

2018
Youth Speaks
Teen Poetry Slam
Guide

2018 YOUTH SPEAKS TEEN POETRY SLAM

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What is Poetry Slam?

A Brief Summary

A poetry slam is a competition in which poets share their work in front of an audience and are scored on a scale of 1 to 10 by a panel of judges from an array of backgrounds. The point of a poetry slam is to defy mediums and platforms that are traditionally given to spoken word artists in an effort to create an interactive experience for both the poets and the audience.

A Brief History

The art of spoken word has existed for centuries. People have been performing stories and verse, even competitively, as long as people have been around (African griots, Greek poets at the Olympics, etc). In 1984, a concept was birthed at a poetry reading at Get Me High Lounge, a Chicago jazz club, as a way to breathe life into the open mic format. It emphasized performance and the idea that anyone could be a poet or at least have an opinion on art. The democratization of this art form, laid the groundwork for what would eventually be known as poetry slam.

In 1996, Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam became part of was the country's first-ever youth slam. Forty-three young poets participated. Currently, the annual event features close to 200 youth writers, emcees, and performers from throughout the Bay Area and Northern California, and attracts nearly 10,000 audience members. What began as a single poetry slam in San Francisco has helped shape a global youth poetry movement.

Eligibility & Registration

The Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam is an **INDIVIDUAL** slam open to all **Bay Area** youth ages 13 - 19 (*born after April 8th, 1998*)

Registration is open **NOW (1/15/18)** and will officially close on **(3/17/18)**.

[REGISTER ONLINE HERE](#)

Bout Schedule

PRELIMINARY BOUTS

#1 Friday, February 16, 2018

Galería de la Raza | 2857 24th Street | San Francisco | 24th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 6:30 PM
Bout Time: 7 PM – 9 PM

#2 Saturday, February 17, 2018

Chapter 510 | 2301 Telegraph Ave | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 12:30 PM
Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

#3 Saturday, February 24, 2018

RYSE Youth Center | 205 41st St | Richmond | Richmond Station BART
Doors & Registration: 12:30 PM
Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

#4 Friday, March 2, 2018

Galería de la Raza | 2857 24th Street | San Francisco | 24th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 6:30 PM
Bout Time: 7 PM – 9 PM

#5 Saturday, March 3, 2018

Chapter 510 | 2301 Telegraph Ave | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 12:30 PM
Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

#6 Saturday, March 10, 2018

Chapter 510 | 2301 Telegraph Ave | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 12:30 PM
Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

#7 Friday, March 16, 2018

Chapter 510 | 2301 Telegraph Ave | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Doors & Registration: 6:30 PM
Bout Time: 7 PM – 9 PM

#8 Saturday, March 17, 2018

1AM Gallery/First Amendment | 1000 Howard Street | San Francisco |
Powell Street Station BART
Doors & Registration: 12:30 PM
Bout Time: 1 PM – 3 PM

SEMIFINAL BOUTS

#1 Saturday, March 24, 2018

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th St Mission BART
Doors & Registration: 4:30 PM
Bout Time: 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

#2 Saturday, March 24, 2018

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th St Mission BART
Doors & Registration: 6:30 PM
Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

#3 Saturday, March 31, 2018

Red Bay Coffee Warehouse | 3098 E 10th St | Oakland | Fruitvale Station BART
Doors & Registration: 4:30 PM
Bout Time: 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

#4 Saturday, March 31, 2018

Red Bay Coffee Warehouse | 3098 E 10th St | Oakland | Fruitvale Station BART
Doors & Registration: 6:30 PM
Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

GRAND SLAM FINALS BOUT

Saturday, April 14, 2018

Nourse Auditorium | 275 Hayes St. | SF | Civic Center BART
Bout Time: 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

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

Rules & Guidelines

Although we de-stress the competition aspect, we have come up with the following guidelines to clarify the rules of the slam. Please abide by them so as to avoid disqualification and keep the focus on the fun and expansive nature of poetry and the slam.

- *How Many Poems Will I Need?*
 - In order to register to compete in the Teen Poetry Slam, you only need two poems: one standard length poem and one lightning round poem, to be used in the event of a tie.
 - If you advance to the Semifinals and/or Grand Slam Finals, you will need a total of three poems: two standard length poems and one 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 (adjusting this time to 3:40). After this time, scores will be penalized 0.5 points for each 10 seconds over time, starting at 3 minutes 40 seconds (e.g. up to 3:39 – no penalty; 3:40 to 3:49 - 0.5 point penalty; 3:50 to 3:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.).
- *Lighting Round Poems:* 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. The poet will also have a 10 second grace period, after which scores will be penalized 0.5 points for each 10 seconds over time, starting at 1 minute 40 seconds (e.g. up to 1:39 – no penalty; 1:40 to 1:49 - 0.5 point penalty; 1:50 to 1:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.).
- *Repeat Rule:* Poets may NOT perform the same poem more than once *within* the same bout (i.e. it's not permitted for the poem used in Round 1 to be used in Round 2). However, poets are allowed to repeat poems between Prelims, Semifinals and Grand Slam Finals bouts. Poets that repeat the same poem in both rounds of the same bout will be disqualified.

