



Playwrights for Change: Year 13

“Widening Our Circle of Compassion”

AATE’s National Ten-Minute Play Writing Competition
for Students in Middle School (6th-8th) and High School (9th-12th)

Submission Rules for the Utah Regional Contest Sponsored by the Utah Valley University Theatre for Youth & Education (TYE) Center

Submission deadline: January 9, 2026

- 1.) Completed scripts must be **no longer than 10 minutes when read aloud**.
- 2.) Scripts may have up to, but **no more than six characters**.
- 3.) Plays must address or relate to the 2026 theme, **“Widening Our Circle of Compassion”**
- 4.) Playwrights must have permission from a parent or guardian to enter the contest. A signed competition application must be included with all submissions to the TYE Center & national contests.
- 5.) Plays must be the original work of the playwright and not an adaptation of pre-existing work.
- 6.) Scripts may **not be co-authored**. Scripts must be written by one playwright.
- 7.) Playwrights may revise their plays if their script advances to the second and third round of judging, based on the feedback they receive from the reviewers. Revised versions of scripts that are returned by the designated deadline will be reviewed in the next round of judging. If revised versions are not received by the designated deadline, the earlier version of the script will be reviewed.
- 8.) Student playwrights must include their **name and title of their play on a cover page** and nowhere else on the script. Also, include a character breakdown with character names and identifying information.
- 9.) The contest recommends (but does not require) 12-point Times New Roman font. The advantage is that when the standard playwriting format is followed, one-page equals about one minute of reading time
- 10.) Scripts should be printed in standard American format described in the formatting guide, available on the TYE Center site and on aate.com.
- 11.) AATE reserves the right to change any contest rule.
- 12.) AATE & the TYE Center reserve the right to accept or reject any play submitted to the contest for any reason.

13.) AATE & the TYE Center reserve the right to request changes and revisions from submitted scripts.

14.) AATE & the TYE Center may post the names of the chosen playwrights on marketing and press materials.

15.) Playwrights agree to allow AATE & the TYE Center to document, through all methods and media, all stages of the process (photos and recording) for educational, publicity, or any other uses.

16.) By submitting a play, both the host organization and the playwright are giving AATE and the TYE Center permission to produce or excerpt the student's play now or in the future and giving permission for the student's script to be made available online for free download for use. This includes its inclusion in any future print/electronic anthologies available for free or for sale to the public.

17.) One play from the TYE Center contest will be submitted to the national AATE middle school competition and one play from the TYE Center contest will be submitted to the national AATE high school competition. The TYE Center will also designate one or more runners-up in each division, which will NOT advance to the national competition. Winners and runners-up will receive a video of a book-in-hand performance of their scripts by UVU students, which will also be shared with the playwright's teacher and may be shown in their class.

18.) The national winning play (from each category) will be selected by a panel of judges chosen by the Playwrights for Change committee. All plays entered by host organizations will receive feedback from a professional theatre artist. Winners and runners-up in each division in the national contest will be featured in a national festival presentation on Zoom and will be published on the AATE website.

19.) Playwrights who submit their plays to the TYE Center regional competition may not submit their plays to other AATE regional competitions.

20.) The winners and runners-up for the regional contest will be announced on or before March 3, 2026. The announcement date of the winning plays & students selected for the AATE National Playwrights for Change Festival will be made early to mid-May 2026

Playwrights for Change Formatting Guide

Please use the following guide to make sure your scripts are in Standard American Format before submitting them to Playwrights for Change competition.

Include the title of the play only on the first page.

Page numbers keep pages from getting lost or mixed up. Number pages in the upper right hand corner.

List all of your characters at the beginning of your script. This helps a producer know how to cast your play.

Mark the beginning of a new act or scene. Do this in the center of the line, not at the left margin.

List the full name of the speaker in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS in the center of the line.

Type your script with a space between the last line of one character's dialogue and the name of the next speaker.

