



JA Business EthicsTM

Essay Competition

Purpose

The goal of the JA Business Ethics Essay Competition is to engage students worldwide in critical, ethical decision-making discussions and resolutions demonstrated in an essay format. The essay should describe a specific plan the author would create to promote ethical decision-making through a hypothetical problem, using a specified number of possible concepts outlined in the essay question. The essay goals are as follows:

- Motivate students to review the content of materials presented.
- Encourage critical thinking as a sustainability component.
- Encourage students who are reluctant writers to participate. Content, not writing skills, is the focus.
- Formalize student ideas and build critical-thinking skills.
- Engage students to conceptualize their ethical views and ideas.
- Build relationships with local volunteers, students, teachers, and JA Members.
- Convey that writing skills vary from person to person; each author is unique.

Essay Competition Rules

- The competition is open to students who currently are participating in the *JA Business Ethics* program or who have completed the program during the current 2008-2009 academic year.
- One submission is allowed per participant.
- The essay should describe a specific plan the author would use to promote ethical decision-making on the island (see the essay question for details), using the two required concepts, code of ethics and interdependence, and three other concepts of the author's choice. These five (5) concepts are outlined in the essay information.
- The essay should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length, and should be submitted online. Contact your local [JA Member Office](#) for the essay submission link.
- Participants must submit their essay in English, the official language used at all stages of the competition. Any essay submitted in a language other than English will not be eligible to compete in the competition.
- The essay submission must be the original work of the participant and submitted under the participant's name.
- An essay may be written in any word-processing program. The participant may then copy and paste the essay into the essay submission page. It is the participant's responsibility to verify that all grammar and spelling are correctly pasted into the submission page.
- Participants are required to retain a copy of their submitted essay, including the essay's title.
- In addition to the essay, participants are required to provide the following information on the essay submission page: student name and email address; parent/guardian name, email address, and telephone number; school name, telephone number, mailing address, and country; teacher name and phone number; JA volunteer name; and essay title.
- Winners submitting essays in the United States of America must provide a Social Security Number or tax identification number prior to receiving a monetary prize. Withholding this information will disqualify the winner from being awarded the monetary prize.
- Essays will not be returned and become the property of JA Worldwide, to be used at its discretion, including written or online publication.
- Judges decisions are final and irrevocable.

Process

Essays will be submitted electronically through the JA Worldwide Essay Competition Portal, and will advance through a three-tier elimination process. A maximum of 120 points may be awarded at each level of the competition, as outlined in the judging criteria. JA Worldwide strongly encourages students to review the judging criteria before writing their essay and again before submitting it through the JA Worldwide Essay Competition Portal. Winners selected to advance beyond the first tier must receive a minimum score of 60 (50% of total points). Winners selected to advance beyond the second tier must receive a minimum score of 72 (60% of total points). Cash prizes will be awarded for all essays selected to advance, as outlined in the prize structure below.

To ensure impartiality, the final evaluation will be carried out by judges selected by JA Worldwide Headquarters. JA Worldwide competition protocols will be followed in notifying all interested parties of winners. All essays will be treated equally, using the same grading rubric at each level of the competition. All essays must be received by Wednesday, April 15, 2009. Winners will be announced based on the competition timeline. The judges' decisions are final. The top three essayists will receive public recognition through the www.ja.org website and by JA Worldwide Marketing and Communications.

Prizes for the 2008-2009 Academic Year

The JA Business Ethics Essay Competition prizes will consist of:

- Awards at the local level will be determined and distributed by the JA Member Office.
- 30 cash prizes of \$50 USD for participants who receive a minimum score of 60 (50% of total points) or above during the first-tier judging.
- 18 cash prizes of \$250 USD for participants who receive a minimum score of 72 (60% of total points) or above during the second-tier judging.
- Three scholarship prizes of \$3,000 USD for first place, \$2,000 USD for second place, and \$1,000 USD for third place for the third-tier winners.

Competition Timeline

October 2008	Announcement of competition and invitations to judges.
October 2008 – April 15, 2009	Student essay submission. Students must submit their essay through the link provided to the JA Member Office. Students who attempt to submit an essay after the deadline, Wednesday, April 15, 2009, will not be eligible to compete in the competition.
April 16 – May 17, 2009	First-tier judging.
May 18 – June 7, 2009	Second-tier judging.
June 8 – June 30, 2009	Third-tier judging.
July 2009	Top three finalists announced.