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

- *Bring New Work:* Poets are NOT allowed to use poems performed in past slam seasons, including previous years of the Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam, Unified District Poetry Slam, and Brave New Voices. Poets who perform poems from past slams will be disqualified.
- *Bring Original Work:* Poems must be original writing by the competing poet.
- *No Props:* 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.
- *Be Responsible For Your Words:* There is no censorship whatsoever, but it is recommended that you try to avoid excessive profanity, violence, sexually explicit content and/ or language that degrades any group of people. Please, do it for the love.
- *Judges:* The slam will be judged by a mixed panel of volunteer poets, adults and young people. Many judges are preselected, and some may come from the audience. We always aim for diversity across our judges.
- *Silent Scoring:* We won't be announcing scores at this year's slam in order to keep the focus on the poetry, not on the points. If you like, you can get your scores from the host at the end of each bout.
- *Poet Advancement:* The top scoring poets from Preliminaries will advance to Semifinals. The top 12 scoring poets from Semifinals will advance to the Grand Slam Finals.
- *Special Note on Preliminary Bouts:* If you compete in a Preliminary Slam, and don't advance, you can get on the waitlist for another upcoming Prelim! You must sign up with our Front of House staff in order to get on the waitlist. To make sure we get as many new poets on stage as possible, participants are only allowed to waitlist for another Preliminary bout *once* and are not guaranteed to get on stage.
- *For 2017 Slam Participants:* If you were a Finalist in last year's Teen Poetry Slam, you get an automatic slot in the Semifinals. This means you do not have to compete in a Preliminary bout, however, **you still need to register for the competition.**

Content/Trigger Warnings

- *What are Content/Trigger Warnings?*
We believe that poetry is emotionally charged and can be therapeutic and healing. We also believe in emotional safety. A content/trigger warning is a statement that warns the audience that the content they are about to watch, hear, etc contains material that could cause distress. Some trauma survivors or people living with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) appreciate hearing a content/trigger warning before listening to a performance

because it helps them prepare themselves to manage trauma responses while witnessing the piece. Content/trigger warnings are just one way we can help respond to the emotional and psychological wounds we constantly carry with us. We will strive to have a SPOKES support table at each bout with emotional support resources for poets and audience members.

- *How Will Content/Trigger Warnings Be Used In The Slam?*
There will be a collective content/trigger warning issued by the MC at the top of each bout. Poets are invited (though not required) to do more specific content/trigger warnings at the beginning of their poems, if they so choose. Participants may also have the MC issue the more specific content/trigger warning for them. If participants are interested in having the MC issue a content/trigger warning, they can arrange this by talking to a SPOKES member at the SPOKES support table at the beginning of the bout. Content/trigger warnings will NOT count against the poet's time (i.e. the Host will still start the stopwatch at the beginning of the participants' poem, not the content/trigger warning).
- *How Do I Give a Content/Trigger Warning?* Content/trigger warnings can take many forms but for first-timers, you should focus on being brief and letting the audience know what sensitive topic(s) will come up in your piece.

Here are a few examples (feel free to use them!):

1. *"Content warning: sexual violence"*
2. *"Trigger warning: domestic violence and self-harm"*
3. *"Content note: gun violence and suicide"*

Elimination of Poets at Finals

There will be 12 poets advanced to compete on stage at the Grand Slam Finals on Saturday, April 14th, 2018 at the Nourse Theater. There will be two rounds of this slam. Only the top 8 scoring poets from the first round will advance to the second round.

Round 1: 12 Poets

Round 2: 8 Poets

What Could I Win?

Beyond a year's worth of bragging rights and the chance to share your voice with your peers and community, the top 5 scoring finalists are also eligible to be on the team representing the Bay Area at the 2018 Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival. This year's festival will be held from July 18-21, 2018 in a city in the Southwest United States.

Tips & Advice

- *Practice Your Poems:* 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.
- *Don't Worry 'Bout The Judges:* Judges will be given criteria for judging on both writing and performance quality, and will serve more as advocates for young writers than as critical 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."
- *No Really, Don't Worry 'Bout The Judges:* Judges will be seated together at a table. Their scores will be passed down to the bout Host, who will tally them but will not announce them aloud. We have adopted this practice because we want to keep the focus on the poetry, not on the points.
- *Do It For The Love:* Be respectful of yourself, the youth writing community, and the communities you represent. Come to share your story *and* to support the other poets.
- *Have Fun:* If you don't get high scores, so what? It says nothing about your abilities and potential as a writer, artist or cultural leader. By getting on the mic and telling your story, you are already doing something powerful: helping to combat alienation and bring the noise from the margins to the core.

Beyond the Slam

We are so excited that you are participating in this year's Teen Poetry Slam! We sincerely hope the slam is just one part of your experience with Youth Speaks. Please join us at some of our other FREE upcoming programs:

- [Writing & Performance Workshops \(Weekly\)](#)
- [Under 21 Open Mics \(every 2nd & Final Friday\)](#)
- [SPOKES Youth Advisory Board](#)
- [MC Olympics](#)
- [Queeriosity @ Brave New Voices \(June\)](#)
- [Brave New Voices \(July 18-21\)](#)

For more, please visit YouthSpeaks.org

Brave New Voices 2018 & The Youth Speaks Bay Area Team

What is Brave New Voices?

The Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival (“BNV”) is much more than a poetry slam. It is a 4-day festival 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, following the success of the Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam, the first BNV 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, Brave New Voices will be held from July 18 - 21, 2018 in a city in the Southwest United States.

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 2018 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 on to 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 Brathwaite, Jade Cho, Rafael Casal, Natasha Huey, Obasi Davis, Joshua Merchant, Sarah O’Neal, Aleah Bradshaw, Nyabingha Zianni, 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 are expected to attend regular practices, retreats, and performances multiple times a week beginning the week of April 23 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 2018 Youth Speaks Bay Area BNV Team at future Youth Speaks events.

Who can be on the Youth Speaks Bay Area Team?

- Participants must be born after July 22, 1998 (the Festival is limited to participants 19 years of age and under, as of the date of Brave New Voices Finals)

- Participants may only be on the Youth Speaks Bay Area Brave New Voices Team a maximum of two times. However, all poets may still compete to be the Grand Slam Champion at the Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam.