



2026 Sikh Youth Symposium



(A Division of Sikh Youth Alliance of North America)

GUIDELINES FOR CONTESTANTS AND JUDGES

Age Group: I (6 to 8 years)

Time allotted: 5 minutes

Book: My Guru's Blessings Book 6

Author: S. Daljeet Singh

I CONTENTS (Answers to the following questions are expected in your speech. Please be brief and to the point. Contents are worth 60 points: 20 points for each question):

1. What are the different types of things we can trust Waheguru Ji with in our lives? How does that help ease our worries and our fears?
2. How should we react when someone makes a mistake? How does Gurbani help guide us and show us the right path when we ourselves make a mistake?
3. What gifts do you enjoy the most, and who gave you those gifts? If you had the chance to ask Waheguru Ji for a gift, what would you ask?

II Presentation (40 points):

Included in this area are items like style, delivery, poise, eye contact, voice, diction, language and effectiveness.

Time allotted to finish the speech for this group is **5 minutes**. There is no penalty for finishing the speech either earlier than 5 minutes or during the grace period of the next 30 seconds. After the grace period, i.e., after 5 minutes and 30 seconds have elapsed, one point would be deducted for every extra 10 seconds or part of 10 seconds, from every judge's score for the participant.

III Punjabi Presentation and Maintenance of Sikhi Saroop:

Use of Punjabi and maintenance of Sikhi Saroop needs to be encouraged. Participants who use Punjabi and/or maintain Sikhi Saroop will be judged according to the above format. However, it is suggested that such participants be rewarded suitably.

IV Suggestions on preparing youth for the Sikh Youth Symposium:

Given that the primary purpose of the Sikh Youth Symposium is for our children to focus on their learning, we would like to clarify the appropriate levels of support children should receive as they prepare for their speeches. It is our recommendation that it is in the best interest of the children to write their own speeches, with minimal support from parents or other adults.

Parents/Mentors may sit with children to read and discuss the book, as well as review the questions with them. They may write the child's responses as the child verbally answers the questions. The parents may help the children put their answers together in a speech format and further develop their thoughts, as needed.

If your child's speech is prepared in Punjabi, it must still follow the guidelines above. If it is prepared in English, it can be translated into Punjabi after it is created per the above guidelines. However, once the speech is in Punjabi, your child should understand the speech in its entirety.

Although these are only suggestions, in order to make this experience most meaningful and equitable for all children, it is recommended that we adhere to these suggestions as closely as possible.



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GUIDELINES FOR CONTESTANTS AND JUDGES

Age Group: II (9 to 10 years)

Time allotted: 6 minutes

Book: The Warrior Princess 2

Author: S. Harjit Singh

I CONTENTS (Answers to the following questions are expected in your speech. Please be brief and to the point. Contents are worth 60 points: 20 points for each question):

1. What are the similarities among the princesses mentioned in the book as they fought their enemies?
2. What do you think is the most significant sacrifice made by the warrior princesses and why?
3. What challenges do warrior princesses of today face in preserving the young lions and lionesses of tomorrow? How should they meet those challenges.

II Presentation (40 points):

Included in this area are items like style, delivery, poise, eye contact, voice, diction, language and effectiveness.

Time allotted to finish the speech for this group is **6 minutes**. There is no penalty for finishing the speech either earlier than 6 minutes or during the grace period of the next 30 seconds. After the grace period, i.e., after 6 minutes and 30 seconds have elapsed, one point would be deducted for every extra 10 seconds or part of 10 seconds, from every judge's score for the participant.

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Parents/Mentors may sit with children to read and discuss the book and questions; however, the children should write their own answers. Parents/Mentors may verbally support the children develop thoughts, suggest the ways and means to use better language without providing exact language to use in the speech.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTESTANTS AND JUDGES

Age Group: III (11 to 13 years)

Time allotted: 6 minutes

Book: Teaching Sikh Heritage to The Youth

Author: Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh

I CONTENTS (Answers to the following questions are expected in your speech. Please be brief and to the point. Contents are worth 60 points: 20 points for each question):

1. Often, we hear that it is important for Sikh youth living in the western world to “fit in” or assimilate within the societies they are living in, and that focusing on education about Sikh values and heritage prevents them from doing that. What are the author’s thoughts on this? What are yours?
2. The Sikh Rehat Maryada is seen by some as placing too-strict restrictions on our code and conduct. What analogies does the author use for justifying the need to follow the practices listed in Sikh Rehat Maryada? In what ways do you practice the Rehat? How does that help you?
3. For many, Sikhism is “yet another religion”. Per the book, what was Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s intent in establishing Sikhism? In what ways do Sikhs today align, and in what way do they misalign, with that intent?

II Presentation (40 points):

Included in this area are items like style, delivery, poise, eye contact, voice, diction, language and effectiveness.

Time allotted to finish the speech for this group is **6 minutes**. There is no penalty for finishing the speech either earlier than 6 minutes or during the grace period of next 30 seconds. After the grace period, i.e., after 6 minutes and 30 seconds have elapsed, one point would be deducted for every extra 10 seconds or part of 10 seconds, from every judge’s score for the participant.

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The participants should read the books independently, asking parents/mentors for support to understand the text and questions as needed. The participants should independently write their speeches, asking parents/mentors for suggestions, Gurbani references and reference points.

If your child’s speech is prepared in Punjabi, it must still follow the guidelines above. If it is prepared in English, it can be translated into Punjabi after it is created per the above guidelines. However, once the speech is in Punjabi, your child should understand the speech in its entirety.

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Age Group: IV (14 to 17 years)

Time allotted: 7 minutes

Book: The Message of Gurbani – Anand

Author: Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh

I CONTENTS (Answers to the following questions are expected in your speech. Please be brief and to the point. Contents are worth 60 points: 20 points for each question):

Please answer the following questions, with references from Gurbani, the lives of the Gurus, and other relevant sources.