Role of the JA Member Office

- Review the student and essay goals with teachers and volunteers participating in the *JA Business Ethics* program.
- Announce the start of the competition. Students should begin writing their essay at the beginning of the *JA Business Ethics* program. At the end of each session, consider engaging students in reflective thinking about the topics covered. Explain that the concepts discussed in a session might be considered as the basis of an essay.
- Provide the essay submission link to all participating students, teachers, and JA volunteers for distribution in local *JA Business Ethics* program classes.
- Communicate the deadline, prize structure, and competition details to all participating students.

Teaching Tips for Volunteers

How do I engage students in the essay competition?

- Inform the students what the competition is about.
- Recognize the sponsor, and inform the students that they are participants in a competition.
- Use examples from the program curriculum. *JA Business Ethics* sessions and student workbooks will help students identify their own code of ethics.
- Explain that many prize-winning essays have been written by students who initially thought they had nothing to write about. Students need not be poet laureates to be winners.
- Assure students that their names will be protected by confidentiality, as each essay submission is processed through a software program.
- Remind students that the deadline for the essay submission is Wednesday, April 15, 2009, prior to starting each session.



- Announce that essays must receive a minimum score from the judges to advance beyond each level of the competition. JA Worldwide strongly encourages students to review the judging criteria (see below) before writing their essay and again before submitting it through the JA Worldwide Essay Competition Portal.
- Inform students that a cash prize will be awarded for participant essays that advance through each tier of the competition.

Pre-writing activities

- Discuss sessions and concepts within the program that already have been completed.
- Briefly review the key terms introduced in each session.
- Review the importance of analyzing personal beliefs and values before making decisions in ethical dilemmas.
- Present a student questionnaire to assist with theme selection:
 - What personal do's and don'ts could assist you in reaching your goals? What choices will hurt your progress toward reaching your goals?
 - What ethical dilemmas have you experienced in life thus far? What was your response?
 - What is the dilemma? What values are in conflict? What choices do you have?
 - How do you make decisions?
 - What decisions will you make if your friends or family are affected?
 - Write down the benefits or advantages of having a code of ethics.
 - What is your personal code of ethics? Describe the primary purpose of your code.
 - Who can you consult for advice? Do you have a hero, role model, or mentor you can look to for guidance? What qualities do you admire in a person?
 - Should marketers be allowed to use lies or deception?
 - Have you faced a personal dilemma that you would like others to avoid or learn from?
- Opening idea or concept:
 - Encourage the use of a quotation. Refer students to the “Warm Up: Quotation Analysis” at the beginning of each session in their student workbook.
 - Point out that a personal anecdote or example can be a good starting point for an essay.
- Opening paragraph or introduction:
 - Explain that a personal discussion or exploration of ideas can serve as a good introduction.
- Supporting paragraphs:
 - Emphasize that the essay tone should be personal. This will help students write about a theme that aligns with their values and ethics.
- Concluding paragraph:
 - Remind students that the concluding paragraph should be a summation of their values and ethics, and should reflect the each student's overall motivation for its selection.
 - If a student opens with a personal anecdote or example, the concluding paragraph also may serve as a summation of the lesson learned.
- Final editing:
 - Students may choose peer editing, but this should be left to the individual student's discretion.
 - Possible peer review checklist:
 - Does the title relate to the content of the essay?
 - Is the content interesting?
 - Have all five (5) concepts been used, including the two required concepts: code of ethics and interdependence?
 - Is the main idea clearly written?
 - Does the supporting information relate to the main idea?
 - Are the paragraphs pertinent to the discussion?
 - Are the ideas connected?
 - Do sentence length and structure vary?
 - Has the essay been checked for correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar usage?
 - Supervisory editing should be minimal.

- Final draft:
 - Essays entries should be typed, with no names attached to them.
 - An electronic form of the essay is required.
 - The final essay submission form will allow for direct input, or students may choose to cut and paste from any standard word-processing program. It is highly recommended that each student use a word-processing program prior to submission, as the software package does not provide word-processing tools.

