

SOUTHERN WORD VIRTUAL SLAM GUIDELINES

(adapted from the Brave New Voices slam rules)

Although we de-stress the competition, we have come up with the following guidelines. Please abide by them so as to avoid controversy and keep the focus on the fun and expansive nature of poetry and the event as a whole.

- Participants must be between 14 and 19 years old (a poet's age is determined by their age on April 23, 2022).
- There are no wrong answers and the standard is yourself. Please show us all how dope you really are.
- All of the work used in the Slam must be original writing by the individuals slamming. Poets and teams that plagiarize will be disqualified. Plagiarism, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; use (another's production) without crediting the source; to commit literary theft; present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.
- The Slam is about the poet(s) and the mic(s). Props may not be used in the Slam. Props are defined as any non-body piece of equipment. Musical accompaniment (excluding mouth/body percussion) may not be used in the Slam.
- **Please arrive 30 minutes prior to slam time.** Before starting the slam, we need to draw the order of the slam. We reserve the right to disqualify any poet or team from the slam who is not present in time for the drawing.
- Each individual or team will compete in a qualifying slam final for their school or county which leads to the statewide finals. Winner(s) of the school/county slam final will advance to the statewide finals. In some cases, it may be necessary to compete in a quarterfinal event before reaching a county slam final.
- The Davidson County Slam at W.O. Smith Music School and the Middle Tennessee Slam at Franklin High School are both open to poets in other Middle Tennessee counties interested in participating. Both events will feed the statewide final.
- The individual school/county final will consist of one three minute round (pieces three minutes or less in length). Based on the event, a specified number of winners from each county final will advance to the statewide finals.
- The statewide finals will consist of two rounds. A one minute round (pieces one minute or less in length) and a three minute round (pieces three minutes or less in length). Scores will be combined for a cumulative total. The poet with the highest total will win. **You must perform two new pieces in the finals. Pieces performed in a county slam final may not be repeated in the statewide finals.** If you had to participate in a quarterfinal bout to reach the finals, you may repeat the piece you performed in the quarterfinal bout. But, you may not repeat the piece performed in the **school/county slam final**.
- You may only compete in one qualifying slam.
- We encourage you to become intimately familiar with the poems with which you will compete. Memorization is not required, but you do want to really bust your piece. Rehearse!
- All participating youth, even those over 21, must submit a signed release form prior to participating in the **statewide finals** event as we will be filming the event.
- Since the slams are an all ages event, there is no alcohol or using of illegal drugs at any point as part of these events (this includes adults over the age of 21). Any participants violating this policy will be asked to leave, and will serve a probationary period of one year before being eligible for future Southern Word events.

JUDGES & SCORING

- The slam will be judged by a mixed panel of poets, adults, and youth. Many judges will be pre-selected and some will come from the audience.
- We are planning to have 5 judges at each event. Judges will score pieces from 0 to 10. The highest and lowest scores will be dropped. The three remaining scores will be added for a potential high score of “30” or 3 judges x 10 points each. If there are 4 judges, only the lowest score will be dropped. If there are 3 judges, no scores will be dropped.
- Judges will be given criteria for judging on both writing and performance quality, and will serve more as encouragers of young writers than judges. This will be as standardized as much as possible, but like each of us, judges come with their own biases for and against certain topics and styles. Remember, the standard is yourself. Be your own best “judge.”
- Judges will be seated together at a table on stage or in the first row. Their scores will be passed down to the scorekeeper who will tally the scores. The rankings will be announced at the end of the competition. If performers are interested in learning their scores, we can share these with teams after the event.
- Each individual and group piece must be under the specified length. We will have a 10 second grace period, after which significant time penalties will incur.
- If individuals or teams go over the time limits, their scores will be penalized .5 for each 10 seconds beyond the limit. (e.g. for a three minute piece: 3:11 to 3:20: – .5 point penalty; 3:21 to 3:30 – 1 point penalty; 3:31 to 3:40 – 1.5 point penalty, etc.)
- Each competition will have a scorekeeper/timekeeper and emcee.
- In the event that there is a tie in the score, teams and individuals will be given a short amount of time to write from a prompt. Participants will perform this piece and the judges will determine the winner based on this performance.
- In the event a team wants to lodge a protest against another team for an infraction of any of the rules, it is the responsibility of the protesting team to contact a slam organizer prior to the conclusion of the bout. **WE STRONGLY DISCOURAGE** this unless you really mean it. We will schedule a protest meeting if need be. Remember, it’s not the points that count. Of course, we all want to make the Finals. But we all can’t. Oh well.

CONTENT

- Southern Word creates platforms for young people to speak about the real hopes and challenges in their lives. We want poets to address issues and subjects that they feel need to be addressed.
- Southern Word is part of an inclusive spoken word movement and the Southern Word Grand Slam will bring together a wide range of people of all ages and backgrounds. It is an incredible opportunity to expose the region to the magic of spoken word.
- Please create your pieces to reach this audience by prioritizing profundity and realizing that part of being heard is understanding your audience and crafting your message accordingly.
- Please use a PG-13 sensibility in creating your pieces. Teams should regulate themselves and avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content and/or language that is degrading to any group of people. Judges will be incorporating this factor into their scoring in determining who is prepared to appear in the final events. Please, do it for the love.
- There will be a collective content/trigger warning issued by the MC at the top of the bout.
- A trigger warning (TW) is a statement delivered prior to the performance of a poem to indicate that there is content that is potentially distressing to the audience (i.e. violence, assault,

abuse, addiction) so that they may either prepare themselves or opt out of viewing the content.

- Poets are allowed to deliver a TW themselves, but time will start at first utterance or audience engagement as specified earlier in the rules.
- If teams would like a specified TW before a particular poem, but would like it to happen outside of the poem's clocked time, they will have the option of having the MC issue a more specific trigger warning directly before any poem. TW sheets will be passed out at the coaches meeting. Coaches must bring the TW sheets to each of their bouts. Teams wishing for a TW will have the option of filling out the slip with team name, draw (ABCDE), round, and content warning. Teams can deliver the slip to the MC at any point during the show up until the designated poem is on deck. The MC will read the TW for the upcoming poem, then invite the poet up to the stage and ask for applause from the audience.
- The TW will be as follows: "For the next poem from team (team listed on card) there is a trigger warning for (list content written on the card). If you would like to step out of the room now or at any point throughout the poem to take care of yourself, feel free to do so."

FILMING

- We will be filming the finals event and will ask that all performers sign a release form that will permit usage of the footage for educational, archival, and promotional purposes.
- Due to the fact that there will be many youth performers, we will not permit filming of the event by outside cameras without special permission. Please contact info@southernword.org if you have special needs in this regard.

PRIZES

- In addition to the competition, this event is about building a young writer community and providing artistic and educational opportunities to high school students from the region. Brave New Voices is presently solidifying their plans for this year, but it looks like there will not be a national slam. If there is a Brave New Voices convening or slam, statewide finals winners will have the first opportunity to attend as representatives of the region.
- As an alternative prize for top finishers at the statewide final, we will have a paid artist development opportunity over the course of the summer. One of the greatest things that emerges from the BNV process is amazing poetry and poets from working intensively on writing over the summer. We will create a comparable experience for the five top finishers of the statewide final.
- Additional prizes and exposure may emerge over the course of the year and competition. However, the main goal is to grow the young writer community in the region, perform at the highest level possible, and realize our potential as individuals and as a group.