



INFORMATION GUIDE

2025 Civics Games



WISCONSIN CIVICS GAMES



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BUILDING ON OUR MISSION

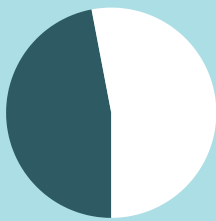
Why Wisconsin newspapers decided to create a civics bowl for high school students



A decline in civics education

Prior to the 1960s, three courses in civics and government were common in American high schools and encouraged students to explore the role of citizens and discuss current issues. Today, such courses are rare.

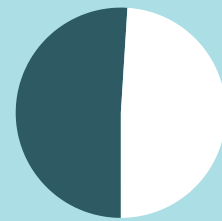
As a result, too few Americans understand how our government works and their role in our democracy.



Only 47% of Americans can name all three branches of government



25% of Americans cannot name any of the three branches of government



51% of Americans believe Facebook posts are covered by the First Amendment

Source: 2022 Constitution Day Civics Survey, Annenberg Public Policy Center

An absence of civic participation

In 2020, only 52% of Wisconsin city council races featured more than one candidate.*

A lack of knowledge in civic affairs makes individuals less likely to be active, engaged citizens. It's a result that has been felt by municipalities across Wisconsin.



**March 2020 Focus on Wisconsin, Wisconsin Policy Forum*

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORTING CIVIC EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT AMONG WISCONSIN YOUTH

In response to declining civics education and participation, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation created Wisconsin Civics Games.

It is a natural fit — newspapers were founded to inform communities and encourage public dialogue. Working to bridge gaps in civic awareness is at the core of our mission.

By engaging young adults in a collaborative competition, as well as through coverage of civic affairs, Wisconsin newspapers aim to help cultivate an understanding among future generations of their role in our democracy.

.....

“ I believe that civics education is frankly **more important than ever**, and the newspaper association’s work to make this opportunity available to the school districts in this state is a **great step forward.** ”

- GOV. TONY EVERS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

CIVICS GAMES



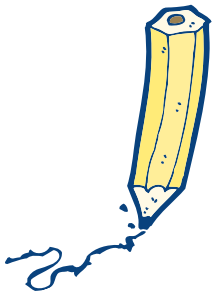
Denmark High School took first place in the 2024 Wisconsin Civics Games state championship in May at the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison. Eighteen teams from 15 schools participated in the competition. It was Denmark's first trip to the finals.

The winning team, advised by social studies teacher Zack Olson, was comprised of Henry Pahlow (captain), Lydia Flanigan, Ben Lindsley, Aiden Nelsen, Collin Trepanier and Cherry Weis. They were among those who advanced from a field of more than 180 students who competed during the regional Games, which were held virtually in April.

West Bend East & West High Schools took second place. The team, advised by social studies teacher Mark Drake, included Grace Mueller (captain), Faith Mueller, Owen Damkot and Daniel Zolp.

New London High School took third place. The two-person team, advised by social studies teacher Patrick Lawton, included Wyatt Adamovich and Jack Keding.





HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2024

EDITORIAL WRITING & CARTOON CONTEST

The contest invites Wisconsin youth to showcase their voices and creativity by submitting original editorials or cartoons that express their thoughts on the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. Students explore themes including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and the right to petition the government, offering their perspectives on the importance of these fundamental rights in today's society.

A total of 18 Wisconsin high school and middle school students from 25 schools across the state, were recognized for their submissions.

Cadence Breitbach, a Poynette High School junior, captured top honors among high school students in the writing competition for her essay about the practices of other countries and her ability to write and speak freely about what she wants as a U.S. citizen.

"To me, the right to say what I want, to write what I want, was intrinsic. I was not taught at every turn that I had to censor myself or that I couldn't criticize or praise my system of government as I wished. But the people in those countries? They were. It made me come to a realization," Breitbach wrote.

"If I saw or heard something that I thought was wrong, I was entitled to speak about it in any manner I wished. I could go out and peacefully protest the issue all day if I wanted," Breitbach added. "I could go to any place of worship, but it wasn't a requirement. In one amendment, I was granted immeasurable freedoms that I never fully understood the significance of. I took these freedoms for granted."

