THE SECRET LIFE OF EVERYDAY ITEMS

Participants will create and submit an original piece of writing that responds to the following contest prompt:

The 2024 EngineerGirl Writing Contest invites students to write a piece exploring the lifecycle of an object that you use in your daily life.

There are many steps in the process of transforming things from raw materials into consumer products. Many of the processes are represented by whole industries, and that means lots of people are involved every step of the way. Your submission will focus on the engineers present in this lifecycle.

In thinking about your submission, consider made objects that you've used before or that you use every day, but don't choose foods or plants.

Make sure to follow the specific guidelines for your grade level, explained below.

WHAT DO I SUBMIT?

Elementary School (grades 3-5)

Select an item that interests or fascinates you, then think about the following:

- What materials is the object made of? Where did these materials originate? (i.e., wood came from trees, metals came from mining, etc.) This will be the beginning of the object's life story.
- How do you use the object? Is this the object's intended use? This will be the end of the object's life story.
- Now, think about what happened to the object to get it from its beginning to its end. Think about the different kinds of engineers involved and their specific

contributions. Consider the stories of all those engineers. How did it arrive at the first engineer's desk? What work did that engineer accomplish to change the object? How did that engineer pass it on?

Think about the above questions to create your object's story. From a consistent perspective, write a piece exploring the lifecycle of your chosen object. Your chosen perspective could be the first-person point-of-view of the object or the engineers, or it could be in third person (a narrator). Make sure to **feature at least three engineering disciplines**. Your submission must be no longer than 800 words.

Middle School (grades 6-8)
Select an item that interests or fascinates you, then think about the following:
- What materials is the object made of? Where did these materials originate? (i.e., wood came from trees, metals came from mining, etc.) This will be the beginning of the object's life story.
- How do you use the object? Is this the object's intended use? This will be the middle of the object's life story.
- What will you do when you're done using the object? (Donate, recycle, etc.) This will be the end of your object's story.
- Now think about what happened to the object to get it from its beginning to its middle to its end. Think about the different kinds of engineers involved and their specific contributions. Consider the stories of all those engineers. How did it arrive at the first engineer's desk? What work did that engineer accomplish to change the object? How did that engineer pass it on?

Think about the above questions to create your object's story. From a consistent perspective, write a piece exploring the lifecycle of your chosen object. Your chosen perspective could be the first-person point-of-view of the object or the engineers, or it could be in third person (a narrator). Make sure to **feature at least three engineering disciplines**. Your submission must be no longer than 1,000 words.

You may also include a reference list of up to 5 resources, but this is not required. Each resource should be listed using the APA citation style. The reference list does not count toward your essay's word count.

High School (grades 9-12)
Select an item that interests or fascinates you, then think about the following:
- What materials is the object made of? Where did these materials originate? (i.e., wood came from trees, metals came from mining, etc.) This will be the beginning of the object's life story.

- How do you use the object? Is this the object's intended use? This will be the middle of the object's life story.
- What will you do when you're done using the object? (Donate, recycle, etc.) Where does the object end up? This will be the end of your object's story.
- Now think about how the object got from its beginning to its middle to its end. Think about the different kinds of engineers involved and their specific contributions. Think about the object's path through the supply chain.
- Who was involved in the creation, transportation, and distribution of the object? How many of these individuals were engineers?
- Thinking specifically of the engineers involved, what portions of the object's life story are a result of their work? What did this work look like?
- How do you think the pandemic-related disruptions to the supply chain affected the object's lifecycle?

Think about the above questions to create your object's story. From a consistent perspective, write a piece exploring the lifecycle of your chosen object. Your chosen perspective could be the first-person point-of-view of the object or the engineers, or it could be in third person (a narrator). Make sure to **feature at least three engineering disciplines**. Your submission must be no longer than 1,200 words.

You may also include a reference list of up to 8 resources, but this is not required. Each resource should be listed using the APA citation style. The reference list does not count toward your essay's word count.

More tips for writing a winning entry can be found below.

ALL STUDENTS PLEASE NOTE: *Your name, address, phone number, or any other personally identifying information should NOT appear in the text of your submission.* You may submit one entry in one – and only one – of the competition categories.

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All submissions must be original work.
Any evidence of plagiarism will immediately disqualify an entry.

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must be in the public domain. Winners will have to ensure that they have all rights necessary to permit them to transfer ownership of the essay, including transfer of any permissions and rights obtained from third parties, to the NAE.

