



#MakeATXBRAVE Youth Spoken Word Challenge Guidelines (2026)

The **#MakeATXBRAVE Youth Spoken Word Challenge** is a youth-organized spoken word competition powered by BRAVE Communities. Participants are challenged to craft and perform original spoken word pieces exploring civic engagement, democracy, community, and encouraging collective care in Austin communities.

Who Can Participate?

- Age groups: 10-14, 15-18, 19-24
- Participants under 18 must have an adult mentor/supervisor

What Is the Challenge?

Create a poem, rap, speech, spoken word performance, or other original spoken piece that expresses one of the following prompts:

- What does Democracy and/or Community or Civic Engagement mean to you?
- What injustice have you experienced or witnessed, and what change would you like to see?
- Why youth voices and community/civic engagement matter.

Timeline

 **July 15** – Challenge Launch at BRAVE Communities Connection Event

 **Sept. 13** – Applications and < 4-minute video recording submissions of spoken word piece due.

 **Sept. 13-27** – Volunteer judges review submissions and select finalists in each age group.

 **Sept. 28** – Finalists of first round notified and invited to the next round of competition held at our Fall edition BRAVE Communities Connections.

 **Oct. 4 (Anticipated Date in the afternoon)** – Finalists perform and compete at BRAVE Communities Connection. The winner in each group will be decided and awarded at this event.

 **BRAVE Fest** (Nov 7th)– The winners of each age group will earn a spot for a paid performance (\$200!) - delivering their original piece.

Benefits

 Chance to be creative, use your voice to speak your truth, share your story, and be an influence of change!

 Every participant who submits a video application will receive a complimentary VIP ticket to BRAVE Fest 2026 on Saturday, November 7!

 **A \$200 paid gig to perform at 2026 BRAVE Fest on November 7th. Judges and community votes will select a winner in each age group.**

Competition format

Round 1: Preliminary Round

All submitted entries will be evaluated by the judging panel using the [official scoring rubric](#). The 3 highest-scoring participants in each age group will advance to the next round.

Round 2: Final Round - Afternoon of October 4, 2026

Finalists will compete for the championship in their age group. Judges will evaluate performances using the official rubric and select one winner from each age group.

How Performances Are Scored

The judges will score the performances at the final round (anticipated October 4, 2026) using the following [scoring guide](#).

1. Relevance to the prompt - 10 pts

- The performance clearly addresses the assigned prompt and demonstrates what Community/Civic Engagement and Democracy are to you.

2. Creativity and originality - 10 pts

- The work presents originality and uniqueness, and demonstrates a positive community impact.

● 3. Message and impact - 10 pts

- The performance conveys a purposeful message.

● 4. Organization - 10 pts

- The performance has a logical beginning, middle, and end that strengthens its message.

● 5. Continuity and delivery - 10 pts

- The presentation flows smoothly and is delivered clearly, confidently, and effectively.

● 6. Time- 5 pts

- The performance needs to be between a minimum of 1 minute and 30 seconds and a maximum of 4 minutes.
- Entries that exceed or fall short of the time requirement may receive deductions by the judges.

● 7. Maximum score: 55 pts

Code of Conduct:

- All participants and attendees are expected to treat performers and fellow participants with respect.
- Entries must be created primarily by the participant. Adults may provide guidance but may not write or perform the piece for the participant.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct may result in disqualification or removal from further rounds of the competition.
- Participants may respectfully discuss challenging social or civic issues. Hate speech, harassment, discriminatory language, or personal attacks are not permitted.
- Advocate for civic engagement, but you should not advocate for any specific political party and/or candidate.
- Participants are encouraged to focus on issues, ideas, and solutions rather than endorsing or opposing specific political parties, candidates, elected officials, or legislation.
- By submitting an entry, participants grant BRAVE Communities permission to share their performance on its website and social media, provided they comply with our Code of Conduct and submission guidelines.

- Everyone who submits a video application will receive a complimentary VIP ticket to BRAVE Fest 2026 on Saturday, November 7 (afternoon). VIP tickets are non-transferable, have no cash value, and may not be redeemed for cash or exchanged for any other item or service.
- If selected as a finalist, you'll need to be available to compete in person on the afternoon of Sunday, October 4. Winners from each age group will be commissioned to perform and be recognized during BRAVE Fest on Saturday, November 7 (afternoon), so please save both dates!

More Questions?

 Check out our [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

 Email: challenge@bravecommunities.org

 Ready to apply? [#MakeATXBRAVE Youth Challenge Application Form](#)