the past, present, and the future of Nuclear Power and the industry as a whole?

6. **Open Topic**

Choose a topic related to nuclear science or another nuclear application that is not addressed by the prompts above. Your essay should clearly explain the topic's connection to nuclear technology, why it is important, and how it could affect society now or in the future.

Guidelines for Your Essay

- **Research Thoroughly:** Provide a well-researched analysis of the chosen topic, incorporating current developments, data and expert opinions.
- **Think Critically:** Evaluate the potential impacts, benefits, and challenges associated with the application of nuclear technology in your chosen area.
- **Be Creative:** Offer innovative perspectives and solutions that demonstrate a deep curiosity and understanding of the topic.
- **Cite Sources:** Ensure to use a minimum of 3 credible sources for your topic of choice and credit those sources as deemed fit.
- **Be Original:** To protect the integrity of the contest, plagiarism and AI-generated essays are prohibited. Entries containing plagiarized content or relying primarily on AI may be disqualified at the judges' discretion. The guidelines for the use of AI/LLM are listed below.

Use of Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models.

AI may help with brainstorming, topic selection, background research, outlining, drafting, revising, editing, identifying counterarguments, and/or improving style. However, you are responsible for the final submission. AI output should be treated as draft material, not as evidence. Any factual, technical, historical, legal, or policy claim must be checked against credible sources before appearing in your Essay.

At the end of your submission, include a brief AI Use Statement explaining which AI/LLM tools you used, how you used them, and how you verified important factual claims. If you did not use AI/LLM tools, state that.

Example of AI Use Statement:

"I utilized Copilot to help verify that my thesis was specific and persuasive enough for an op-ed and to get guidance for questions that I had difficulty finding sources for. I also used it to experiment with wording and flow. All the ideas and the wording are my own. I did not use AI for evidence, instead I found reliable sources using Microsoft Edge."

Contest Criteria

Who

Limited to High School, Secondary School, or equivalent to your area. Lower Grades, College, and University Students do not qualify for participation in this contest.

Requirements

1000 – 1500 words

There are no specific formatting requirements for the essay.

Submission Guidelines

Deadline for submissions is **November 30th, 2026**. Submit to PI@NAYGN.org

Please include a signed copy of the NAYGN Essay Contest Waiver with your submission.

Prizes

1st Place: Tablet

2nd Place: Kindle

3rd Place: Wireless Earphones

To be eligible for a prize, students must reside in North America. Prizes will be shipped only to addresses within North America.

Please reach out to PI@NAYGN.org with questions or for more information.