



Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam Guide 2016

2016 YOUTH SPEAKS TEEN POETRY SLAM

Presented by Youth Speaks



How Did Poetry Slam Start? (A brief history)

In 1984, construction worker and poet Marc Smith started a poetry reading at Get Me High Lounge, a Chicago jazz club. Smith was looking for a way to breathe life into the open mic format. The series—with its emphasis on performance and the democratization of the art form—laid the groundwork for what would eventually be known as poetry slam.

In 1986, Smith established the weekly poetry competition at the Green Mill, an infamous jazz club and former haunt of Al Capone's. The Uptown poetry slam, which started the trend of 5 judges, high and low score dropped, etc., continues to run every Sunday in Chicago to this day.

In 1996, ten years later, James Kass founded Youth Speaks Inc. in San Francisco, and hosted the first Teen Poetry Slam.

Please read on for information on eligibility, slam rules, and for this year's slam dates!

ELIGIBILITY

It's an Individual Slam

Open to all Bay Area youth ages 13-19*

**born after April 16th, 1996*

REGISTRATION

– Register Online @

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/youth-speaks-teen-poetry-slam-2016-prelims-poet-registration-registration-20591229923>

– Fill out a Teen Poetry Slam Registration Form

Deadline to register is Thursday, February 11, 2016



PRELIMINARIES

Thursday, February 18, 2016

Co-hosted by Holla Back Open Mic
EastSide Arts Alliance | 2277 International Blvd. | Oakland | Fruitvale BART

Registration: 7:30 PM

Bout Time: 8PM –10PM

Thursday, February 25, 2016

SoleSpace | 1714 Telegraph Ave. | Oakland | 19th Street BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7 PM – 9 PM

Friday, February 26, 2016

826 Valencia | 826 Valencia St. | SF | 16th Street Mission BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7 PM – 9 PM

Saturday, February 27, 2016

Brower Center - Richard and Rhoda Goldman Theater | 2150 Allston Way | Berkeley

Downtown Berkeley BART

Registration: 12:30 PM

Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

Thursday, March 3, 2016

SoleSpace | 1714 Telegraph Ave. | Oakland | 19th Street Oakland BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Friday, March 4, 2016

826 Valencia | 826 Valencia St. | SF | 16th Street Mission BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Saturday, March 5, 2016

La Peña Cultural Center | 3105 Shattuck Ave. | Berkeley | Ashby BART

Registration: 12:30 PM

Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

Thursday, March 10, 2016

SoleSpace | 1714 Telegraph Ave. | Oakland | 19th Street Oakland BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM



Friday, March 11, 2016

826 Valencia | 826 Valencia St. | SF | 16th Street BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Saturday, March 12, 2016

Brower Center - Richard and Rhoda Goldman Theater | 2150 Allston Way | Berkeley

Downtown Berkeley BART

Registration: 12:30 PM

Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

SEMI-FINALS

Friday, March 25, 2016

Impact Hub Oakland | 2323 Broadway | Oakland | 19th Street BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Saturday, March 26, 2016

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th St Mission BART

Registration: 12:30 PM

Bout Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Friday, April 1, 2016

Impact Hub Oakland | 2323 Broadway | Oakland | 19th Street BART

Registration: 6:30 PM

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Saturday, April 2, 2016

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th St Mission BART

Registration: 12:30 PM

Bout Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

FINALS

Grand Slam Finals | Saturday, April 16, 2016

Davies Symphony Hall | 201 Van Ness Ave. | SF | Civic Center BART

Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

General Admission Tickets: \$5 Youth | \$10 Adults | \$50 VIP

GUIDELINES

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 slam.

- In order to register to compete in the Teen Poetry Slam, you only need 2 poems: 1 standard length poem and 1 lightning round poem, to be used in the event of a tie.
- If you advance to the Semi-Finals and Grand Slam Finals bouts, you will need a total of 3 poems: 2 standard length poems and one 1 lightning round poem, to be used in the event of a tie.
- *Standard Length Poems:* must be under 3 minutes, 30 seconds long. The poet will also have a 10 second grace period, after which scores will be penalized 0.5 for each 10 seconds beyond, starting at 3 minutes 40 seconds (e.g. up to 3:39 – no penalty; 3:39 to 3:49 - .5 point penalty; 3:50 to 3:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.).
- *Lighting Rounds:* In the event of a tie at the end of any of the bouts, a lightning round will be added in order to break the tie. Poems performed during the lightning round must be under 1 minute, 30 seconds in length. We will also have a 10 second grace period, after which scores will be penalized 0.5 for each 10 seconds beyond, starting at 1 minute 40 seconds (e.g. up to 1:39 – no penalty; 1:39 to 1:49 - .5 point penalty; 1:50 to 1:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.).
- If poets advance, they are allowed to repeat poems between Prelims, Semi-Finals and Grand Slam Finals bouts. However, poets may NOT perform the same poem more than once within any single bout. (i.e. you may not perform the same poem in both rounds of the Semi-Finals bout). Poets that do not abide by this rule will be disqualified.

