

## **CHECKLIST FOR ESSAY CONTESTANTS**

1. **Is your essay between 500 and 1,000 words?** Essays have been disqualified for being too short. We count the words in the actual essay. We do not count the cover page, title or bibliography. **Doing the minimum rarely wins contests.**
2. **Did anyone proofread the essay?** Double check spelling, grammar, run-on sentences, etc. (There are programs that catch many common errors.)
3. **Is the Essay easy to read?** It is easier for judges to read larger fonts like 12p Arial or 10p Verdana. Double spaced lines are appreciated and leave room for comments (on copied pages).
4. **Don't put your name on essay pages.** (We just must cover it up for judging.) Signatures can be on the *cover sheet* (which judges don't see).
5. **Use the exact title from the pamphlet.** It should be on the first page of the essay as well as on the cover sheet. **Do not change the title.**
6. Does the coversheet include the following?
  - The Essay Title from the pamphlet.
  - Contestant's Name, address, telephone, & email address.
  - Teacher's verification of Student's Grade Level.
  - School Name and Address
  - Sponsoring American Legion Post Number, Name & Address.
  - Parent or guardian's name, address and phone number.
  - Student's signature.
  - (Contact an Inter-district Chairperson from your area found on the pamphlet if unsure)
7. **Is there a Bibliography?** It is hard to be competitive at higher levels without one. The PA Legion Essay Pamphlet does not specify a bibliography format nor is a sample provided. Students typically use the format required by their school. We must be able to verify each source listed using the information provided in the bibliography. Links to the internet sites must work. We must have the ability to tell where a specific fact or quote comes from. One way is to number each source in the bibliography and to put that number in parentheses after its referenced fact or quote. Some students put the bibliography in order by author and cite the author's name in parentheses.
8. Are there copies of the essay? It is unlikely, but an essay can be damaged or lost. It is wise to send a copy directly to your legion contact for tracking as well as to your local Legion Post.

9. Submit your essay by the required date on the pamphlet. If there is not a contest at your school, you can submit directly to your local American Legion Post.
10. **Double Check to see that your essay was received.** There have been rare cases where an essay has been misplaced or lost. Don't just leave an essay at an American Legion Post without following up. Do not mail it to the PA American Legion Headquarters in Harrisburg.

American Legion Headquarters  
717-730-9100  
[www.pa-legion.com](http://www.pa-legion.com)

CALL the Chairman that's listed  
on the brochure with any questions.