Essay Question

Imagine that you are back on Ethos Island (Session One activity of *JA Business Ethics*). You are ship-wrecked indefinitely, along with other passengers and the crew. The three original groups now have agreed that it is in everyone's best interest to work together as one.

Over time, your island group is contacted by people living on nearby islands. You discover that each island has unique resources to trade in return for the abundant fresh water and fish found in your lagoon. For example, some islands have plants with healing powers and others have herds of animals for food and labor. Soon, your group begins to function like a business, as tasks are divided and exchanges are made with other islanders.

You have the position of Ethics Consultant. While others in your group are in charge of enforcing the rules and laws, this is not your responsibility. Your job is to foster ethical decision-making by the group and its individual members. You also identify potential ethical dilemmas and help to resolve them. Most important, your job is to create an atmosphere in which members of the group want to be ethical, as opposed to obeying rules only to avoid consequences. Specifically, what is your plan to promote ethical decision-making in your group?

Use the *JA Business Ethics* concepts listed below to describe your plan. You must include and correctly apply the two required concepts, code of ethics and interdependence, as well as three other concepts of your choice. A total of five (5) concepts is required.

Required JA Business Ethics concepts to include:

- Code of ethics: A document stating the formal purpose, values, and ethical expectations and behaviors for a business, organization, or group.
- Interdependence: The condition of a group when the actions of any part of the group affect another part.

Possible JA Business Ethics concepts to include (three (3) minimum):

- Belief: An idea accepted as true.
- Board of directors: A group of people in charge of making decisions and recommendations for a corporation.
- Critical thinking: The process of analyzing and evaluating information to form a conclusion or make a judgment.
- Ethical dilemma: A situation in which a choice has to be made based on conflicting values.
- Fallacy: An error in a logical argument.
- Gatekeeper: An individual in an organization assigned to monitor ethical behavior and intervene, if necessary.
- Goal: An intentional aim or purpose.
- Organizational ethics: The interactions of various professional ethical roles in a business, usually by department.
- Social responsibility: A business's obligation to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects of its ethical decisions.
- Stakeholder: Any person or group directly affected by a business. It can include individuals within the company, as well as suppliers, customers, and community members.
- Stockholder: An individual or business owning stock in a company with the goal of making a profit.
- Values: Strong beliefs that influence one's actions.
- Four Philosophies of How to Decide What Is Ethical:
 - Consequences
 - Duties
 - Trainings and Teachings
 - Beliefs Based on Universal Principles



Judging Criteria

A maximum of 120 points may be awarded at each level of the competition. JA Worldwide strongly encourages students to review the following criteria before writing their essay and again before submitting it online.

Note: Each criterion is assigned a maximum amount of points. If a student perfectly expresses a criterion, he or she will be awarded its maximum point value. If the student does not include a criterion at all, zero points will be awarded. Judges may award partial points if a criterion is only partially performed.

Ethics Content

1. The author described a specific plan in the essay for promoting ethical decision-making on the island. See the essay question for details. The plan demonstrated the author's critical-thinking skills.
10 points maximum
2. The author included and correctly applied the two required concepts, code of ethics and interdependence, as well as three other concepts of the author's choice. A total of five (5) concepts are required, as outlined in the essay question.
50 points maximum (5 concepts times 10 points maximum each = 50)

Essay Structure

3. The author included an introduction that expressed the overall topic, theme, or thesis, and provided a preview of the essay's content.
10 points maximum
4. The author provided two, well-developed body paragraphs, including a main idea and supporting details.
10 points maximum
5. The author included a conclusion that restated the overall topic, theme, or thesis, and summarized the essay's main ideas.
10 points maximum
6. The essay was free of significant spelling, grammar, and other errors.
10 points maximum

Essay Quality

7. The author expressed originality in content ideas and/or used creativity in the content delivery.
10 points maximum
8. Overall, the essay was well-written.
10 points maximum

Submission of Essays

Student participants must submit essays through the JA Business Ethics Essay Competition Portal, no later than Wednesday, April 15, 2009, by using the following website:

<http://ethics.ja.org/gbees/submissions/default.aspx?cc=576361>.