



COACH HANDBOOK

(Updated August 2024)

Section I – Preparing for the Tournament

Finding A Team

It's time to look for students who are interested in writing and who might be willing to join a competitive writing team. So how do you do this?

- Ask your English teachers (especially those who teach creative writing courses) to talk about the program. Have them help you identify potential writers.
- If you have a junior high writing team or club, ask for the names of those writers. Often, these students are looking to continue this creative outlet.
- Understand that you might start small, this type of program often takes time to grow. Know that you can do it, and through your excitement, students will want to get involved.
- Make an announcement about your audition-it is recommended you have two different days for each division. It makes it easier for you.
- Determine when and where you will have practices. Will you meet weekly? Twice a month? Will you practice virtually? If you choose this option, you can always have the writers write more frequently and submit prompts to you.

Provide a blind audition for students to write:

- Pull together the materials that you will need for the audition:
 - A numbered sign-in sheet
 - Paper for the students to write on
 - Think about the prompt you will present. For example: The cold left a hollow feeling in her stomach. Use this as the first line of your narrative. For the audition, you may want to explain the different genres and let them choose the one they are most comfortable with.
 - Have a sheet with practice dates and the tournament dates available to pass out to students.
- Day of Audition
 - Have a sign-in sheet. Students sign in next to a number. This becomes their audition number.
 - Discuss your expectations: practices, attendance, competition
 - Pass out a special "first page." A sample page is included for you to use in the coach's materials. Remind students not to put their names on their papers.
 - Share the genre choices and then give the students the prompt.
 - Allow them 45 minutes to compose a narrative.

- After Audition

- Read the stories and stack them in order from your favorite piece to your least favorite piece. You can use the rubric to help you mark your thoughts on each story.

- Once you have read the pieces, determine if you need a callback. Where do the top 8 writers stand out compared to the rest? You may need to call back your top “chunk” to have them write again.

- Remember that you can only have six writers in each division compete. However (when competitions are in-person), you can also bring two alternate writers per division in case someone is sick. These alternate writers may shadow write at the Regional level only (meaning they can write for fun).

- If not, post your team members and welcome them to your team! Let them know when your first meeting will be.

Preparing for Tournament

Now that you have your team, you need to establish when your writing practices will be! It is up to you to determine how often you need to see your writers. Some coaches meet weekly, others bi-weekly, and some only meet once a month--with writers turning in prompts through platforms like Google Classroom or Schoology.

What is important to remember is that during your face-to-face time with the students, they need you to help them learn about different strategies to use during the tournament. This is one way that *JustWrite* assists. Throughout the season, videos and other handouts are accessible in the “Coaches Corner” of the website. Topics include: dialogue, characterization, description, detail, paragraph development, etc.

In addition to this, having students write in a timed session can be very beneficial. Give them a practice genre and prompt and only 45 minutes to compose their story.

A final aspect of practice that can really help students is to use the *JustWrite* rubric to judge their pieces. You can also have them use the rubric to assess each other's work. Have them give constructive criticism and share their stories out loud with their peers. This helps them better understand the rubric that they are writing to as they apply it to the stories they hear. You can also use examples from the “Collection of Voices” anthology. These are pieces that *JustWrite*, Inc felt were solid examples for each genre.

*(Access to the “Coach’s Corner” is given after team Regional Program fees are paid.
Coach’s Corner can be found on the www.justwriteus.org website)*

So What's Your Role?

Basically, you determine how much time and energy you put into the team. You are their coach, and it is up to you to help them grow in their passion and improve their creative writing skills.

