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Poetry Foundation

## How To: Administer a Poetry Out Loud Virtual Competition

Poetry Out Loud (POL) competitions may be held virtually or in-person. Below you will find guidance on how to hold a virtual POL contest. For organizers who elect to hold an in-person contest, please follow any federal, state, and local guidelines in regard to slowing the spread of COVID-19. This may include wearing masks, enforcing social distancing measures, hand sanitizing, and ensuring participants and guardians are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19 prior to attending, and while participating in, a POL event.

There are several avenues POL teachers and organizers may choose to administer their virtual POL competitions. This document provides multiple options on how to hold a virtual contest. All contests, whether in-person or virtual, must abide by the evaluation criteria and rules specified in the Teacher's Guide. If you have any questions or concerns regarding administering your POL virtual contest, please know that we are here to help. Please contact your [state coordinator](#) and/or [poetryoutloud@arts.gov](mailto:poetryoutloud@arts.gov) for additional guidance.

- **Video submission contest:** Each student records and saves each recitation as a separate video file. Students send video(s) via email or a file sharing platform (i.e. Dropbox, We Transfer, etc.) to the POL organizer. The organizer reviews submissions to ensure the videos meet film requirements and then forwards to the judges for their review. Contest judges and the accuracy judge must provide scores for each criterion and review independently—the same as live competitions. Organizers set a deadline for judges to submit scores and then tally the scores. For video submission contests, videos must not be edited, but students may record their recitations more than once and send their best recording for each recitation.
- **Recording one-on-one on video platform:** The organizer meets with each student competitor individually over a video platform (i.e. Zoom, Skype, etc.) with the accuracy judge and prompter. The student recites their poem(s) live for the organizer while each recitation is being recorded. Recordings of recitations are sent to contest judges to review and provide scores. Judges must provide scores for each criterion and review independently.
- **Live contest on video platform:** The organizer holds a live POL contest over a video platform (i.e. Zoom, Skype, etc.). The contest follows as an in-person contest would. Judges submit scores for each criterion to contest organizer to be tallied; winners and runners-up announced at the end of show.



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### Accessibility:

- Please refer to the National Endowment for the Arts' guide [Resources to Help Ensure Accessibility of Your Virtual Events for People with Disabilities](#).
- Review [POL Accessibility Checklist – Venue & Event Promotion](#) for planning recommendations for captioning and sign language interpreter vendors, alternate formats of materials, and communication of access accommodations. Reach out to participating schools for the Deaf and Blind prior to event planning to inquire about preferences.
- Check the compatibility of your virtual platform for screen-reading software and captioning capabilities (do not rely on auto-generated captions and plan to work with a third-party). Avoid using only the chat feature for essential information that will not be said aloud. Reach out to [accessibility@arts.gov](mailto:accessibility@arts.gov) for guidance.
- Set communication rules at the start, speak slowly, and introduce yourself before speaking, which is also helpful for captioners and interpreters.
- Research audio description vendors for live streamed competitions, in particular for participating schools for the Blind.
- If an access accommodation is requested by a judge or a teacher who will be in a breakout room, make sure the captioner or interpreter is directly assigned to the requester.

### Additional resources and tips:

- Find examples of student recitations that were recorded remotely for the 2021 National Finals on the [POL YouTube page](#).
- For video submission contests, we recommend considering having student competitors attest that their recitations were indeed recited from memory and their videos were not edited or altered (this includes not adding graphics, titles, music, etc.). Organizers may want to include this as a part of their competition registration process for students.
  - Here is sample language: "I certify that my Poetry Out Loud recitation(s) were performed from memory and the video(s) I submitted were not edited or altered in any way. All recitations follow the Poetry Out Loud competition criteria and are true to the best of my knowledge."
- For guidance on how students should film recitations, please refer to the "How To: Film a Recitation for a Virtual Poetry Out Loud Competition" document on the ["Organizing a Contest" page on poetryoutloud.org](#).
- For additional contest resources including a digital contest evaluation sheet, sample tally sheet, and more, go to the ["Organizing a Contest" page on poetryoutloud.org](#).



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## How To: Film a Poetry Out Loud Recitation for a Virtual Competition

For examples of recitations recorded for a virtual contest, please refer to the videos from the 2021 National Finals on the [POL YouTube page](#).



### Video/Framing:

- Use a phone, tablet, computer, or other device to film your recitation. Ask your teacher or organizer for assistance on acquiring a device, if needed.
- Film with a horizontal orientation.
- Face the camera so it captures your head to mid-torso (medium shot). Top of head should be near top of frame, but not cut off. Camera should be at eye level.
- Frame yourself in the center of the shot.
- Each recitation should be filmed in one single shot from one static angle.
- The sound and picture must be clear.
- Videos cannot be edited. Do not add music, graphics, titles, virtual backgrounds, or computer animation.
- For video submission contests, each recitation requires its own separate video.