The Importance of the First Amendment 232 Years Later

Despite the Constitutional Amendments, specifically the First Amendment which shapes our daily lives, many US citizens never think about it and take it for granted. Reading books, talking politics, attending church, protesting, and petitioning for changes are all things the First Amendment protects. This is not a universal concept though. There are many people who still live in areas without the benefits allowed by the First Amendment. Only 43% of countries were considered to have free expression by the Freedom House, a non profit organization, in the world index. We must remember the importance of the First Amendment to understand the lives of others living under different rules and to be more open-minded when meeting them. Despite the creation of it hundreds of years ago, it still holds importance in the present world. And we need to see it as such. As George Washington famously said, "If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter."

Essay by Nicolas Giang, Waunakee Community
Middle School, 8th grade. *First place*



Cartoon by Isaac
Arneson, Gilman
Middle School, 7th
grade. *First place*

See all the winning entries here:

tinyurl.com/9bu6e5d3



Cartoon by Willow Fedenia-Beste, University Lake School, Hartland; *Second place (Middle school)*



**SEE ALL THE
WINNING ENTRIES!**
tinyurl.com/9bu6e5d3



Cartoon by Ian Slager, Lake Mills High School, *First place*



Cartoon by Daniel Beaupre, West DePere High School; *Second place*

“ The first amendment is one that will improve our nation and should never be used as a weapon meant to silence a citizen of the United States who has been provided these rights. ”

- JORJA STOCKTON, WINNEBAGO LUTHERAN ACADEMY, OSHKOSH
Third Place (High school)



2025 CIVICS GAMES



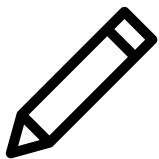
Civics Games Playoff Competitions

Playoff competitions will be held virtually on **Wednesday, April 9 and Thursday, April 10**. The number of contests will be based on participation and announced after the registration deadline.



Civics Games State Finals

The 2025 state finals will be **Friday, May 2**, at the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison. Members of the state championship-winning team will each receive a \$2,000 scholarship to the Wisconsin college or university of their choice.



Editorial and Cartoon Competition

The 2025 Editorial and Cartoon Competition begins on **Monday, September 1**.

Submissions are due: **Friday, November 14 at Noon**.

More information will be available on our website
wisconsincivicsgames.com



“ I learned many things I hadn’t from the school social studies curriculum.

As a member of a village committee in the town where I live, I found that the topics I learned about while preparing and studying for the competition helped me do a better job of **serving my local constituents.**

”

**- SAMUEL KAUFMANN
WAUNAKEE STUDENT & 2019
CIVICS GAMES FINALIST**

PREPARING FOR THE CIVICS GAMES



SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE

To participate in the Wisconsin Civics Games, go wisconsincivicsgames.com, and sign up.



USE OUR ONLINE RESOURCES

We've made several online resources available through our partnering organizations, including Wisconsin Public Television, the Public Broadcasting Service, iCivics and WisconsinEye. These resources can be found at wisconsincivicsgames.com.



REVIEW THE RULES & SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Before competing in the Wisconsin Civics Games, all participants should review the Official Rules and the sample questions in this guide.



DISCUSS CURRENT EVENTS

By this point, you've probably broadened your civic knowledge quite a bit. Pick up your local newspaper and put that knowledge into context.

Find relevant issues that demonstrate democratic participation and discuss the issues involved. Talk about if those who are participating are being effective. Could the situation have been handled better? Write comments in response to the news (you could even send a letter to the editor). Past Civics Games participants have attended city hall or school board meetings to gain a better understanding of their local government.

OFFICIAL RULES

OVERVIEW

Prior to competing in any given round, participants must wait in a designated waiting area. For competitions held virtually, this will be a designated Zoom meeting room. There will be a camera in the waiting room and a dedicated judge who will monitor the room. Students are allowed to do homework when they aren't competing.

Playoffs: Make sure you have a reliable internet connection and download the Zoom app in advance of the competition. Players will be required to appear via video, all team members must be visible and **on one computer** (unless you are an online charter school). Players should test audio capabilities in advance of the competition; external noise and distractions should be minimized.

Each player will also be required to login to BuzzIn.Live on their phone. If a phone is not available, that student may use a tablet/chromebook. BuzzIn.Live will serve as the competition's buzzer system.

Cheating: If a player appears to be looking at other windows, interacting with other people or devices, or typing at an inappropriate time, they and their team could be eliminated for cheating at the judges' discretion.

Lunch

Following the end of round 2, students and advisors will go to the Zoom holding/waiting room. At this time, they can break for lunch and be back on camera by 12:45 p.m. to begin the final two rounds.

TEAMS

A team shall consist of any number of players who meet all eligibility rules. However, no more than four players may actively compete at any one time. Teams may compete with fewer players, with a minimum of one player.

Each team shall designate a captain prior to the beginning of the competition. The captain shall provide the team's answer to tiebreaker questions, should that be necessary, and is the primary student spokesperson for the team. Alternates may be used in the event of illness or scheduling conflict. If an alternate is used, the alternate must participate in the remainder of the game. No student may play for two different teams in the course of the competition. If a team uses an alternate player during the Playoffs, and advances to the State Finals, they are permitted to reinstate the original player if they choose.

SCHOLARSHIP POLICY

- **Individual Scholarships:** Each eligible, actively competing team member receives a \$2,000 scholarship to a Wisconsin college or university.
- **School Cap:** A maximum of \$8,000 total can be awarded per school, regardless of team size.
- **Fewer than Four Players:** If the team has fewer than four competing members, the total awarded will be proportional (e.g., 3 players = \$6,000 total).
- **Flexible Distribution:** Schools may request a different way to divide the total scholarship amount among their players (e.g., not necessarily equal amounts).

GAME OFFICIALS

At least two judges and a moderator will oversee each round of competition. Judges will read questions, enforce time limits, supervise the clock, determine the accuracy of responses, award points, keep score, and otherwise enforce the rules of competition. The moderator will act as host for the Games, assist the judges with any needs during competition and oversee all activities.

EQUIPMENT

Participants in playoff contests hosted remotely will use BuzzIn.Live. Each student must use their own phone/Chromebook/tablet to access BuzzIn.

At the state Final competition, a buzzer system is provided by WNA Foundation and will be used to determine which player has signaled first.

RESPONSE TIME

A player may buzz at any point after the judge begins to read the question.

Only after being acknowledged by a judge as the eligible respondent may a player begin to answer the question, and they must do so immediately. If the eligible respondent doesn't begin to answer within 2 seconds, they will lose the opportunity to respond. Decisions as to whether players have exceeded allowable time constraints will be made by the judges and are not subject to protest.

Only the player who buzzed may give an answer, and teammates may not consult at any point (with the exception of during a tiebreaker question).

If neither team buzzes in within 10 seconds of completion of the question, the judge will read the answer and move on to the next question.

If a player buzzes in before the entire question is read, the judge will stop reading. If the response is incorrect, the judge will reread the question for the opposing team.

If an ineligible respondent answers a question out of turn, their response is disqualified and the other team is given the opportunity to answer.

In such a case, the judge will not reveal the answer — or acknowledge if the ineligible respondent's answer was correct — before the second team is given the opportunity to respond. If the judge inadvertently reveals the answer, the eligible respondent will be read a replacement question.

COMPETITION FORMAT

PLAYOFFS: Competition will consist of four rounds in each division, during which teams will compete in head-to-head matches. Matches with two teams will consist of 12 questions. Matches with three teams will consist of 18 questions.

During the first two rounds, teams will be matched by random drawing. In Round 3, teams will be paired according to scores as follows: 1 vs. 6, 2 vs. 5, 3 vs. 4. Cumulative scores through the first three rounds will be tallied, and teams will be re-ranked using the same methodology. The two teams with the highest cumulative scores in each division at the end of the fourth round will advance to the state finals.

If there are not two distinct highest-scoring teams, a bonus, tiebreaker question will be asked to determine which two teams advance to the state finals.

FINALS: Competition will consist of four rounds, during which teams will compete in head-to-head matches. Each match will consist of 15 questions.

During the first two rounds, teams will be matched by random drawing. The six teams with the highest cumulative scores through those rounds will advance and be paired for the third and fourth rounds.

NEW in 2025: For the final two rounds – the 6 teams will be randomly matched up and the points will be reset to ZERO.

If there is a tie at the conclusion of the fourth round, a tiebreaker question will be asked. Tiebreaker questions must be answered by each team's captain. However, the captain may consult with his/her teammates prior to buzzing.

The team awarded the most points at the end of round four will be named Wisconsin Civics Games champions.

POINTS & TIEBREAKER

PLAYOFFS: If there are not two distinct highest-scoring teams in each Division at the conclusion of round four, a bonus tiebreaker question will be played to determine which two teams advance to the state finals.

FINALS: If there is a tie at the conclusion of a match in the last round, a tiebreaker question will be asked. Tiebreaker questions must be answered by each team's captain. However, the captain may consult with his/her teammates prior to buzzing.



