



2026 IFI Fatherhood Essay Contest

**Deadline:
March 19**

Student's Name / Nombre del Estudiante

Grade / Grado

Father/Father-Figure Name / Nombre del Padre/Figura Paterna

School / Escuela

Email

Phone / Teléfono

Writing About / Escribiendo Sobre:

"What my father or an important father-figure* means to me"

Father / Padre

"Lo que mi padre o una figura paterna importante* significa para mí"

Grandfather / Abuelo

Stepdad / Padrasto

Father-Figure / Figura Paterna

Father/Grandfather/Step-Dad/Father-Figure reaction to this essay:

3000 Character Maximum / Máximo de Caracteres

Reacción de padre/abuelo/padrastro/figura paterna a este ensayo:

2000 Character Maximum / Máximo de Caracteres

* Father-Figure can be a stepdad, grandfather, uncle, pastor/rabbi/shaman, God, or an ideal vision of a father.

*Una figura paterna puede ser un padrastro, un abuelo, un tío, un pastor/rabino/chamán, Dios, o un visión ideal de un padre.

CONTEST DETAILS

Each student is asked to write a 3000 character (or less) essay on the theme "What My Father or an Important Father-Figure Means to Me," describing their relationship with their father or father-figure. Students should share their true feelings. Provide examples of joys, frustrations or special memories they have as well as commenting about what they would most like to see in their relationship. A father-figure can be a stepdad, grandfather, uncle, coach, pastor/rabbi/shaman, God, or an ideal vision of a father.

CRITERIA FOR ESSAY JUDGING

Submissions will be evaluated according to grade level. Judging criteria will consist of:

1. How the essay describes the relationship.
2. Detail and stories that demonstrate the character of the father/father-figure.
3. Honesty, clarity, simplicity of writing.
4. Overall grade level appropriate writing skill.

JUDGING PROCESS

1. Essays will be divided into the 13 grade levels (K-12).
2. Volunteers will use the above judging criteria, reading every essay. Top essays from the first round will be sent to a final essay reading session.
3. At the final essay reading, volunteers will then select 10 essays per grade. Up to 130 essay semi-finalists will receive special recognition.
4. The top 13 essay writers will be invited to the IFI Fatherhood Dinner Celebration.
5. All entrants will receive a Certificate of Participation.

RULES

1. One entry per person.
2. All essays must be original, unaided by AI and created by the student.
3. All entries become the property of Illinois Fatherhood Initiative (IFI). IFI will not be able to return them.
4. Entry into the contest transfers copyright of the essay to IFI and grants IFI permission to reproduce without compensation all or any portion of the essay and response on an unlimited, world-wide basis in its publications and media channels.
5. When appropriate and with parent/guardian permission, IFI will cite the name of the author(s) if significant portions of a positive essay/response are used. IFI will also change or conceal names to maintain confidentiality if requested.
6. Contest is open to Illinois students (K-12).
7. Deadline for upload or postmark is March 19th.
8. Completed forms can be uploaded on 4dads.org or mailed to:

1515 S. Grove Avenue, #3667, Barrington, IL 60011.