CAN I INCLUDE IMAGES OR DIAGRAMS?

Yes. Each contestant may include one, and only one, image or PDF document file to accompany their submission. Only .jpg or .pdf formats will be accepted.

CAUTION: Beware of using images found online. Most of these images are protected by copyright and cannot be used without permission. You should only submit images that you create or that you are certain you may use. If you use an image protected by a Creative Commons license, please indicate that with your submission.

While including images may improve your submission, they are not required and you should not rely on them to make your argument. Judges will be scoring the text of your submission; attached material may be used to break ties.

*PLEASE NOTE: Your name, address, phone number, or any other personally identifying information should **NOT** appear in the attachment. If it does, the file cannot be considered as part of your submission.*

WHAT BELONGS IN MY REFERENCE LIST?

A reference list is a list of the resources you used for research and to prepare for writing your essay. It does not count toward your word limit.

Elementary school students do not need to submit a reference list. Middle school students may include a reference list with up to 5 resources but it is not required. They can use APA citation style or create the list by including the following information for each resource:
- **Title:** The name of the resource. A resource can be a webpage, article, person, or other reference.
- **Author:** The person who wrote or created the resource. There may be multiple authors or sometimes an author can be an organization. If you cannot find an author you may write, "No Author Available."
- **Date:** The date the resource was created. If there is no date (for example on a webpage) the citation should include the date the page was reviewed for your essay.

- **Location:** Where we can find the resource. For webpages this is the URL. For printed resources include the name of the publisher.

High school students may submit a reference list of up to 8 resources with their essays but it is not required. Each resource should be listed using the APA citation style.

The quality of the reference list submitted with an essay may be used to break ties.

HOW DO I SUBMIT MY ENTRY?

Entrants should, whenever possible, submit their work through the online form at https://www.engineergirl.org/151727/2024-Writing-Contest-Submission-Form.

Those with unreliable or slow internet connections may request a fill-in PDF form that can be completed offline and submitted via email. Request a form by sending an email to EngineerGirl@nae.edu with the subject line "2024 Contest form request". There is no penalty for using the PDF form.

To be considered, submissions must include the full text of the essay and, if required, the reference list. Links to material saved elsewhere (as a Google Doc, for example) will not be followed or judged.

ALL entries, regardless of how they are submitted, are presented to the judges in the same format, which excludes all personal information.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE?

The contest will close at 11:59 PM, February 1, 2024, U.S. Eastern Standard Time. All entries, regardless of how they are submitted, must be received prior to this date and time in order to be considered.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE?

The contest is open to individual students in the following three competition categories: Elementary School Students (grades 3-5), Middle School Students in (grades 6-8), or High School Students (grades 9-12).

The category for entry is based on US grade categories. Home schooled or international students should choose an appropriate category based on where the student would be placed if attending public school in the US.

Prior winners of the EngineerGirl writing contest who received a cash prize may not enter again in the same age group.

Employees of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and their immediate families or those living in the same household as a National Academies employee are not eligible to enter this competition.

HOW WILL THE ENTRIES BE JUDGED?

Submissions will be judged by a slate of volunteers that include professionals from various engineering fields. In addition to checking that submissions meet all of the basic rules, they will be looking for:

Presentation and Engineering (~50%)
Does the essay/story reflect understanding of multiple engineering disciplines? Was a single, tangible object selected? Are the beginning, middle, and end of the object's lifecycle clearly described? Are the raw materials used for the object identified? For high school students, was the supply chain considered in the lifecycle of the object?

Perspectives Considered (~35%)
Does the essay/story consider the different perspectives and talents of different engineers? Are at least three engineering disciplines included? Are there logical transitions from one event to the next (the object doesn't just teleport from A to B)? Is the story of the object told from a consistent perspective? For high school students, are pandemic-related disruptions considered?

Quality of Writing (~15%)
Is the essay well-written?

Extra credit may be given for outstanding originality, creative presentation, or particularly engaging examples.

Take time to review the scoring rubric, which is available online at: https://www.engineergirl.org/151583/2024-Writing-Contest-Rubic.

The quality of the reference list submitted with an essay may be used to break ties.

Finalists will be judged by the EngineerGirl Steering Committee. The decisions of the judges are final and incontestable.

WHEN WILL THE WINNERS BE ANNOUNCED?

Finalists will be notified in writing via email by May 1, 2024 and will be required to submit a signed copy of the EngineerGirl Use License and Release giving the NAE permission to publish the entry should it be selected as a winner.

