

New York Times Learning Network Contest

You will need to browse through the New York Times online archives to complete this activity.

- [Is It Ethical to Eat Meat?](#)
- [Should Students Be Able to Grade Their Teachers?](#)
- [Do Violent Video Games Make People More Violent in Real Life?](#)

Every day during the school year we invite teenagers to share their opinions about questions like these — on [topics from hip-hop to climate change](#) — and hundreds do, posting arguments, reflections and anecdotes to our [Student Opinion](#) feature.

With this, our first-ever Student Editorial Contest, we're asking you to channel that enthusiasm into something a little more formal: short, evidence-based persuasive essays like the [editorials](#) The New York Times publishes every day.

The challenge is pretty straightforward. Choose a topic you care about, gather evidence from both New York Times and non-New York Times sources, and write a concise editorial (450 words or fewer) to convince readers of your point of view.

Because [editorial writing at newspapers is a collaborative process](#), you can write your entry as a team effort, or by yourself. When you're done, post it in the [comments section below](#) by March 17, 2014.

With our contest partner, the [Center for News Literacy](#) at Stony Brook University, we will then use [this rubric](#) to select winners to publish on The Learning Network.

As teachers know, the persuasive essay has long been a staple of high school education, but the [Common Core standards](#) seem to have put evidence-based argumentative writing on everybody's agenda. You couldn't ask for a more real-world example of the genre than the classic newspaper editorial — and The Times publishes, on average, [four of them a day](#).

To help with this challenge, Andrew Rosenthal, The Times's editorial page editor, made the video above, in which he details seven pointers. We have also culled [200 prompts for argumentative writing](#) from our Student Opinion feature to help inspire you, though, of course, you are not limited to those topics.

Update | Feb. 7: We have just published a lesson plan, "[For the Sake of Argument: Writing Persuasively to Craft Short, Evidence-Based Editorials](#)," that offers additional ideas for teaching the steps in the process.

So what issue do you care about? [Gun violence?](#) [School lunch?](#) [Reality TV?](#) You decide. Then use the facts to convince us that you're right.

Contest Rules

1. Use at least one Times source. You can write your editorial about any topic, as long as you use at least one source from The New York Times. That should pretty much open the whole world to you since you may be surprised how much you can [find in The Times](#).

One thing you should know, however, is that The Learning Network and all its posts, as well as all Times articles linked from them, [are accessible without a digital subscription](#). That means you can use any of the articles we have linked to on this blog for the editorial contest without exceeding the 10-article limit.

2. Use at least one non-Times source. Make sure, however, that the source you use is a [reliable](#) one.

3. Always cite your sources. If you found evidence in an article on the Internet, link to it. If you used a print source, state the title and author, linking to additional information about it if possible. If you interviewed an expert, state his or her name and position. Readers (and judges) should always know where you got your evidence.

4. Be concise. The editorial must be no more than 450 words. (Update: Your list of sources is separate and does not count as part of your 450-word limit.)

5. Have an opinion. Editorials are different from news articles because they try to persuade readers to share your point of view. Don't be afraid to take a stand.

6. Write your editorial by yourself or with a group. If you are working as a team, just remember to submit all of your first names and last initials when you post your entry.

7. Be original and use appropriate language. Write for a well-informed audience, but include enough background information to give context. Be careful not to plagiarize: use quotation marks around lines you use verbatim from another source, or rephrase and cite your source.

8. Submissions must be from students who are 13 to 19 years old, though students can come from anywhere in the world. No last names please, but an initial is fine, as is a school or class code of some type. (For example, "Ethan G. CHS112.")

9. All entries must be submitted by March 17, 2014 at 5 p.m. Eastern time, as comments on this post. If you have questions about the contest, please feel free to post them in the [comments section](#) as well, and we'll answer you there.

10. We will use this [rubric \(PDF\)](#) to judge editorials. The top editorials, as judged by The Times and the [Center for News Literacy](#) at Stony Brook University using this rubric, will be featured on The Learning Network. (As with all our contests, if you win, you can then follow [these steps](#) to make sure we can use your last name.)

Good luck and have fun. As always with a first-time contest, we welcome your questions and comments in case we have somehow omitted details that might be useful. Let us know how we can help, below.