



2026 Technology Awareness Day Essay Contest Rules

SPONSOR

Sponsor is BNSF Railway ("Sponsor" or "BNSF").

TERM

The 2026 BNSF Railway's Technology Awareness Day Essay Contest ("Contest") ends on February 13th, 2026.

Financial Aid contest registration should be completed at the time registration for the event is submitted by the student participant but is not required to participate.

Completed entries must be received no later than **February 13, 2026. Entries received after this date will not be considered.**

Information on how to enter and prizes form part of these official rules ("Official Rules"). By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the Official Rules and warrants that his or her entry complies with all requirements set out in the Official Rules. This is a skill-based contest and chance plays no part in the determination of winners.

WHO MAY ENTER?

Eligibility:

The contest is open only to students at participating schools or programs who are in 9th through 12th grades at the time of entry.

One contest entry, per category submission, per student. There is no cost to enter the contest.

As of 2024, Past Grand Prize Winners are now eligible to participate in the category they won.

CONTEST RULES:

The essay must be:

- Based on the prompt listed below
- An original, unpublished work. Essays deemed not original work will be disqualified.
- Include a cover page with student's name, school, program, and grade
- Word Count for 9th/10th graders: At least 350 words
- Word Count for 11th/12th graders: At least 500 words
- Double-spaced, 12-point font
- Bibliography is **not** included in the word count
- Contestants should proofread entries for spelling and grammar errors.
- Participant can attend TAD either virtually or in person to qualify for the contest

Regarding sources:

- It is recommended that you support your arguments with qualified sources.



- Use direct quotes when taking a source word for word. Use MLA style in-text citations and bibliography entries.
- Don't focus on strict adherence to MLA – the important thing is that we know which parts of your essay are from an outside source, and where we can find that source.

Contestants will be competing in one of two groups: 9/10th graders and 11/12th graders. The top three contestants from each group will be recognized and awarded prizes on **February 28, 2026**. Prizes in past years typically included laptops and tablets.

PROMPT

TAD 2026 Theme: Your Path in STEM

Write an essay around something that excites you in one of the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics.

JUDGING CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS

Judges will select the top entries by applying the following criteria ("Judging Criteria"):

- a) Style and Mechanics (grammar, sentence structure, etc.) (15%)
- b) Quality of work (15%)
- c) Originality (20%)
- d) Creative Expression (20%)
- e) Adherence to Theme (30%)

Decisions of the Judges are final.

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Please send the contest entries to TAD@bnsf.com. Use subject line: "2026 TAD Contest Entry". You should receive confirmation within 2 business days that your essay has been received.

Deadline: Entries must be received no later than **February 13, 2026**.

For questions contact TAD@BNSF.com.

QUESTIONS

Direct questions regarding technical requirements to TAD@bnsf.com with "TAD Financial Aid Question" in the subject line.

LICENSE

Each entrant retains the copyright to his/her Essay(s), but explicitly grants Sponsor, its licensees, affiliates and their designee (collectively, the "Authorized Parties") an irrevocable, non-exclusive license for the duration of copyright to use each Essay for advertising, marketing, and promotional purposes, in any and all media now known or hereafter created, including but not limited to publication in catalogs, brochures, blogs, and websites, at Authorized Parties' discretion, without additional consideration, notification, permission to entrant or any third party.



LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

By participating, participants agree to release, discharge and hold harmless BNSF Railway and its partners, affiliates, subsidiaries, tour operators, agents and their employees, officers, directors, and representatives from any claims, losses, and damages arising out of their participation in this Contest or any Contest-related activities and the acceptance and use, misuse, or possession of any prize awarded hereunder.

BNSF Railway assumes no responsibility for any error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, or delay in operation or transmission; communications line failure; theft or destruction of or unauthorized access to Contest entries or entry forms; or alteration of entries or entry forms. BNSF is not responsible for any problems with or technical malfunction of any telephone network or lines, computer online systems, servers or providers, computer equipment, software, failure of any e-mail entry to be received on account of technical problems or traffic congestion on the Internet or at any Web site, human errors of any kind, or any combination thereof, including any injury or damage to entrants' or any other persons' computers related to or resulting from participation, uploading or downloading of any materials related to this Contest.

CONDITIONS

THIS CONTEST IS VOID WHERE PROHIBITED.

Participants also agree (a) to be bound by these Official Rules and (b) that the decisions of the Judges are final on all matters relating to the Contest. In the event that the selected winner(s) of any prize are/is ineligible or refuses the prize, the prize will be forfeited and Sponsor, in its sole discretion, may choose whether to award the prize to the next highest qualifier present.

Regulations and conditions may apply.

RIGHT TO CANCEL OR SUSPEND CONTEST

If for any reason the Contest is not capable of running as planned, due to infection by computer virus, bugs, worms, Trojan horses, denial of service attacks, tampering, unauthorized intervention, fraud, technical failures, or any other causes beyond the control of BNSF that corrupt or affect the administration, security, fairness, integrity, or proper conduct of this Contest, BNSF reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to disqualify any individual(s) who tamper with the entry process, and/or to cancel, terminate, modify, or suspend the Contest. If Sponsor elects to cancel or terminate the Contest, Sponsor will not retain any rights to the submitted photographs.

DATA PRIVACY

Entrants agree that personal data, especially name and address, may be processed, shared, and otherwise used for the purposes and within the context of the Contest and any other purposes outlined in



these Official Rules. Personal data will be used by Sponsor and its affiliates exclusively for the purposes stated herein.