



## **Royal Court Young Playwrights Award**

### **Guidance for schools and groups**

#### **About the Award:**

The Young Playwrights Award is the Royal Court's new playwriting competition for young people aged 13 – 18 years old. We want to support and discover the most promising talent and uplift new voices by giving them the opportunity to write about what matters most to them and develop their creative writing skills.

The Award will open for entries between 24 March – 2 May 2025 with winning plays performed in a festival at the Royal Court from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July and published by Nick Hern Books. Our team will read every play we're sent and respond with feedback, plus all shortlisted writers will be invited to attend the festival.

You can read more about the Festival and Prizes on our website ([royalcourttheatre.com](http://royalcourttheatre.com)) where we're also offering a range of resources and short videos to support every writer's journey and for use in school and group settings.

For our pilot year in 2025, the Award is open to any 13-18 year old living or attending education in Greater London.

The following pages contain headline information and guidance for any school or group interested in supporting young people to take part, whether encouraging on an individual basis or as a collective activity via your own 'playwriting club'.

Everything on offer, including for individuals submitting to the Award, is **completely free for individuals, schools and groups** to take part in.

*English Stage Company Limited trading as Royal Court Theatre is a registered charity number 231242. Our address is Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London SW1W 8AS.*



## **Take part – for Schools & Groups**

There are lots of ways you and your students can take part in the Young Playwrights Award, and we want it to be as easy and open as possible.

**Any student aged 13-18 can independently submit a play** on our website, and you can encourage them to do so, including downloading a poster to display from our website, here: <https://royalcourttheatre.com/playwriting/>

If you have an individual or group of students interested, you can provide **support within a school or group setting**, including signposting our resources and helping them complete and submit a play.

You can also **set up your own playwriting club for a group of students**, which could be in a classroom setting, or a lunchtime, afterschool or youth club – whether specifically for this purpose or as part of existing activities.

Taking part in the Young Playwrights Award is completely **free of charge**. Schools do not need to register to take part and any young person is welcome to submit final drafts of plays between 24 March – 2 May 2025.

Full **submission guidance can be found on our website, as well as a special Schools & Groups newsletter** to sign up for updates. If you have any other questions, you can get in touch on [youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com](mailto:youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com).

### **Why take part?**

- Develop young people's literacy skills and their ability to critically analyse and evaluate drama texts for GCSE and A-Level courses.
- Develop written and verbal communication skills.
- Increase confidence in writing and develop a love of reading and writing for pleasure.
- Connect with other students from across the school to develop new friendships and share different perspectives on issues that matter to them.
- Take up an extra-curricular activity that support their emotional wellbeing.
- Receive feedback and support on their plays from professional playwrights at The Royal Court. Finalists will have their plays performed and published.

## Ways you can support your students

We'd love you to **encourage your students to take part** and **remind them of the deadline for submitting**. We know you're busy; anything else from the following list of suggestions is a bonus!

### Resources:

- **Our digital video resources** presented by professional playwrights will be released weekly throughout February and March 2025 via our website and social media channels. Your students may wish to watch these videos individually or as a group, and **you can use them to provide a structure for six sessions** as part of a playwriting club.
- To make sure you don't miss anything, sign up to the special **Schools & Groups newsletter on our website** to receive videos, updates on extra opportunities and reminders of the deadlines for entering.
- You can support students who want to learn more by listening to our **Playwright's Podcast** or checking out our suggestions of **Writing Exercises** on our website at [royalcourttheatre.com/playwriting/writer-resources/](https://royalcourttheatre.com/playwriting/writer-resources/)

**Providing feedback.** There is no need to formally read or feedback on students' work, but if you want to, or are asked for help, here are some tips:

- Providing **supportive and encouraging feedback** is key. The plays shouldn't be treated as pieces of work to be 'marked' – there is no 'pass or fail.'
- **Stating what you love** about their writing is a great place to start, e.g. 'I love how you've presented this character', 'I love how you build up such a clear image of the setting'.
- **'Reflecting back'** is a powerful tool where you can let them know how the play speaks to you: 'to me, this a play is about...', 'It made me think of...', 'It made me feel...'. This can help to give them a sense of how their play is being received and interpreted.
- **Asking questions** is another powerful feedback tool. 'What is this character thinking?', 'How does this character feel?', or a simple 'What happens next?'

