Application for 2025-2026 Optimist International Oratorical Contest

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State/Province/Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Date of Birth _____/_____/_____ Age _____

Have you participated in any other Optimist Club's Oratorical Contest this school year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contestant Agreement:

I have studied the rules of the contest, and I will be bound by all the requirements.
I understand entries will be run through plagiarism and AI detection software.

Contestant's Signature _____ Date____/____/____

Parent or Guardian Permission:

I give my permission for my child/ward to participate in this contest.

Signature _____ Date____/____/____

Relationship _____

I, _____ *grant the Optimist Club/International my permission to use a picture/video of my son/daughter* _____ *for their public relations purposes. Optimist Club/International may use the photo/video in any publication they see fit.*

Sponsoring Optimist Club Name _____

Sponsoring Optimist Club Number _____

Language speech will be spoken in: ☐ English ☐ French

Topic: "The Moment I Realized I Belonged — My Definition of Community"

For more information contact: Jessica Wagner

Address jessica.mae.wagner@gmail.com **Phone Number:** 937-657-0146

Official Rules

Section I — *General Rules*

1. The Optimist International Oratorical contest will begin at the Club level, proceed to the Zone and District level and end with a contest at World Championships level.
2. Contestants must enter through a local Optimist Club.
3. The official application must be completed by each contestant and submitted to the sponsoring Club's Contest Chair.
4. Clubs, Zones and Districts **will** have a combined gender contests.
5. No Zone, Regional, or District level contest shall have fewer than 3 or more than 20 contestants competing.
6. Optimist International has the right to edit, publish and record any speech used in any contest without payment to the author.

Section II — *Qualifications for Contestants*

1. The contest is open to contestants under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 – September 30) and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent, including CEGEP students in Québec, Canada. There is no minimum age.
2. A contestant is eligible to enter/compete in only one Optimist Oratorical contest during a contest year. Once a contestant wins first place at the Regional level of the Optimist International Oratorical World Championships, they are ineligible to compete in the Optimist International Oratorical Contest at any level again.
3. Each contestant shall prepare his or her own speech. The contestant may receive advice in the preparation of the speech and may make minor changes or improvements in the speech at any time.
4. All contestants at each level of the contest must show proof of age before competing. Optimist Clubs may require a copy of birth certificate or passport if offering a club scholarship separate from Optimist International. District winners must provide a copy of the birth certificate or passport with District entry documentation
5. A printed copy of the speech must be furnished either before or after the speech.

Section III — *Contest Rules*

1. All contestants must speak on the official topic.
2. A speech may be delivered in English or French.
3. All contestants must state the official topic in the first sentence of the speech. Timing will begin with the first spoken word. A 3-point penalty is automatically assessed by the timekeeper for failure to state the official topic in the first sentence.
4. Any quotation, copyrighted, or largely paraphrased material used in the speech must be identified verbally during the presentation and in the written copy of the speech with the original author's name. The contestant shall be fully responsible for the use of any quoted material and Optimist International shall assume no responsibility. Failure to identify non-original material will result in up to 10 penalty points.
5. The use of props, special costumes or clothing, will result in 10 penalty points
6. The use of audience prompters will result in disqualification
7. Notes and lecterns can be used if the contestant desires.
8. The time allowed will be not under 4 minutes or over 5 minutes. Contestants going over or under will not be cautioned, and will be penalized one point for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the allotted time. This penalty will be determined by the official timekeeper.
9. Timing will begin at the first word spoken. Timing will stop when the contestant finishes.
10. No reference can be made that identifies the contestant, parents, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. This will result in a deduction of up to 5 points. Contestants shall not be identified by name or sponsoring Clubs until after the last oration has been presented and the judges and timekeeper have started deliberations.
11. Any protest in the conduct at any level of this contest must be made immediately after the condition is noted. Protests received after the next contestant has been introduced, or in the case of the last contestant, after the judges leave to total the scores, will not be accepted under any circumstances.
12. The Contest Chairperson will decide all protests in accordance with the official rules. The decision of the Contest Chair is final and no higher appeals will be recognized. In the case of Club contests, the Club Contest Chair has this authority. In the case of Zone and District contests, the final authority is vested in the District Contest Chair. The Zone Chair has the authority to handle protests that may arise during the Zone competition with the District Chair having the final authority.

Section IV — *Scoring*

Scoring in all Club, Zone, District, and World Championships contests will conform to the following criteria.

1. Poise – appearance and personality: 10 points
2. Content of Speech – subject adherence, theme, content, logic and color: 40 points
3. Delivery & Presentation – voice, volume, pronunciation, gestures, eye contact, sincerity and emphasis: 35points
4. Overall Effectiveness – appeal, impression, attitude and effect: 15 points

Section V — *Penalties*

1. Failure to announce the official topic in the first sentence – 3 points
2. Failure to identify non-original material – up to 10 points
3. Use of props, costume, etc. - 10 points
4. Time penalties – 1 point for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the allotted time.
5. Self-identification – up to 5 points
6. Failure to complete speech – disqualification
7. Use of audience prompters - disqualification

Section VI — *Awards*

1. Club Level – Medallion
2. Zone Level – Plaque
3. District Regional Level – Plaque
4. District – Plaque and Scholarship

Each winner of the District level contest will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university or trade school only. Three winners awarded scholarships of $2,500, $1,500 and $1,000 respectively for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.
All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.

5. World Championship Optimist Oratorical Contests – Plaque and Scholarship
   A. Each winner of the World Regional level contest will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university or trade school only. There will be one winner awarded a $5000 scholarship at the World Regional Level. All winners of the World Regional Contests will be eligible to compete in the World Championship Contest with awards for first, second, and third place of $15,000, $10,000, and $5,000 respectively at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.
   B. All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International.
   C. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International.
   D. Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.