

VSA PLAYWRIGHT DISCOVERY COMPETITION 2015 APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Each year, young writers with and without disabilities, in U.S. grades 6-12 (or equivalents) or ages 11-18 for non-U.S. students, are asked to explore *the disability experience* through the art of script writing for stage or screen. Writers may craft scripts from their own experiences and observations, create fictional characters and settings, or choose to write metaphorically or abstractly about the disability experience.

Young writers with and without disabilities are encouraged to submit a one-act script of any genre. Entries may be the work of an individual student or a collaboration by a group of up to five students. The competition has three divisions: grades 6-7 (ages 11-13), grades 8-9 (ages 13-15), and grades 10-12 (ages 15-18) (or equivalents). A panel of theater professionals selects division winners.

One winning script is chosen in the Primary and Junior Divisions (grades 6-7/ ages 11-13 and 8-9/ ages 13-15 respectively). Winners in these divisions will receive \$500 for arts programs at their schools.

Selected winners in the Senior Division (grades 10-12/ ages 15-18) win a trip to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. where they participate in a multi-day intensive comprised of pre-professional activities with distinguished theatre professionals. The Professional Development Intensive will take place Thursday, September 17 – Saturday, September 19, 2015.

Attendance at the Professional Development Intensive is mandatory in order to be eligible for the award. Excerpts from a select number of Senior Division winners' scripts will be chosen for a Millennium Stage performance.

Applications for the 2015 VSA Playwright Discovery Competition will be accepted online. For more information and for the online application, visit <http://www.kennedy-center.org/PDP>. **The application deadline is Monday, April 13, 2015 at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time.**

ADDITIONAL COMPETITION INFORMATION

Attendance Requirement: The VSA Playwright Discovery Professional Development Intensive will take place from Thursday, September 17 – Saturday, September 19, 2015.

Winners of the Senior Division must be present for the entire Intensive, along with the staged reading performance on September 19 at 6 p.m. on Millennium Stage to be eligible for the award.

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ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to enter the VSA Playwright Discovery Competition applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. **The competition is open to domestic and international applicants.** However, all scripts must be submitted in English; scripts submitted in other languages will not be accepted.
2. **Any student with or without a disability is eligible to submit an entry.**
3. **All scripts must explore the disability experience.** See “Submission Rules” for a definition of disability and more information about the disability experience.
4. **Authors must be students in U.S. grades 6-12 (or equivalent) or ages 11-18 for non-U.S. students.** Students in grades 6-7 (ages 11-13) apply to the Primary Division, students in grades 8-9 (13-15) apply to the Junior Division, and students in grades 10-12 (15-18) apply to the Senior Division.
5. **Previous applicants are eligible to reapply in subsequent years until they win or age out of the competition. Any applicant (applying as an individual or with a group) may win once in either the Primary or Junior Division, and once in the Senior Division. This means:**
 - a. Primary Division winners may submit a new script for consideration to the Senior Division when of age, but may not apply to the Junior Division.
 - b. Junior Division winners may submit a new script for consideration to the Senior Division.
 - c. Senior Division winners are not eligible to reapply to the competition.
6. **Co-authorships of up to five students are accepted, but all authors must fulfill eligibility requirements.** Co-authors of a script must be eligible for the same division (i.e. authors of a Primary Division script must all be enrolled in grades 6-7 or ages 11-13), but do not have to be in the same grade level. The application must include information for all authors.
7. **Senior Division winners must be present for the VSA Playwright Discovery Professional Development experience from Thursday, September 17 – Saturday, September 19, 2015,** as well as for the staged reading performance on September 19 at 6 p.m. in order to be eligible for the award.

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Applicants may be asked to submit proof and/or an affidavit of eligibility if selected as finalists or winners of the VSA Playwright Discovery Competition.

SUBMISSION RULES

1. All entries must explore the disability experience.

What is the definition of disability? A disability could be a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities, or it could be a physiological disorder affecting one of the body's systems, or a mental or psychological disorder. The disability may be visible and obvious to see, such as quadriplegia, cataracts, or cerebral palsy, or it may be invisible and less obvious, such as a person who is deaf or has a learning disability.

What is the definition of the disability experience? There is no dictionary definition of disability experience, but here are a variety of ideas to consider:

- a. Having a disability is something that can happen to any person at any time in his or her life. Some examples: a senior citizen develops Alzheimer's, a young adult with traumatic brain injury due to a car accident, a parent struggling with the onset of Type II Diabetes. Disability takes many forms (as you can see from the very broad definition listed above), and can change during the course of a lifespan. Think of someone you know—yourself, or someone in your family, community, or at school—that experiences a disability. There are probably more people around you living with a disability than you would think.

- b. The disability experience is related to society's perceptions about people with disabilities or the individual's experience of disability. It is important to recognize, evaluate, and even challenge those perceptions and acknowledge and respect these experiences. We believe that theater is the perfect vehicle to do just that. Gregg Mozgala, a theater artist with a disability, says,

"I believe in the transformative power of theatre. Through the collaborative experience of the artistic process I believe the disabled experience can be more sincerely and accurately reflected on stage, that new communities can be forged, perceptions changed and barriers to understanding and empathy can be shattered." (www.theapoethetae.org/about)

- c. See our Playwriting Resources page (found at www.kennedy-center.org/PDP) for more ideas about the disability experience.

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2. Scripts must be submitted in English; scripts submitted in other languages will not be accepted.
3. All entries must be one-act scripts of fewer than 30 pages in length.
4. Acceptable entries include traditional theater, film, or TV scripts, non-linear scripts, scripts that do not rely on spoken language, and/or scripts that emphasize the use of multimedia, non-traditional technologies/techniques, puppetry and audience participation. Since non-text entries are accepted, scripts may be submitted as video or audio files, in addition to Microsoft Word files.
5. To request application materials in a different format, please call 202-416-8898 or email vsainfo@kennedy-center.org.
6. Entries must be original, unproduced, and unpublished at the time of submission. Scripts with previous readings or workshops are acceptable, as long as they were not produced for a paying audience and have not been publicly reviewed.
7. Text entries must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document and video or audio entries must be submitted as MP3, MP4, WMA, or WMV files. All entries should follow these formatting guidelines:
 - a. Include a cover sheet listing the title of the play and the cast list. **Do not show your name, address, or any identifying information on the cover or any page of your entry.**
 - b. Typed in 12 point Times New Roman font.
 - c. List page numbers on each page of the script (not counting the cover sheet)
 - d. Set the page layout to portrait (no landscape, please)
8. Authors may submit only one script, whether under his or her name, a pseudonym, or as a co-author.
9. If an entry includes any material that is copyrighted or otherwise owned or controlled by someone other than the Authors (including but not limited to, poetry, music and/or lyrics, characters originally created by others in any medium, and/or stories based on real people and/or other people's lives) the author shall provide proof of written permission to include such material in the script.

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APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- **Complete the online application form** at www.kennedy-center.org/PDP.
***NOTE:** If there are any questions about this process, or to request application materials in a different format, please contact us at vsainfo@kennedy-center.org.*

- **Attach your script file**
***NOTE:** If you have difficulty uploading any of your media files, please contact us at vsainfo@kennedy-center.org for other submission options.*

Please read the following file submission guidelines carefully:

- Before uploading your file, please re-name it in the following format:
 - TITLE OF SCRIPT
- The application accepts files in the following formats: DOC, DOCX, PDF, MP3, MP4, WMA, or WMV

Application materials should be submitted no later than April 13, 2015 at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time. We will receive your application the day that you submit it, and you will receive verification of your submission via email.