However, in short, you are responsible for the following:

1. Identifying excellent writers in your school population. The more excited you are, the more excited the students will become.
2. Set up practices to prepare for the Tournament season
3. Fundraise if necessary to secure the funds for Tournament fees
4. Design a team shirt-if you want; however, *JustWrite* designs a new shirt every year for writer purchase.
5. Review the Tournament Rubric and prepare yourself to judge.
6. Return all required forms to *JustWrite* by the deadlines provided
7. Fill out Purchase Order paperwork following your district policies.
8. Upload copies of the release form (posted to the Coaches Corner)-this must be done at least 2 weeks before the Regional tournament.
9. Find additional judges for the Regional/State tournament. Train these judges using the rubric, stories your students write, and the videos and materials posted on the *JustWrite* website.
10. Promote your team's participation through your school's social media accounts.
11. Send important information home to the parents of your team. We often find that collecting parent emails makes this easy.
12. Follow the Coach's Checklist for all deadlines.

Part II: Regional Tournament Information

School Supervision

JustWrite mandates that each participating school send a designated school representative to accompany their team at all tournaments, as the team coach. This individual can also judge at the events.

Parents, guardians, or other family members are not permitted to attend in a coaching capacity. This policy addresses safety and liability concerns.

Volunteers

At the Regional tournament, **each school is asked to provide one parent volunteer** to assist in the STAR room. These volunteers are essential to a well-run tournament, as at least 400 papers flow through the STAR room during an average Regional tournament. In the STAR room, they assist with checking in narratives, sorting papers to be returned, and reading scores to the STAR Computer Scorer. They may also be used to run notes to judges, help find missing writers, and for various other tasks.

What does a qualified judge look like?

Qualified judges are the TEACHERS/COACHES who have used the *JustWrite* prompts and materials to guide their writers toward excellence at the Tournament. If a school only has one coach, then it is the school's responsibility to enlist and train a second judge. **It is preferred that this additional judge is a school staff member or student teacher with a background in English Language Arts.** However, *JustWrite* understands that this is not always possible. If a parent must judge, they will not be allowed to judge their child's division. Please let *JustWrite* know if this is the case.

In both cases, the TEAM COACH must assist in training this additional judge. To do this, the coach must review the rules of judges, provide the rubric with sample papers, and discuss any questions they may have about the scoring process. Share with them the *JustWrite* judge training videos from the Coach's Corner. In-person judge training will be required at the Regional level.

Judging at Regional Tournaments:

Schools are required to **supply one judge for each entered division** at the Regional tournament--regardless of the number of competitors. This is important as one judge is required for each section of the Tournament grid. If a school cannot provide a judge for a given division, they will be charged a "Judge Purchase" fee that must be paid before the day of the Regional Tournament. This will be a standard \$50 fee, billed on a separate invoice, as *JustWrite* will have to employ additional trained judges.

If a school would like, they can bring shadow judges--this allows additional judges to get the experience needed to judge at the State Tournament.

Judges are individually assigned groups of up to six writers and will read and rank their stories according to a rubric. This rubric addresses not only aspects of creative writing but also technical aspects of composition as well. No writer can be given the same score on the rubric as any other writers in their round group, and this rubric score will determine round winners. Rank is only used to break ties between students when determining awards.

Writing at the Regional Tournament:

Students have 45 minutes per round, competing in a total of three rounds.

All students must write to incorporate the genre-specific prompt.

Students will not be evaluated by the same judge and will have different judges evaluate their work

When at in-person tournaments, students will handwrite all pieces.

Writer Drops at the Regional Tournament:

All student drops for the Regional Tournament should be made 24 hours before the competition. At the Regional level, coaches may substitute an alternate writer for a student who cannot attend. There is no fee for dropped or replaced writers.

Poetry Contest at the Regional Tournament

Competing writers are asked to bring one poem-based on a predetermined prompt- with them to the Tournament. This prompt is emailed two weeks before the Tournament.

These poems are read by special Regional Poet Laureates, and three poems from each division will win a special poetry award.

These top poets will compose a second poem to be judged at the State Tournament by the State Tournament Poet Laureate. One poet will emerge as the winner of the Excellence in Poetry Award. This is to honor the power of poetry.

Winning Awards at the Regional Tournament

The top fifteen writers in each division will be recognized at the Regional level. These students will automatically advance to the State Tournament. These students will win a *JustWrite* medallion.

Three writers from each division will be awarded a special poetry award, determined by Regional Poet Laureates. These poets will advance to the State Tournament. These students will win a ribbon and a writing journal.

In addition, teams will be awarded points for overall team points. Schools will receive first, second, and third-place division trophies, which are the culmination of all points earned by the competing team writers.

There will also be one school named the tournament champion--this is a combined total of all points from both divisions.

It is important to understand that schools that bring full divisions, have a higher chance of winning the overall team awards.

After the Regional Tournament

At the conclusion of the tournament, coaches will receive a take-home packet. This packet will include all stories that received a two through six in a round, copies of all writing rubrics, and all non-winning poetry entries.

The STAR room will keep number one stories. These will be scanned and emailed to coaches within two weeks of the tournament. All writers who receive a #1 story for their round are asked to type their PDF stories, and coaches should upload them through the Submission form provided to the coaches by set due dates.

Approximately two weeks after a Regional Tournament, coaches will receive information that outlines the team's overall results. Student writers who qualify for the State Tournament will be identified, as will the required number of judges. Students who received #1 stories will be asked to submit their narratives to JustWrite. These pieces will be read and evaluated for potential publication in the anthology.

Sample Schedule:



Cloverleaf Regional Tournament Schedule

11 December 2021

8:15-8:45	Main Lobby	Registration
9:00-9:15	Cafeteria	Welcome
9:15-10:00	Cafeteria	Student Orientation
9:15-10:00	Library	Judges' Orientation
10:05-10:50 11:00-11:45 11:55-12:40	Assigned Rooms	Round I Writing Round II Writing Round III Writing
12:40-2:30 Lunch/Activity	Cafeteria/Gym	
2:30	Cafeteria	Awards
3:30	Departure	

*Congratulations to all writers!
Your school can be proud of the fine writing skills you have demonstrated.*

Part III: State Tournament Information

School Supervision

JustWrite mandates that each participating school send a designated school representative to accompany their team at all tournaments, as the team coach. This individual can also judge at the events.

Parents, guardians, or other family members are not permitted to attend in a coaching capacity. This policy addresses safety and liability concerns.

Volunteers

At the State tournament, **each school is asked to provide one parent volunteer** to assist in various roles. These volunteers are essential to a well-run tournament. Volunteers will be assigned roles in the STAR room, check-in tables, helping with lunch, and various other jobs.

Couriers

Student writers who did not qualify for the State Tournament but who would like to accompany their team may attend the State tournament as couriers. **These students must be signed up in advance, and confirmed by the STAR room Coordinator to attend.** They will be counted as supporting volunteers at the tournament. Their main job will be to transport papers from the different locations to the STAR room and return folders to judges.

What Does a Qualified Judge Look Like?

Qualified judges are the TEACHERS/COACHES who have used the *JustWrite* prompts and materials to guide their writers toward excellence at the Tournament. If a school only has one coach, then it is the school's responsibility to enlist and train additional judges.

The team coach must assist in the training of this additional judge. To do this, the coach must review the judging rules, provide the rubric with sample papers, and discuss any questions they may have with the scoring process. Video judge training will be posted before the State Tournament.

Judging at State Tournament:

To be qualified to coach at the State Tournament, one should have judged at the Regional level or watched the State Tournament Judge Training Video. Each school must supply one judge for up to three student writers, per division. At most, a school will be required to bring four judges.

Judges can be fellow teachers and colleagues, student teachers, *JustWrite* alumni, or parents. Some school districts allow for a school-release absence for coaches and judges, as it is a school-related event.

If a school cannot provide a required judge, they will be charged a "Judge Purchase" fee that must be paid before the day of the State Tournament.

-This will be billed on a separate invoice, as *JustWrite* will have to employ additional trained judges for the tournament.