### Location, Lighting, and Audio:

- Record your recitations indoors.
- Film your recitation in front of a neutral background, if possible, like a plain wall. Try to avoid wearing clothing in similar colors to the background.
- Do not film in front of an uncovered window or have light sources directly behind you. This is to avoid being backlit.
- Pick a quiet location. Be aware of fans, AC/heat, or other distractions that can go on during recording.

### Additional Tips:

- Students may look directly into the camera, at a fixed spot, or at an imagined audience.
- Make sure you are the only visible and audible person in the video.
- Use a microphone, if possible. If the microphone is on the camera, position the camera close to you.



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- Have the camera on a tripod or solid surface during recording, if possible. Do your best to avoid camera movement.
- Start recording a few seconds before the recitation and stop recording a few seconds after the end.
- For video submission contests, check with the contest organizer if there are file size limits to videos and if there is a preferred naming convention to save your videos.

Reminder – Recitation Requirements:

- Students must begin by stating the title of the poem and the poet’s name, and the translator, if applicable.
- A student’s own editorial comments before or after the poem are not allowed.
- Poems must be recited from memory.
- For more details regarding the evaluation criteria, please consult the [Teacher’s Guide](#).

Accessibility:

- To request accommodations, please contact your contest organizer or [POL state coordinator](#).

## Poetry Out Loud Poem Streaming Permissions Guide

In order to stream recitations of poems over the internet or broadcast recitations on television, you must have permission from the poems' rightsholder. Here is the process of securing those permissions:

- 1. Check to see the poem's status in [this spreadsheet](#).**
  - a. If the poem is marked "yes," the poem is all set to be streamed.
  - b. If a poem is marked "no," you must go through the process of securing permissions before the recitation can be streamed.
  - c. If you plan on broadcasting on television, please contact Justine Haka at [jhaka@poetryfoundation.org](mailto:jhaka@poetryfoundation.org) to find out if your poems have broadcast permissions.
- 2. Contact the poem's rightsholder (many times, it's the publisher), as soon as possible, to get the rights to stream the poem.** Some publishers take a while to respond, so it's best to send your ask out as soon as you can. Contact information for the publishers can be found in the above spreadsheet. Be sure to mention it's for educational purposes, and that the use is non-commercial, and the viewership will be private and limited. Here is a [sample email](#) that you can use for this process at the end of this guide.
  - a. On the rare occurrence that a rightsholder asks for payment, please contact Justine Haka at [jhaka@poetryfoundation.org](mailto:jhaka@poetryfoundation.org).
- 3. If you are unable to get the streaming rights for a poem in time for the contest, you can make alternate arrangements.**
  - a. For the National Finals, we play a short audio interview with the student instead of airing their recitation. Here is the language we've used in the past: "We regret that we cannot webcast the recitation of this poem because the rights holder has not granted permission."

### Other Concerns

- This permissions process is for any streaming of poem recitations for the Poetry Out Loud program. Unfortunately, the Poetry Foundation is not authorized to give any legal advice concerning poem permissions or other matters.
- We do not advise sharing recitations on social media outlets or outside of the one-time live stream. For requests from news outlets such as radio or television stations, please contact Justine Haka at [jhaka@poetryfoundation.org](mailto:jhaka@poetryfoundation.org).
- For any questions about this process, please contact [poetryoutloud@arts.gov](mailto:poetryoutloud@arts.gov).

## POL Permissions Email Template

### GREETING

I'm a POSITION [e.g. teacher, administrator] at ORGANIZATION [e.g. Springfield High School, Ohio Arts Council], and I'm reaching out to you with a permissions query. I work on [Poetry Out Loud](#), a national arts education program sponsored by the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts that encourages the study of poetry through a dynamic recitation competition among high school students across the country. The competition is entirely free to participate in, and non-commercial and educational in nature. As part of the POL competition, a student would very much like to recite the following poem:

"POEM" by AUTHOR from BOOK

ORGANIZATION would like to broadcast its [school, regional, state] competition via MEDIUM [e.g. Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, public access television, etc.] on DATE [e.g. March 3, 2021 or more general, in March 2021; can also include leaving a recording up for a given period of time], but we do not currently have broadcast rights.

The Poetry Foundation has permission to include the poem in their online archive and on Poetry Out Loud's website via a previous agreement; now we are asking if we could broadcast a [live/recorded] recitation of this poem. The poem reciting would be accessible by AUDIENCE [e.g. 20 students and their families] for PERIOD OF TIME [e.g. once on DATE, for two months beginning...]. There will be many other poems in the competition, but this is the only one we need permission from you for.

Since the broadcast of the POL competition is noncommercial and educational in nature, we hope that this use may be approved without an additional fee.

We very much hope this limited, educational use could be approved, and this student can recite the poem in the competition. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Warmly,