FAIR PLAY POLICY – WISCONSIN CIVICS GAMES

At the Wisconsin Civics Games, we are dedicated to creating a fair, enjoyable, and competitive experience for all participants. To uphold the integrity of the competition, we enforce a strict zero- tolerance policy on cheating.

Prior to the start of round 1, matchup 1 – all phones, tablets, and computers must be handed over to the team advisor. If any student is using a device, their team will be disqualified. Devices will be given back to the student at the end of round 2 competition (when students are dismissed for lunch). But prior to round 3 competition, devices must be turned over to the advisors. If your school has more than one team competing – students not advancing will still be required to turn in their devices prior to round 3.

What Counts as Cheating

Using Unauthorized Assistance: Getting help from outside sources, including other participants or advisors.

Improper Use of Technology: Accessing information or receiving help through phones, smartwatches, tablets, computers, or any other devices—unless clearly allowed by the contest rules.

Consequences

Any participant found violating this policy will be disqualified, and their entire team will be removed from the competition. Additional penalties include a permanent ban of the student from future events and the school will be suspended from 2026 competition.

We reserve the right to investigate any suspected misconduct and take appropriate action to protect the fairness of the Games.

Commitment to Fair Play

We encourage all participants to compete with honesty, respect, and integrity. Let's work together to make this a fun and positive experience for everyone!

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The following questions have been compiled to help students and teachers better understand the type of questions that will be asked during the Wisconsin Civics Games competitions. The answers can be found on Page 15.

1. Although amended many times the original Wisconsin constitution is still being used and is one of the oldest state constitutions in the nation. Describe two ways that the Wisconsin state constitution can be changed; and which of the two has never been attempted?
2. In Wisconsin, the governor has the power to veto bills passed by the legislature. The Wisconsin constitution was amended in 1930 to give the governor the authority for a specific form of veto. Name the veto authority added to the constitution in 1930 and describe the type of legislation where the governor has that authority?
3. City and Village governments in Wisconsin have been given wide-ranging powers to deal with providing services. A 1924 constitutional amendment granted them authority known as “home rule.” What is “home rule” and what are these locally enacted laws called?
4. What is the term used to describe the practice of drawing legislative district lines to establish a political advantage for a group or political party; and what is proposed by some as an alternative means for drawing district boundaries?
5. The tenth amendment to the United States Constitution delegates to the states powers not delegated to the federal government. These are known as reserved powers. Name two of the reserved powers; and name one power not given to the states by the federal government?
6. Unites States Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch was recently quoted as saying that ten percent of Americans surveyed believe that the TV star Judge Judy is a member of the United States Supreme Court. Describe the process by which Judge Judy would become a member of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court?

ANSWERS

The following are answers to the sample questions found on Page 14.

1. The constitution can be changed via a constitutional amendment or by convening a constitutional convention. A constitutional convention has never been convened.
2. The veto authority is the line-item veto and it may only be applied to bills dealing with appropriations.
3. Home rule is when a city or village may do things the way it wants unless the state constitution prohibits it — or if it is something of statewide concern that the legislature should handle. These locally enacted laws are called ordinances.
4. The term used to describe the practice of drawing legislative district lines for political advantage is called gerrymandering. The alternative to gerrymandering would be the appointment of a non-partisan independent commission to draw the district boundaries.
5. Powers given to the states include the ability to:
 - Establish local governments and public schools
 - Issues licenses
 - Regulate business within the state
 - Conduct elections – local, state and federal
 - Provide for public health and safety.

Powers not given to the states include the ability to:

 - Create its own currency
 - Sign international treaties
 - Stop interstate commerce
6. In Wisconsin, Judge Judy would run in an election to be seated on the state Supreme Court. Judge Judy would be nominated by the president of the United States and confirmed by the US Senate to serve on the United States Supreme Court.

SUPPORTING THE WISCONSIN CIVICS GAMES

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Wisconsin Civics Games wouldn't be possible without the support of our dedicated volunteers and generous donors. Here are some ways to support the Civics Games and join our effort to revive interest in current events, local government and civics education.

SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteer your time to assist with registration, coordination and logistics at regional sites, as well as the state finals.

BECOME A SPONSOR

Help provide young adults with the knowledge and tools they need to make significant contributions to society and the state of Wisconsin.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Help cultivate a passion for public service in the next generation with a donation to the WNA Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.



Donate today by scanning the QR code.