Preliminary Bout	Round 1
	Lightning Round (*only in the event of a tie*)

Semi-Finals Bout	Round 1
	Round 2
	Lightning Round (*only in the event of a tie*)

Grand Slam Finals Bout	Round 1
	Round 2
	Lightning Round (*only in the event of a tie*)

- Poets are NOT allowed to use poems used in previous Youth Speaks slams, including past Teen Poetry Slams, Unified District Poetry Slams, and Brave New Voices. Poets who use poems from past slams will be disqualified.



- Poems must be original writing by the competing poet.
- No props may 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.
- There is no censorship whatsoever, but gratuitous use of profanity could work against you when it comes to scoring. It is recommended that you try to avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content and/ or language that degrades any group of people. Please, do it for the love.
- The Slam will be judged by a mixed panel of volunteer poets, adults and young people. Many judges will be pre-selected, and some may come from the audience. We will shoot for diversity in the judging panel.
- The top 12 scoring poets from the Semi-Finals will advance to the Grand Slam Finals.
- If you were a Finalist in last year's Teen Poetry Slam, you get an automatic slot in the semi-finals. This means you do not have to compete in a preliminary bout.
- No phones are allowed on Finals stage. Plan accordingly with paper and/or memorization of pieces.

Elimination of Poets at the Finals:

There will be 12 competing poets at the Grand Slam Finals on Saturday, April 16th, 2016 at Davies Symphony Hall. There will be two rounds during that evening. After the first round, only 8 poets will be advance to the second round.

Round 1: 12 Poets

Round 2: 8 Poets

The top 5 scoring finalists are eligible to be on the team representing the Bay Area at The Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival in Washington, D.C. from July 14 to July 18, 2016!

TIPS & ADVICE

- We encourage you to become intimately familiar with the poems you will compete with. Memorization is not required (music stands will be available at all venues), but you want to really bust your piece. Rehearse! Know your poem.
- 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 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. Their scores will be passed down to the event host, who will read them off from low to high. We do this because we want to allow the judges some anonymity, and to not have poets get angry or too happy with any one judge. Take responsibility for your words. Be smart.
- Be respectful of yourself, the youth writing community, and the community you represent.
- Have fun in this process. If you don’t get high scores, so what. It says nothing about your abilities and potential as a writer, thinker, and cultural leader. By getting on a mic and telling your story, you are already showing your strength and character.



THE YOUTH SPEAKS BAY AREA TEAM **AT BRAVE NEW VOICES (BNV)**

What is Brave New Voices?

The Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival is much more than a poetry slam. It is a week-long series of workshops, performances, and other transformative events focused on bringing together young poets so that they can tell their story and create new pathways toward artistic growth and civic engagement. Originally founded by Youth Speaks in 1998 after the success of the Teen Poetry Slam, the first festival had 4 teams; we now have over 500 young poets representing 60 team from cities and regions across the world. Brave New Voices takes place in a different city across the US each year.

This year it will be in Washington D.C.

What does being on the Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Team entail?

The Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Team is one of Youth Speaks' most sacred rites and long-honored traditions. Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Team members will represent the entire Bay Area at the 2016 Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival. This is an all-expense paid trip that allows team members to meet and deeply engage with some of the most amazing young poets from around the world. In addition to meeting an international network of incredible poets, team members will get individualized support and the opportunity to grow as part of a close-knit community of some of the Bay Area's strongest young writers and performers. Former Youth Speaks Bay Area Team members have gone onto become actors, teachers, organizers, activists, published poets, renowned playwrights, and globally touring performers. Among them include George Watsky, Chinaka Hodge, Jason Mateo, Shannon Matesky, Dahlak Bradford, Jade Cho, Rafael Casal, Natasha Huey, Obasi Davis, Joshua Merchant, Sarah O'Neil, Michael Turner III, Bryant Phan, and many more.

Being a part of the Youth Speaks Bay Area Team means having an individual commitment to personal artistic development and cultivation of craft. Team members will be expected to attend regular practices, retreats, and performances multiple times a week beginning the week of April 17 and ending with Brave New Voices in mid-July. After the festival, team members will be encouraged to continue to write and work independently and perform representing the 2016 Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Team at future Youth Speaks events.

Who can be on the Youth Speaks Bay Area Team?

In order to be eligible to be on the Youth Speaks Bay Area Team, participants:

- Must be born after July 17, 1996 (participants must be under 21 years of age at the time of this year's Brave New Voices Finals)
- Must NOT have already been on two previous Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Teams (Poets may only go to BNV as members of the Youth Speaks Bay Area team a maximum of two times. However, these poets may still compete to be the Grand Slam Champion at the Annual Teen Poetry Slam.)



Thank you for sharing your stories with one another and with all of us!

We are really glad you are participating! We sincerely hope your Youth Speaks experience isn't limited to the slam and that it is instead the starting point of a long relationship. We hope that you also join us at these other upcoming programs:

- [AFTER SCHOOL WRITING & PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS](#)
- [UNDER 21 OPEN MICS](#)
- [UNIFIED DISTRICT POETRY SLAM](#)
- [QUEERIOSITY](#)
- [MC OLYMPICS](#)
- [OAKLAND POET YOUTH LAUREATE](#)
- [SPOKES YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD](#)

For more, please visit YouthSpeaks.org