1. a. What "Aanand" Guru ji is talking about in Aanand Sahib Path? Explain.
b. What daily practices can we adopt to increase thankfulness and to reduce the desires in life?
2. a. "Koorh ki soi pahunchai naahi mansa sach smanee" (ਕੁੜ ਕੀ ਸੋਇ ਪਹੁਚੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਈ)
b. Explain what Guru ji is saying to us in the above lines from Aanand Sahib?
c. Why are we in unhealthy mental status?
d. How can divine perspective solve our unhealthy mental status?
- 3: a. How does "Aanand Sahib" path and Guru Ji's wisdom influence your life?
b. Give 2-3 personal examples of how will you apply this wisdom in your daily life?

III Presentation (40 points):

Included in this area are items like style, delivery, poise, eye contact, voice, diction, language and effectiveness.

Time allotted to finish the speech for this group is **7 minutes**. There is no penalty for finishing the speech either earlier than 7 minutes or during the grace period of the next 30 seconds. After the grace period, i.e., after 7 minutes and 30 seconds have elapsed, one point would be deducted for every extra 10 seconds or part of 10 seconds, from every judge's score for the participant

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The participants should independently read the book and answer questions and ask adults for support only as reference points or to ask for guidance on Gurbani references.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTESTANTS AND JUDGES

Age Group: V (16 to 22 years)

Time allotted: 8 minutes

Theme: Guru's View of a Just World – ਬੇਗਮਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੇ ਨਾਉ (Begumpura Sehar Ko Naon)

Book: No book assigned

The theme for this year is "Guru's View of a Just World – ਬੇਗਮਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੇ ਨਾਉ (Begumpura Sehar Ko Naon)". Our Gurus offered a clear vision for a just society, and in fact laid the foundations of such a society. Discussions this year would relate broadly to Guru Sahib's view of a just world; how much do today's Sikhs as well as the world at large live by that world view; and what we can do to bring our own life in tune with Guru Sahib's vision as well as bring awareness of such vision to others. Please research and think about various aspects of the theme and related issues.

The judges will consider the development of the arguments presented. They do not have to agree with the speaker; in fact, the viewpoint presented may be unusual, different or even unpopular. What matters is the logic, its development and its strength.

Competition at the International level will involve discussions around the above theme and various related issues. We hope to encourage an understanding of the Gurmat values based on Gurbani, History and Rehat, as well as promote the habits of critical thinking. This will also help in developing skills to discuss difficult issues with other Sikhs and with non-Sikhs.

For the speech competition at the Center and the Regional levels, the participants should address the three specific questions given below.

I CONTENTS (Answers to the following questions are expected in your speech. Please be brief and to the point. Contents are worth 60 points: 20 points for each question):

- Context: In contrast to Gurus' message of equality for all, we see significant social discrimination in today's world based on religion, caste, race, skin color, nationality, language, and much else. Even many Sikhs engage in such discriminatory practices.
• Question: Suggest some specific practical ways to promote living by Guru Sahib's vision as well as make the world at large aware of that vision.
2. Does the shabad '*Begumpura Sehar Kau Naon*' describe not only a state of spiritual liberation from the suffering caused by our vices, but also the concept of human dignity and freedom from social injustice of all kinds? If so, then how does this relate to some of the United Nations' SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), and to what extent? Explain.
3. Our interfaith partners feel envious of the institution of langar in Sikhi, and often say that if they had the institution of langar they would have dominated the entire world. What do you understand about the concept of langar? Is langar a good model for addressing social divisions and can langar be considered a manifestation of a just, peaceful and harmonious world? Explain your answer.

II Presentation (40 points):

Included in this area are items like style, delivery, poise, eye contact, voice, diction, language and effectiveness. Time allotted to finish the speech for this group is **8 minutes**. There is no penalty for finishing the speech either earlier than 8 minutes or during the grace period of the next 30 seconds. After the grace period, i.e., after 8 minutes and 30 seconds have elapsed, one point would be deducted for every extra 10 seconds or part of 10 seconds, from every judge's score for the participant.



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The participants should independently research the theme and answer questions and ask adults for support only as reference points or to ask for guidance on Gurbani references.

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ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION - GROUP V

For group V, the guidelines at the International level are different from those at the Center and the Regional levels. The format at the International level is specifically designed to foster discussion and critical thinking.

What follow next are guidelines that are specific to the competition at the International level. ***The Regions may, if they so desire, implement these guidelines at the Regional level also.***

Phase 1.

1. Each participant has two minutes to make an opening statement. The order of the participants is chosen at random. The opening statement does not necessarily need to cover every specific question and sub-question mentioned within the three questions that are addressed at the local and the regional level, but it needs to cover the overall theme in a competent manner.
2. After each opening statement, another participant chosen at random will be asked to respond to the opening statement. Time allotted for the response is one minute.
3. After each opening statement and the response to it, there will be an open discussion among the participants for about five minutes.
4. During the discussion mentioned in 3 above, the moderator will ask questions from the participants as necessary to keep the discussion alive. The moderator will ensure that the discussion stays on track and that no one participant gets to dominate the discussion.

Phase 2.

Following Phase 1, each participant will get one and a half minute to make a closing statement. The order of presentations is to be chosen at random.

Note:

While it is understandable and acceptable for the participants to come with a prepared closing statement, they are encouraged to incorporate relevant elements from the discussion during Phase 1 into their closing statement. That reflects a participant's ability to comprehend what is being discussed, analyze it, and integrate some relevant points from the discussion into their own statement.

The moderator will carry a critical burden on his/her shoulders