Winners will be notified in writing via email by June 1, 2024, and the winning entries will be posted on the EngineerGirl website by July 1, 2024. A list of contest winners may be obtained by submitting a request in writing to: EngineerGirl Writing Contest, National Academy of Engineering, 500 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC 20001.

WHAT ARE THE PRIZES?

Winners in each grade category will receive the prizes listed below:

    First-place winners will be awarded $1,000.
    Second-place entries will be awarded $750.
    Third-place entries will be awarded $500.

All winning entries will be published on the EngineerGirl website. Honorable Mention entries will not receive a cash award but will be published on the EngineerGirl website.

Prize funds will be distributed to an individual winner (or the winner's parent or guardian, if the winner is under 18 years old). Any federal, state, and local taxes, and all similar fees and assessments, are the sole responsibility of the prize recipient.

HOW DO I WRITE A WINNING ENTRY?

Take time to learn about engineers and engineering in general. The better you understand the engineering design process, the clearer and more persuasive you can be in your writing.

Include specific, detailed examples. This is one of the most effective ways to improve persuasive or non-fiction writing, and even fiction writing. Do plenty of research so that you can provide not only facts and numbers, but also testimonials, personal accounts, or historical comparisons.

Choose to focus on something that you care about or that you are curious about. It is easier to do research and write about something that's important to you. Your interest in the subject will also come through in your writing, making your piece more powerful.

Additional Requirements and Disclaimers

By entering this competition, each individual entrant (for individuals under 18 years old, the individual's parent or guardian) grants the NAE a worldwide nonexclusive, royalty-free, transferable license to use the essay, or any portion thereof, for NAE purposes, and grants NAE a world-wide, non-exclusive, royalty-free, transferable license to use the entrants' names, likenesses, photographs, and/or biographical information for advertising, publicity, and promotional purposes.

If selected as a winner, each individual (and for individuals under 18 years old, the individual's parent or guardian) hereby agrees to irrevocably grant and assign exclusively to the NAE all rights, including copyright interests in the essays, under all laws, treaties and conventions throughout the world, in all forms, languages and media, now or hereafter known or developed without limitation. Use, publication, or dissemination by winners of their respective essay may be permitted at the discretion of NAE, as approved in writing in advance by the NAE. Submitting an essay to this competition does not guarantee that the Submission will be displayed or used by NAE.

Use by NAE of a Submission does not necessarily reflect the views of the NAE, and in no event shall NAE assume or have any responsibility or liability for any Submission, in whole or in part, or for any claims, damages, or losses resulting from the use and/or appearance of any Submission or the contents thereof.

NAE reserves the right to refuse any Submission in its sole discretion. NAE also reserves the right at any time during the competition to remove or disqualify any Submission when it believes in its sole discretion that the entrant has: (i) infringed any third party's copyright; (ii) failed to comply with these Terms and Conditions; or (iii) failed to obtain the necessary consents as set out in these terms and conditions.

NAE shall not be liable for any claims, costs, liabilities, damages, expenses, and losses arising out of (i) NAE's use of the Submission; (ii) the entrant's participation in the competition; (iii) technical failures of any kind including but not limited to problems or delays arising from software or equipment malfunctions or computer viruses; and (iv) any events outside NAE's reasonable control.

By entering this competition, each individual entrant, (and for individuals under 18 years old, the individual's parent or guardian) represents and warrants that: (i) the entrant is the sole author, creator, and owner of the Submission; (ii) except for material used by permission, none of the intellectual property rights in the Submission, or any portion thereof, has been assigned or transferred to anyone other than the entrant; (iii) the Submission, through its creation and its submission as an entry, does not violate any applicable laws; and (iv) the Submission, through its creation and its submission as an entry, does not infringe upon or violate intellectual property rights held by any third person or party.

Any entrant who supplies false information, enters the NAE EngineerGirl Writing Contest by fraudulent means, or is otherwise determined to be in violation of the eligibility criteria or terms of EngineerGirl Writing Contest shall be ineligible for any prize and shall be required to forfeit any prize obtained based on such information or means.

By entering a Submission in the Contest, each individual entrant (and for individuals under 18 years old, the individual's parent or guardian) agrees to comply with and be bound by the official rules and decisions of NAE.

All references to NAE contained herein refer to the National Academy of Sciences on behalf of the National Academy of Engineering.

This Contest is void where prohibited. The Contest shall be governed by, construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the District of Columbia.