

# BRAVE NEW VOICES, INTERNATIONAL YOUTH POETRY SLAM FESTIVAL RULES

- There must be a minimum of four people on each team, a maximum of six. No alternates. All 6 can be on the team. We do this so as to encourage the involvement of more youth from your area. Teams can bring other youth, who can be incorporated into all aspects of the festival except the slam itself (additional youth can be sacrificial poets).
- No more than 4 poets on the stage at any time (during the slam). By “on the stage,” we mean as a part of the poem.
- Team members must be between 13-19 years old \* (\*see earlier rules)
- Teams must have a minimum of one adult sponsor/ mentor over the age of 21 for every 4 youth.
- **Teams must attend all of the festival events.** We have worked hard to put together the lineup of performance and growth opportunities. We strongly encourage you to participate in all aspects of the festival.
- All participating youth, even those over 21, must submit a signed permission slip or acknowledgment form before arriving in San Jose.
- There is to be no alcohol or using of illegal drugs at any point as part of the festival. Any youth or adult caught violating this policy will be asked to leave, and will serve a probationary period of one year before being eligible to be a part of future BNV festivals.
- We encourage everyone to be as gregarious and outgoing as possible. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet, share, and build with a community of young writers, leaders, and educators from across the country (and beyond). Please take advantage of this.
- There are no wrong answers and the standard is yourself. Please show us all how dope you really are.

**SLAM 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 festival as a whole.

- 4-6 members per team.
- No more than 4 members involved in any one poem during the slam competition itself.
- Teams must prepare at least one individual poem per member.
- All of the work used in the Slam must be original writing of the poets. 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.
- Group pieces constructed and performed as duets, trios, and quartets are not only permissible, but also encouraged. Each performing member of a group piece must have participated in the writing of the group piece.
- 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.
- Each individual and group piece must be under three minutes in length. We will have a 30 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 3:30 minutes, starting at 3 minutes 40 seconds. (e.g. up to 3:39 – no penalty; 3:40 to 3:49 - .5 point penalty; 3:50 to 3:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.)
- There is no censorship whatsoever, but gratuitous use of profanity could work against you when it comes to scoring. It is recommended that teams regulate themselves and try to avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content and/or language that is degrading to any group of people. Please, do it for the love.

- Teams as a whole can repeat a maximum of 2 poems throughout the slam (Finalists may do a 3rd repeat) Choose wisely. We do this to encourage young folks to push your creativity and write/perform new work. To clarify, this is two poems that can be performed twice by the entire team, not by each individual member (3 in case of the Grand Slam Final teams). Because there are two Quarter-Final bouts (4 rounds), the Semi-Finals (4 rounds), and the Finals (4 rounds), each team should prepare a minimum of 13 poems for the Slam itself. There are many opportunities for open mics and other readings as well.

## **Quarter & Semi-Final BOUTS** (term courtesy of the Taos Poetry Circus)

- Each team will compete in TWO Quarter-Final bouts.
- 8-10 Teams will participate in the Semi-Finals, and 4-5 Teams in the Finals
- Each Bout will have a host and emcee.
- Bouts are 4 rounds. 4 poems per teams.
- The Slam will be judged by a mixed panel of poets, adults and young people who are in no way affiliated with the teams who participate in the Slam. Many judges will be pre-selected, and some will come from the audience. We will shoot for diversity in the judging panel. DO NOT TRIP ON THE JUDGES. PLEASE. It's stupid, we know. How can you put a number on a poem???
- Team bouts will be drawn randomly. Each bout will consist of four competing teams.
- Bout order is drawn before the start of the bout. Teams captains draw either an A, B, C, or D. Bout order goes as follows:  
Round 1 – Team A, Team B, Team C, Team D  
Round 2 – Team B, Team C, Team D, Team A  
Round 3 – Team C, Team D, Team A, Team B  
Round 4 – Team D, Team A, Team B, Team C
- Every member of the team must be physically present and checked in with the Slam organizers at least 25 minutes before their bout begins.
- After each bout, each team will earn a place ranking of 1, 2, 3, 4. (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th place) At the conclusion of the bouts, we will add each team's rankings for a cumulative rank score. (e.g. If a team places 1st in their first bout, and 2nd in their second bout, their cumulative rank score is 3.)
- The 5-10 teams with the lowest cumulative rank score will advance to semi-finals.
- In the event that there is a tie in cumulative rank score, tiebreakers will be determined according to each team's total points for the two bouts. (i.e. it is just as important to score high in your bout, as it is to win or place high in your bout.)
- 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 Grand Slam Finals. But we all can't. Oh well.

## **More on the Slam.**

- We encourage you to become intimately familiar with the poems you will compete with. Memorization is not required (music stands will be available at most venues), but you do 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 on stage. 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. We will have a panel of well-known writers as judges throughout the week.
- Take responsibility for your words. We're offering you packed stages. Be smart.
  - Be respectful of yourself, the youth writing community and the group 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.