Indent stage directions and put parentheses around them. Stage directions in the middle of a speech start on a new indented line. The speech continues on the next line.

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Title of Play

Characters

Josh, a shy 7th grader who has written a play
Alexandra, an outgoing 7th grader who likes to write
Ms. Stevens, their teacher, who is energetic and helpful

Scene 1

JOSH

I finished my play! But I feel kind of nervous about turning it in.

MS. STEVENS

Why? I thought the part about aliens from outer space visiting Earth was especially exciting.

(Ms. Stevens smiles, moves towards Josh.)

JOSH

Well...Maybe

(He takes his script out of his backpack and flips through the pages.)

I wish someone would read it out loud to make sure it sounds okay.

ALEXANDRA

I could read your script! I've been working on mine, too.

JOSH

Thanks so much! After you read my script, we'll finish writing our plays and type them in Standard American Format. Then we'll send them to *Young Playwrights for Change* and see what they think!

Always type your script.
For paper copies, print on one side of the paper only.



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Creative Tips for Student Playwrights

Having trouble getting started on your script? Suffering from writer’s block?
Read on for some quick tips and strategies to get inspired or to keep your creativity going.

❖ Elements To Think About

➤ **Theme** - Think about the theme of “Widening our Circle of Compassion.”

- When we first consider compassion, it often extends to our family and close friends. But what happens when we broaden that view, recognizing our deep interconnectedness to all people—and choose to act kindly not only toward those who we perceive are different from us, but toward individuals we view as adversaries and even the natural world? The true challenge is to practice empathy in these wider, more difficult spaces.

❖ Now think of the elements of your play:

- What might the central character discover that changes what they understand about who they are, who they used to be, or who they may become? How might the character make that discovery? Is the journey of discovery enlightening, painful, or both?
- What might the central character discover about another person or group of people that helps the character understand them, help them, or work together with them? What could motivate the character to make that discovery, or avoid making that discovery?
- Is the character determined to make a difference in the world (big or small)? Does the character resist taking a stand? Does the character discover something totally unexpected about themselves or others?

➤ **Setting** - Where is your play set? At a school? In your community? In the future or the past? In outer space? Get creative—your play can be set anywhere!

➤ **Characters** - You can have up to six characters in your play. Who are the characters you’re working with? What do they want? How do they feel about one another? What are they afraid of? How do they feel about themselves? Interesting characters have thoughts, feelings, reactions to situations, and sometimes are unpredictable. Do the characters change over the course of your play?

➤ **Plot** - What happens to your characters over the course of your play? Is there a beginning, a middle, and an end? What is the central conflict or event in your play? If the character doesn’t end up “happily ever after,” does the discovery the character makes change her/his life in a small but significant way? Does the discovery make a difference for anyone else?

❖ **Brainstorming and Getting Started**

- Create a “portrait” of your main character by making a list of words that describes him or her. Be as specific as possible.
- Try writing about a character’s worst day, their favorite song, biggest fear, most treasured possession, person they most admire, or question they most want to ask another character.
- Outlining or mapping out your story or plot before you start writing your script is a great way to begin.
- Try telling the story of what happens in your play to a friend or family member and repeat this a couple of different times so you get the feel for the important events you’re imagining.
- Create a storyboard with text and/or images, or even some kind of map. Use drawings, symbols, or doodles to represent events, characters, etc.
- Try putting key scenes on separate sheets of paper and lay them out in different orders to experiment with the sequence of events.

❖ **What If I Get Stuck While Writing?**

- Go back and read aloud what you have written so far. Sometimes reading out loud can give you fresh perspectives or new ideas!
- Stuck on a particular scene or detail? Skip ahead or go back! Sometimes the order of your plot or sequence of events in your play is not the order in which you write your script.
- Find a friend or family member to read your work and give you some feedback.
- Take a break! Get up from the computer, take a stretch break, eat a snack, take a walk, or just do something else for a little while. Then come back to your script with fresh eyes.