

The Research Question Prize

Judging criteria and terms, for school staff

Students choose a difficult question in a subject they care about and explain it to a curious 12-year-old, in no more than 1,000 words excluding references. Any subject. Entries are read blind.

HOW ENTRIES ARE SCORED

In this order.

- 1 Is the question genuinely difficult, and does the entry show why?**
We are not scoring how impressive the topic sounds. A strong entry makes clear what the question is really asking, why a simple answer is not enough, and where the difficulty actually lies.
- 2 Would a curious 12-year-old follow it?**
Every technical word is explained or left out. Use a concrete example when an abstract explanation would lose the reader. No talking down either; a 12-year-old can tell.
- 3 Does it handle the complexity honestly?**
Explain the main ideas, interpretations or disagreements fairly, and be clear about what remains uncertain, contested or unanswered. Do not manufacture a neat two-sided debate where one does not exist.
- 4 Is the thinking the entrant's own?**
We would rather read an uneven essay that is clearly a real person working something out than a polished one that could have been written about any subject by anyone.

THE TERMS THAT USUALLY MATTER TO A SCHOOL

Who can enter

Anyone aged 14 to 18 at the closing date, any country. Free throughout, with no account to create.

Dates

Anything in by 15 October comes back with written comments, whatever the result. Entries close 15 November. Results are announced by 10 December.

Prizes

\$500, \$300 and \$200 in cash. The cash is unconditional and separate from anything else; for a winner under 18 it is paid to a parent or guardian. Winners are additionally offered a scholarship of half the fee for whichever Aldevere programme they choose, up to \$3,000, which they can decline without affecting the cash. Highly Commended certificates go to entries of genuine quality that do not place, with no quota on the number.

What it asks of your staff

Nothing. Students enter directly and a parent confirms any under-18 entry. Polish is not scored.

READY TO PASTE INTO A BULLETIN OR NEWSLETTER

The Research Question Prize. Free entry, open to students aged 14 to 18 at the closing date (Years 10 to 13). Choose a difficult question in a subject you care about and explain it to a curious 12-year-old, in no more than 1,000 words (excluding references). Judged blind, and polish is not a criterion. Every entry submitted by 15 October gets written feedback. First prize \$500, unconditional, awarded on merit. Closes 15 November. Run by Aldevere, an academic mentoring organisation: aldevere.com/research-question-prize