-The fee increases by \$25.00 for each additional judge purchased. See the chart below for a fee breakdown.

Number of State Tournament Purchased Judges	Total Cost
1	\$75.00
2	\$175.00
3	\$300.00
4	\$450.00

Judges are paired and will be assigned groups of up to six writers. Judges will work together to read, rank, and comment on stories according to a rubric. This rubric addresses not only aspects of creative writing but also technical aspects of composition as well. No writer can be given the same score on the rubric as any other writers in their round group, and this rubric score will determine round winners. Rank is only used to break ties between students when determining awards.

Writing at the State Tournament:

Students have 45 minutes per round, competing in a total of three rounds.

All students must write to incorporate the genre-specific prompt.

Students will have different judges evaluate their work each round.

When at in-person tournaments, students will handwrite all pieces.

Writer Drops at the State Tournament:

All student drops for the State Tournament must be made by the predetermined due date, typically three weeks before the competition. **Writer drops after this date will be assessed a \$50 per writer drop fee and mailed on a separate invoice.**

Poetry Contest at the State Tournament

Student writers who won poetry awards at the Regional level will compete for the Excellence in Poetry Award at the State Tournament.

These writers will receive a new prompt with a specific required poetic technique. These poems will be due one month before the State Tournament for evaluation by the State Tournament's Poet

Laureate. One poet will emerge as the winner of the Excellence in Poetry Award. This is to honor the power of poetry.

Winning Awards at the State Tournament

Student writers who have competed at the State tournament for all four years will receive a special pin to be won on their graduation.

The top 15 writers in each division will be recognized at the State level.

Three writers from each division will be awarded a Director's Choice Award. These are chosen from the Regional Tournament number one stories. The *JustWrite* Executive Director chooses these award winners.

One student will be awarded the Excellence in Poetry Award. This poet will be chosen from the State Tournament poetry entries, by the State Tournament's Poet Laureate.

One student will receive the Nikki Delamotte Award for Excellence in Narrative Writing. This award is given to one student writer whose story from the Regional Tournament is a stand-out piece and highlights overall excellence. This award is chosen by the *JustWrite* Board of Directors.

Teams will be awarded points for overall team points. First, second, and third-place division trophies will be given to schools.

One school is named the tournament champion--this is a combined total of all points from both divisions.

After the State Tournament

Coaches will receive a take-home packet at the conclusion of the tournament. These take-home packets will have copies of stories and writing rubrics.

If schools plan to leave early, they must PRE-PAY to have results mailed. The cost varies yearly based on current mailing rates and the size of packet/awards.

All writers who receive a #1 story for their round are asked to type their PDF stories, and coaches should upload them through the Submission form provided to the coaches by set due dates. These stories will be evaluated for potential publication in the yearly anthology.

Approximately two weeks after the State Tournament, coaches will receive information that outlines the team's overall results from the tournament.

Part IV: Other Policies

Policy on Plagiarism and Censorship

JustWrite, Inc. believes that the act of plagiarism-- including self-plagiarism of past Tournament pieces-- is a direct conflict with the design and execution of our program.

While this act is rare, it is important that judges who suspect plagiarism bring it to the attention of the STAR room coordinator.

In concern to censorship, coaches and judges must not allow personal biases to interfere with the judging of any piece. This means that professional expertise is what guides all judging, as the rubric is applied to any narrative. No judge or coach should discount points because they do not approve of the subject matter, language, or approach the writer has taken. Instead, they must follow the rubric categories and determine if the story addresses the prompt and genre in an innovative and attentive way.

Policy on Writer Accommodations

JustWrite, Inc acknowledges that all students deserve a voice. With that, they do their best to accommodate writers with special needs.

In regards to students with IEPs, *JustWrite*, Inc follows the basic guidelines outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The goal is to afford special needs writers the identified and appropriate modifications spelled out in their individual education plans. However, these modifications must adhere to the spirit of this writing competition. For example, extra time is typically not an approved tournament accommodation.

