

True Leaders in Equity

4-H Writing Equity Challenge Quick Guide

“The truth has a strange way of following you, of coming up to you and making you listen to what it has to say.”

—Sandra Cisneros

What’s the Challenge?

Be a global citizen by putting pen to paper to explore and share about an equity issue important to you! It must be writing, but it can take any form—poem, essay, letter, etc.

Why does it matter?

Many of the top issues facing society today, both in the U.S., and worldwide (i.e., health care, food security, economy, education, health care, crime, poverty), can be traced back to issues of equity. Youth are a huge part of driving change in the world. In fact, historically, youth have played a pivotal role in many issues (cue Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam Protests, Indigenous Water Rights...). Having a mindset of being responsible for people, places, and things around the world and believing that your actions impact others, is being a global citizen. You can be a global citizen too, and we need you to be! Writing is a powerful way to use your voice. Let’s hear it, and maybe you’ll inspire others to think differently or take action.

Background

Equality is when each individual of a society or a group receives the same resource or treatment regardless of what may be needed to achieve a desired outcome. Equity is when an individual or group receives the unique resources and opportunities needed to reduce or eliminate the barriers. The goal with equity is to make things more fair for everyone. Most people want things to be fair. But many people disagree about what fair looks like. What does equity look like to you? What you think matters. You can use writing to explore for yourself what it means to you and what it means to others. Writing is a powerful form of both exploration and expression because writing is an outward expression of thinking, feeling, imagination, hope, and fears. When we’re not sure what we think or feel about something, writing can help us figure that out. Some writing is meant to be kept to ourselves, which is perfectly fine. But writing that we intend to share with others can help us connect in ways we never thought of, which has great potential for making the world a more understanding and equitable place.

How do I do it?

1. **Find your inspiration.** Every piece of writing has something it wants to say—a topic or idea to explore. What’s yours? Storm that brain for ideas! You may already have ideas in

that creative mind of yours...you just have to find them. But you also may benefit from getting inspiration from others. Start with a brainstorming session about the equity issues you care the most about, or that you have the most questions about. There are many different strategies you can use to find your inspiration! Here are a few to try:

- **List.** List as many things as you can about equity—what it is, what questions you have about it, what it affects, how it impacts your life or those you know, etc..
 - **Freewrite.** Think about equity. Then start writing. Anything goes, and spelling matters less than this tip. If only questions come to mind, write them down! Include how you're feeling about the topic. Keep the pencil (or keyboard keys) moving for at least 10 minutes.
 - **Loop.** Looping is a way of freewriting. Start by freewriting, and then stop. Then find an idea in that writing that appeals to you and freewrite again, this time about that topic. Repeat this a few times, and you may find the topic you want to focus on for the challenge.
 - **Mind map.** Write your topic in the center of a piece of paper. Then think of things that relate to it—its impacts, issues, your experiences with it, etc. Draw a line connecting any ideas that relate to each other. This will create a kind of web. Look at where there are clusters of ideas that all connect that interest you. This can help you see the topic in new ways.
2. **Pick a format.** What kind of writing do you want to do? A poem? A letter? An essay? Short story? Pick a format that inspires you.
 3. **Do some research.** Writing is easier when you know what you're writing about. So if you have any questions that you need answered about your topic, go onto the Internet, dig into your books, and learn what you need to learn. Be sure to look for [credible sources](#)!
 4. **Start writing.** Remember that writing is a process! Even the best writers go through many many drafts before they publish something. So don't worry about what it looks like just yet—polishing comes later. For now, just put pen to paper (or fingers to keys...or touch screens...or...).
 5. **Get feedback.** Once you have a draft that you feel OK about (doesn't have to be great yet), it's time for some feedback. The first person to consult is yourself. Look at the [rubric](#) to make sure you're on track. Then find someone willing to take a look at it for you. But make sure to find someone who will give you *helpful* feedback. Saying "that was great!" is not very helpful. Good feedback means they've shared something with you that you can use to make it better.
 6. **Revise.** Once you know what to improve, you can work on making the writing better. And because writing is a process, you may need to repeat steps 5 and 6 (feedback and revision) two, three, or even four times!

7. **Polish.** Once you're satisfied with your work, it's time to put on those finishing touches. This involves checking for typos and making final changes to the language to make sure it makes the impact you want it to.
8. **Reflect on the process.** It's both helpful for others and vital for you as a learner to think about what you got out of the experience. If you take your performance to a 4-H judging experience like the county fair, the judge will want to know what you learned from the experience. Write a short paragraph about what you learned. Not sure what to write? Start by answering the following questions.
 - Why did you choose to write about this topic?
 - What did you learn about equity, and/or what questions did this challenge bring up for you about equity?
 - Why did you choose this particular format to explore the topic of equity?
 - Overall, what did you learn from doing this project?
 - How did writing help you explore equity?
 - What do you hope others get out of reading your work?
 - What would you do differently next time?
9. **Share your work!** Sharing your work with others is another important part of the learning process because it helps you process, express, and validate what you learned. Following are some ideas for how you can share your work.
 - Enter your writing into a local contest or county/state fair.
 - Visit with a local professional writer to get feedback.
 - Use your writing to spark dialog with friends or family members about equity and what it means to them.

What's next?

What else do you want to know about writing? About equity? Here are some ideas for how you could take the learning further.

- Try another equity challenge project ([STEM](#), [Photography](#), [Performing Arts](#)).
- Use the [Photography](#) challenge to add a visual to your writing.
- Explore your topic from another angle, perhaps by trying to answer other questions the project brought up for you.
- Try exploring equity through another writing project, this time picking a different format.
- Notice the quotes at the beginning of this challenge guide. Find your own quotes that speak to you of equity or express something to you about how writing helps you explore equity.