

USC Annenberg Youth Academy for Media and Civic Engagement (AYA) Application Instructions

AYA 2025 dates are: Monday, June 16, 2025–Thursday, July 3, 2025.

Typically we will meet on campus M-Th between 9am-2pm; the final schedule will be determined and communicated to students who are admitted to the program. Once you have completed the application, hit the “submit” button. You should be able to save data and come back at a later date to finish up the application. However, no changes can be made to the application after it has been submitted.

The USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism offers high school students the opportunity to participate in a college-level program with our stellar faculty and students.

AYA is only open to current high school freshman, sophomores and juniors **residing and attending high school in Los Angeles County**. Current seniors **will not** be considered.

Application Deadline: **Monday, April 14, 2025 at 11:59pm**

Applicant Eligibility:

1. Must have completed at least the 9th grade by June 13, 2025.
2. Should be pursuing a rigorous high school curriculum.
3. Must reside and attend high school in Los Angeles County. (Due to the popularity of the program we are not able to consider students from any other county; applications submitted from other counties will not be reviewed.)
4. **If accepted to AYA, you are required to attend all class meetings beginning Monday, June 16, 2025. Late arrivals and early dismissals cannot be accommodated.**

Application Requirements:

Complete AYA application [here](#)

Within the online application where you will detail your personal and high school information, you will need to have the following ready to submit:

1. Submit an Essay

Write a 300-500 word essay responding to the following prompt:

Social media has become a powerful tool for young people to engage in civic life—raising awareness, organizing movements, and influencing change. However, today’s digital landscape also presents challenges, including opaque algorithms that shape what people see, the concentration of media ownership, and the spread of misinformation.

Discuss the role of young people in using and creating media (ex. videos, digital photos, podcasts, etc.) for civic engagement in 2025. Consider the following questions as you develop your response:

- How can youth use media to advocate for social issues and civic causes?
- What challenges do young people face when using media for civic engagement?
- How can youth ensure their voices are heard and their messages reach the right audiences?
- What are some examples of successful youth-led media initiatives for civic engagement?

Your response should include specific real-world examples and demonstrate critical thinking about the role of media in shaping civic action.

Submission Instructions:

- Save your essay as a Word or PDF file before uploading it to the online application.
- File name format: LastName_FirstName_Writing

2. Submit a brag sheet/resume.

Include high school clubs, leadership roles, and jobs (if applicable)

This will be submitted as a PDF directly into the online application. Please save as:
(LastName_FirstName_Resume)

3. Submit your official high school transcript through Fall 2024 grades.

This will be submitted as a PDF directly into the online application. Please save as:
(LastName_FirstName_Transcript)

4. Letter of recommendation

Letter of Recommendation Instructions: Please choose a teacher, mentor, counselor or other school administrator who can comment on your academic achievements, level of maturity, and personal integrity.

Please provide the following prompt to your recommender:

The student above is applying to the USC Annenberg Youth Academy for Media and Civic Engagement. Due to the intense nature of courses offered at AYA and the high volume in applications received, we can select only those students who demonstrated the intellectual and social maturity required to meet the challenges of a demanding academic experience. We will use this recommendation only for the USC Annenberg Youth Academy for Media and Civic Engagement purposes.

Please email the letter in PDF format to ascjaya@usc.edu. It is recommended that the letter is created using a word processor program (Word, Google Docs) and shared in a professional letterhead.. **Please address in your letter the following: How long have you known this student and in what capacity? How would rate the student's emotional intelligence, integrity, maturity, motivation, and productive participation in class? What can the student contribute to the Annenberg Youth Academy for Media and Civic Engagement?**

Please save your Letter of Recommendation file under the following format (Studentlastname_Studentfirstname_LOR).

If you have any questions regarding the application please contact AYA at ascjaya@usc.edu. We look forward to reviewing your application.

Please check the AYA webpage at <https://annenberg.usc.edu/about/annenberg-youth-academy> for the latest updates on AYA.