

The Global Kids' Digital Media Initiative's **Digital Media Essay Contest**

Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Instructions

On a typical day, more than half of US teenagers use a computer while more than 40% play a video game. Meanwhile, more than 60% have downloaded music or used instant messages.

What does this mean?

It might mean that you are learning things from games that no one can teach you in school. It might mean you depend on Internet chats to express certain aspects of your personality. It might mean you are finding powerful tools for getting informed, connecting with others, and making a difference in the world.

Why is this important?

It means that your generation is the first to learn and be shaped to such an extent by the new digital media... about which adults understand so little. And if they could better understand how digital media like games, web sites and text messaging is preparing you for the world, the more traditional forms of education will be challenged to catch up.

Who cares?

The MacArthur Foundation, which is supporting the essay contest, wants to learn more. They want to understand how digital media can support powerful and engaged ways of learning. They want to know more about how these digital media are affecting the lives of today's youth, from their own perspective.

What's in it for me?

Each essay properly submitted by February 26th by a high school student working with a designed educator will bring its writer a \$10 gift certificate and the chance to shape the next generation of funding by the Foundation. The best essays will appear on a web site, be shared with the press, and be read by many individuals supported by the MacArthur Foundation. In fact, the essays may be quoted for public reports written about the state of digital media and learning.

In addition, three essays will emerge as grand prize winners (\$200 each) and another eight will receive honorable mention (\$100). Awards and honors will be distributed at an a ceremony at

the annual Global Kids Conference, in New York City (for those who live in the region - sorry, no free trips!).

What do I do?

To enter, all you have to do is work with your designated educator to fill out the Entry Form, sign the appropriate papers, and, most importantly, write a personal essay. The essay should be between 1,000 to 3,000 words (that's about 4 - 12 double-spaced pages).

What can I say?

You may submit an essay on a topic of your own choosing, but it should address the various roles digital media play in your life. It can focus on one specific example of digital media or on a variety. That's up to you. This is not intended to be a research paper but a personal essay, based on your own thoughts and experiences, in which the expert is you!

If you need topics to get started, the workshops offered to your educator should help get the ideas flowing. In addition, the following are questions or issues you might like to address:

- Does your gender or ethnicity matter online like it does offline?
- Do violent games cause violent behavior?
- Are online relationships just as important as offline ones?
- When is it safe to share personal information online? How do you decide?
- How do you use the Internet for research? How can you tell who is telling the truth?
- How do you express different sides of your personality in different digital media?
- Should teens download music or videos without its owners getting paid?
- What is challenging about accessing or using digital media? Describe those challenges.
- How has digital media hurt or helped you or someone you know?
- Do you use the Internet to get involved with bettering the world? How?

And remember... we want details! Lots and lots of details!

Where can I find help?

After speaking with your designated educator, if you still have any questions, feel free to contact Barry Joseph at dmec@globalkids.org. (Be sure to put "Barry - DMEC" in the subject line).

When can I start?

Right.... about... NOW!