If a student's IEP or 504 indicates the need for a laptop computer, printer, scribe, individual aide, etc, it is the home district's responsibility to provide these supports. This is because, following State and Federal guidelines, it is the home district's responsibility to fulfill the conditions of the student's IEP. This includes providing the identified technological and staff support needed by the student on a daily basis in the classroom.

Secondly, this best ensures the success of the writer--by using technology, they have already built a level of confidence and know how to operate. Students will be provided a separate space away from other writers for these supports.

JustWrite, Inc reserves the right to approve any and all accommodations-to adhere to the spirit of the writing competition and to assess any technical support to assure that there is no programming or function that gives undue advantage to the student.

JustWrite, Inc. looks forward to allowing a place of tremendous outlet for creative exploration, personal expression, and public acknowledgment of all talent. We will work to bring this experience to as many writers as possible.

Further Clarification on Inappropriate Content and Foul Language

It is *JustWrite*, Inc.'s belief that while the encouragement of the narration process is important, extreme violence or sexual content in the short story process is not necessary to create a superior piece. Students are encouraged to use innuendos and not to describe these acts in detail.

More importantly, should the need arise for these situations to occur in the narration, it should be an integral part of the story and not for shock value.

Foul language can be used within story narration IF it enhances the understanding of the character and is used to move a piece forward or help one better understand a character's POV. It should not be used for shock factor, as that will detract from the narrative at hand.

Part V: *JustWrite* Key Terms

As we develop as an organization, we will continue to have our own vocabulary that needs to be defined to help you understand our program.

Collection of Voices: *JustWrite*'s Official Anthology of published student writing.

Division One- 9th and 10th-grade competing students

Division Two- 11th and 12th-grade competing students

STAR Room- Student Tabulation and Results room. This is where all papers go to be reviewed by the STAR Room Coordinator and sorted to be returned

Genre- A category of artistic composition in literature characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter. *JustWrite* recognizes and requires students to develop writing in the following genres: Fantasy, Science Fiction, Classic Horror, Historical Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Narrative Nonfiction, and Mystery. Students ARE assigned a random genre for each round of the Tournament and may or may not write in all genres each season.

Prompt- The creative concept that the writer's story must be based on. For example: "The Gala: Use this as the setting for your narrative"

Gridding- The process of assigning writers to be judged in groups of up to 6.

Poetry Laureates- Community Members chosen by the host school to judge poems for the poetry aspect of the Tournament

Host School- The school that hosts the Regional Tournament

Regional- First tournament of the season, typically 15-20 schools in attendance. From this Regional tournament, approximately 50% of writers will advance to the State Tournament. As the program grows, this number will become more elite, and less of a percentage will be invited to the State Tournament.

State- Second and final tournament of the season. Approximately the top 50% of writers from Regionals will compete for awards, prizes, accolades, and a chance to be published in the "Collection of Voices."

Director's Choice- A state-level award given to 3 writers in each Division. This award is chosen from stories written at Regional Tournaments. They are chosen by *JustWrite*'s Executive Director.

Excellence in Poetry- A special state-level poetry award chosen by *JustWrite* from the winning Regional poems.

Nikki Delamotte Award- A special state-level award given to an exemplary piece at the state level each season.

2022-2023/2023-2024 Fee Breakdown:

Fee Description	Amount	Due Date
Regional Tournament Registration	400.00 for both divisions/250.00 for a single division	Due-upon receipt of invoice-Coach's Corner password will be sent upon receipt of payment
Regional Judge Purchase Fee	\$50.00	Due after Regional Tournament
State Registration	50.00 per advancing writer	Due prior to the State Tournament
State Lunch Fees	Optional (cost determined by State Tournament site)	Due prior to the State Tournament
State Judge Purchase Fee	\$75.00	Invoiced and Due after State Tournament
State Writer Drop Fee	\$50.00	Invoiced and Due after State Tournament