

**Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc.**  
**2023 High School High School Writing/Photography Contests**

**High School Writers/Photographers Encouraged to Enter Statewide Contest**

The Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc. (VOWA) is sponsoring a High School Writing/Photography Competition for 2023, our 30th Annual Competition. The goal of the competition is to reward high school students for excellence in communicating their personal experiences in the outdoors. The competition is open to all Virginia students in grades 9 through 12, including home-schooled students.

The theme of this year's writing/photography contest is **A Memorable Outdoor Experience**. Any experience by the writer/photographer with hunting, fishing, camping, canoeing, hiking, birding, or other outdoor activity should be the predominant subject matter. Athletic events or competitions are not an eligible subject matter.

Prizes will be \$100, \$50, and \$25 for the first, second and third place essays and photos respectively. Winners will be notified that they have won in advance, but actual placements and award presentations will occur at the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association annual membership meeting at the DoubleTree Hotel in Charlottesville in the fall of 2023. The winners and two guests (parents, mentors, or teachers) are invited to the awards presentation as guest of VOWA. Additional guests will also be welcomed, but will be charged a \$20 fee for lunch.

The winning essays will be read by the students and winning photos shown in a PowerPoint at the awards program during the Annual Meeting. The three top essays and photos will be published on the VOWA website, and may be published in other publications or social media. In addition, Honorable Mentions may be awarded as the judges see fit and these selected individuals will also be featured on the VOWA website ([www.vowa.org](http://www.vowa.org)). Any Honorable Mention winners will be invited to the awards ceremony as VOWA's guests, but any guests they bring will be charged a \$20 fee for lunch.

Essays should be written in Microsoft Word format, attached along with the submission form, and emailed to [lewistmn@msn.com](mailto:lewistmn@msn.com). The submissions can be made between now and the Sept. 15, 2023. High School Winners Showcase at [www.vowa.org](http://www.vowa.org).

**General Competition Guidelines for Essays:**

1. Open to all Virginia students in grades 9-12, including home schooled students.
2. Essay theme: **"A Memorable Outdoor Experience."** Non-fiction stories only. Writers will create their own title for the essay, something other than using the words of the theme listed above.
3. Student's name, grade/school, and hometown must be printed in three lines at the top right-hand corner on each page of the entry. Please include a photo of the entrant as well.

4. Word Length: 750 to 1,250 words, not including title. Entry must be typed, double-spaced.
5. Electronic submissions are required; send as a Microsoft Word document (not a PDF).
6. Include the designated submission form—age, grade, and school or specify if home schooled. Also include a short biographical sketch and a photo of the student, which will be included with the winning essays on the VOWA website.
7. By submitting the article to the competition, permission is granted by the parent/guardian(s) and student for VOWA to post or publish the article in publications or web sites as deemed appropriate by the VOWA Competition Judges. Compensation is limited to writer credit to the student author to reward and recognize writing excellence, and for VOWA use to promote the competition throughout the year.
8. Include a complete mailing address and evening telephone number, and an e-mail address for correspondence purposes only.
9. Submissions not meeting the competition guidelines and criteria will be disqualified.
10. Submissions can be made from now to Sept. 15, 2023.

Complete the submission form and send via email along with essay as specified in Guidelines to: **lewistmn@msn.com** e-mail subject line: **HS Essay Contest** (followed by your high school name)

If you have questions please email Mr. Lewis at: lewistmn@msn.com or call him at 804-693-2687.

### **General Competition Guidelines for Photographs:**

For the Best Outdoor Photo award, each student may submit up to three of her/his best outdoor photos in JPEG format with a 50 to 75-word paragraph describing the photo. Photographs should be sized to 1028 pixels on the longest side at 96 ppi, if possible, as this is the size image that works best in PowerPoint and shown with a digital projector or monitor. If you are unable to do this, a larger image that we can resize is acceptable.

The file name for each image should have the camera number removed and photographer's name and the image title put in its place. It is best if you copy and rename your original image so you can retain the camera number on the original image.

Permitted photo editing includes: cropping; re-sizing; rotating the photo; red-eye removal; simple enhancement such as Auto-fix, Quick-fix, Auto-levels, etc.; filters to sharpen, blur, or reduce noise; corrective functions to improve the natural appearance of the image, such as white balance, brightness, contrast levels, exposure, saturation, and color balance. Not permitted are techniques such as adding, removing, or replacing elements; artistic filters; and added borders or frames.

Photographers must complete a **Submission Form** and include a **biographical statement**, and a photo of the student as described in the Essay Guidelines. Send photos and materials to: **lewistmn@msn.com** e-mail subject line: **HS Photo Contest** (followed by your high school name)

Good luck and enjoy the great outdoors!