### **Helping with drafting and editing:**

- Encourage students to try to get *any* ideas down on the page. They can start with a storyboard, images or a timeline, anything that helps them to generate ideas before laying out their writing in the format of a play.
- Students may go through different ideas and drafts before they settle on something they're happy with. This is ok and part of the process – they just might need a timely nudge to settle on a single idea.
- Reassure we are not looking for perfect spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Swearing is allowed and plays can be on any topic and in any style or genre. But they must be intended for the stage, to be performed by actors.

### **Setting up a Playwriting Club:**

Many schools we have spoken to are setting up an informal lunchtime or afterschool club across February – March for students from Years 9-13 to write together. Our videos will support with this, guiding six fun, relaxed sessions with hints and tips.

- You do not need any experience in playwriting. Teachers outside English and Drama departments might enjoy the opportunity to try something different!
- We recommend a quiet classroom space where students can feel safe and comfortable sharing their ideas and are able to focus.
- If you can, snacks and drinks might help focus, particularly after school!
- Cultivating a supportive, kind and trusting group environment is key. Reassure students that there are no right or wrong ways to write a play. Everyone's experiences, opinions and perspectives are valid and there's no pressure for concrete outcomes or learning objectives.
- Background music can be useful. Some students might want to listen to their own music on headphones or have a silent space – follow their lead on this.
- Allow students a good amount of independent writing time – this can take up the majority of the session. They can also be encouraged to continue developing their plays in their own time, if they wish.
- You can invite students to share extracts if they feel comfortable, to help get constructive feedback and develop their plays.
- Students can write and submit plays individually, in a pair or group of three.

## Other key information

### Dates:

- **February 2025- March 2025:** Six weekly digital resources will be available on our website to support students to develop their plays.
- **24<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025:** Submissions open.
- **June 2025:** Shortlisted plays announced.
- **10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2025:** Performance festival held at The Royal Court.

If you prefer to receive our six weekly digital resources all in one go, you can request this by emailing us on [youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com](mailto:youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com). Please note that the resources will be ready by the beginning of February 2025.

### Submission guidance:

- Students can submit plays independently by visiting the submissions page on our website, but it may be helpful if you can offer support.
- If the applicant is 17 years or under on the day they submit their play, they will need consent from a parent, guardian or teacher to enter. We will ask for their name, email address and a phone number.
- We can accept plays between 1,000 and 5,000 words long (approximately 10-30 minutes on stage).
- Plays should be typed in a word document or PDF with the **title** of the play and the student's **name and age** at the top.

### Safeguarding:

- Students might write about themes and issues which are challenging and sensitive. It's not unusual for young people to write about a real life issue.
- If you have concerns regarding the content of a student's play, please follow your safeguarding policy and speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- If we receive a submission which raises safeguarding concerns, we will follow the Royal Court's safeguarding policy and may contact the named adult.

**SEND, Access and Inclusion:**

- We want all young people to have the opportunity to apply. Reasonable adjustments can be made depending on individual students' needs. Please email us on [youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com](mailto:youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com) if you would like to discuss a specific student's needs.
- We request that all plays are submitted in a written format. Students who have English as an additional language (including BSL users) or experience challenges with writing are welcome to use an adult scribe as long as all ideas are authentically from the student. Please indicate on the script if a scribe has been used.
- Students who have English as an additional language are welcome to include words or phrases in their home language if they judge that it's true to the way their character speaks. (If possible, providing a glossary/translation for our reading panel will be very helpful!)

**Financial support**

**There is no fee or other cost** to take part in or submit plays to the Royal Court Young Playwrights Award. If finances are a barrier for winning or shortlisted writers attending any of the festival events, we have some budget available to ensure everyone can be there.

**Any questions?**

Please feel free to email us on [youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com](mailto:youngplaywrights@royalcourttheatre.com).

**Thank you for taking part in the Royal Court Young Playwrights Award.  
We hope you and your students enjoy the process of crafting your plays and  
we very much look forward to reading them!**

With thanks to: