

## BEING AN AMERICAN ESSAY CONTEST

# ESSAY WRITING TIPS

### Before you write:

- Decide on the value(s) you will discuss.
- Think about American history. What individuals can you think of who have exemplified this value(s)?
- Reflect on the American Founding documents. Which can you think of that refer to or imply the value(s)?
- Think about your personal response: brainstorm some ways you put this value into practice in your own life.

### While you are writing:

- Stay focused and minimize distractions.
- Write however you feel most comfortable—using a pen and paper or a computer.
- Remember all writing is re-writing.
- Let your topic guide your structure. Considering including an introductory paragraph, 3 supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Stay on track: if you find yourself getting off the topic, go back and revise.

### After you write, ask yourself:

1. *Have I answered the question?*
  - Is it clear what value(s) I am discussing?
  - Have I referenced a figure from American history and explained his/her connection to the value(s)?
  - Have I referenced a Founding document and explained its connection to the value(s)?
  - Have I explained fully how I can put the value(s) into practice?
  - Have I said what I wanted to say?
2. *Is my essay well-written?*
  - Have I used paragraphs?
  - Do all my paragraphs have a topic sentence?
  - Do I fully develop one idea per paragraph?
3. *Is my writing correct?*
  - Have I checked for spelling errors myself, without relying on spell-check?
  - Have I checked for grammar errors without relying on a grammar checker?
  - Have I checked my facts: dates, document titles, names, etc.?

### OTHER IDEAS

- Try reading your essay aloud to a family member. Does it sound like it flows easily? Can your audience member summarize your essay back to you in one or two sentences? (If they can't, try going back and clarifying your ideas.)
- Try putting your essay down for a day or two and coming back to it and re-reading it. Do you notice anything you'd like to change or add?