

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is the Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest?**

The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest is a character education program for high school students. Students in grades 9 – 12 are asked to select a “Law of Life” (such as “Honesty is the best policy,” or “To give is better than to receive”), and to write about how the character value contained in the maxim applies to the student’s life. The contest challenges students to reflect on values such as generosity, courage and compassion, and it rewards those students who are willing to take a stand for their beliefs.

*“The Laws of Life Essay Contest gives students the opportunity to look within themselves and decide which ideals are important to them.”*

-Former First Lady Barbara Bush

### **Why is the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest unique?**

The *Laws of Life* Essay Contest consistently rewards not just students who test well or are who are always high academic achievers, but students of all achievement levels. Our essays are not primarily judged on grammar or style, but on the degree to which the essay writer shows that he or she has earnestly reflected on a law of life and applied it to his or her life.

*“The Georgia Laws of Life contest encourages young people from all walks of life to reflect on a character-building life experience. It allows students of all academic abilities – from C students to valedictorians – to be recognized together in front of their peers, parents, and community.”*

– Mark Ellis, East Columbus Rotary Club

### **How does the *Laws of Life* contest fit in with Core Curriculum standards?**

The contest is operated through a school's English or Language Arts department. The essay assignment works well with Core Curriculum and other writing standards, including:

RC 3 - Acquires new vocabulary in each content area and uses it correctly.

W 1 - Establishes appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure.

W 4 - Practices both timed and process writing and, when applicable, uses the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing.

C 1 - Demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.

C 2 - Demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats.

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## ESSAY REQUIREMENTS

When writing a *Law of Life* Essay for the 2015-2016 contest, students should be original and should “write from the heart.”

- **Essays should be 500 to 700 words in length, typed and double-spaced.** Although not required, students may include a word count on their essays.
- **Essays should be based on a student’s personal experience.** The essay should show how a *Law of Life* applies to a student’s own life. Essays that focus exclusively on a historical character or that read like a book review are not winning essays.

- **Essays should contain a “law of life” expressed as a maxim, saying, or quote.** (“Honesty is the best policy” is a *Law of Life*; the word “honesty” is not. Essays that do not contain a saying or quote are not eligible to win prizes.)

## CONTEST AWARDS

The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest has significant state-wide student awards, school-level student awards, and teacher awards. For 2011 -2012, the awards are as follows:

### State-wide Student Awards

\$1,000 - First place winner  
 \$750 - Second place winner  
 \$500 - Third place winner  
 \$300 - Fourth place winner  
 \$200 - Fifth place winner

### School Winners and Grade Winners

A school that generates a minimum of 100 essays per grade level will have four (4) cash winners: a \$100 School Winner and three \$50 Grade Winners.

- **\$100 per School Winner\***
- **\$50 per Grade Winner (3 per school if minimum participation levels are met)\*\***
- **\$100 award** to the English teacher of the grand-prize essayist (for the state).

## WRITING A GEORGIA *LAWS OF LIFE* ESSAY

### Pointers for Students

- A *Law of Life* is a wise saying or quote that contains words of truth, lasting meaning, or inspiration. Examples of *Laws of Life* include:
  - “An attitude of gratitude creates blessings.”
  - “You are only as good as your word.”
  - “To have a friend, be one.”
  - “Honesty is the best policy.”
  - “When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.”
  - “Smile and the world smiles with you.”
- Think about a personal experience that has taught you about a Law of Life. The experience may have been a major event in your life, or it may have been a small, private moment when you came to understand something profound about life. Perhaps the experience was something traumatic, such as when you or a family member were in a car wreck. Or perhaps the experience was something that makes you smile every time you think of it – the time your grandmother taught you how to bake a blueberry pie, or the time that you and a friend discovered that laughter was the best medicine.
- Write an essay that relates your experience to a Law of Life. Be sure to clearly state the Law of Life in your essay!
- Remember that the best essays include lots of details. These details make the reader feel as though he or she was right there with you when the event occurred. Let the reader know exactly how you felt, and why.

- Your essay should be between 500 and 700 words. Essays that are shorter or longer than this will be disqualified from the contest. Placing the essay's word count at the beginning or end of the essay is helpful, but it is not required.
- Complete the Student Entry Form and staple it to the top of your essay.
- Make a copy of your essay to keep; the copy that is sent to the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest will not be returned to you.

*"Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart." -William Wordsworth*

### **Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest Sample Maxims**

A "Law of Life" or maxim can be a quotation from a famous person, or a simple saying that you have heard. A "law of life" should be short and easy to remember.

1. "The highest form of wisdom is kindness." - *The Talmud*
2. "A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition."
3. "What is success? To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived." – Ralph Waldo Emerson
4. "Strength is a matter of a made-up mind." – John Beecher
5. "Slow and steady wins the race." – The Tortoise
6. "Loving someone deeply gives you strength, while being deeply loved gives you courage." – Lao-tzu
7. "Share a smile with other people and a smile will return to you."
8. "Fall seven times; stand up eight." –Japanese proverb
9. "Love is patient, love is kind." - I Corinthians 13:4
10. "Beauty is a light in the heart." -Kahil Gibran
11. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." – *William Hickson*
12. "Out of adversity comes opportunity."
13. "Failure is not falling down but refusing to get up."
14. "No one knows what he can do until he tries." –*Pubilius Syrus*
15. "Mistakes are doorways to discovery." – *Anonymous*
16. "To listen, when nobody else wants to listen, is a very beautiful thing." –*Mother Teresa*
17. "The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what you are for what you could become."  
–*DuBois*
18. "One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore." -*Andre Gide*
19. "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and he'll eat forever." - *Chinese Proverb*
20. "Good example is the best sermon." - *Benjamin Franklin*
21. "Stop and smell the roses." – *Anonymous*

# Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest 2015-2016 Student Entry Form

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY - Attach with a staple to the top of your essay.  
DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE ESSAY ITSELF

High School: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

Law of Life (This is the maxim or quote that you have written about, and it should appear in your essay):

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's or Guardian's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Have you won this contest as a finalist before? \_\_\_\_\_

First & Last Name of Your English Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

*By signing this document, you and your legal guardian hereby give the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest the right to use this information, your essay, and your photograph and/or video image at its discretion and without limitation to publicize and promote the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest and/or its sponsors. By signing, you are also certifying that the essay is your own original work and truthfully reflects your personal life experiences.*

Signatures: Essayist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Students 18 years of age and older do not require a parent's or guardian's signature. If you are 18 or older, please check here: \_\_\_\_\_*