

LEIDENSCHAFT DER AUSSPRACHE
Houstonfest Pronunciation Competition
New Contest at Houstonfest 2022

- **Purpose:** To promote better pronunciation among contest participants through intensive attention paid specifically to pronunciation, motivated by the possibility of substantial monetary prizes provided by a donor.
- **Prize purse for 2022:** \$10,500 (prizes of \$4000, \$3000, \$2000, \$1000, and \$500).
- The competition will be subject to **re-evaluation each year**.
- Prize money will be paid directly to the winners immediately after the contest (typically, at the Houstonfest awards ceremony). It is a “prize,” not a “scholarship” (thus not held for later payout to the winner’s college).
- There will be **one level of competition** for all students regardless of their years of study of German. (While students with more years of German study will have a head start, German pronunciation follows clear rules, and a student with less experience is just as capable of pronouncing German correctly as one with more experience, with proper attention to pronunciation and practice.)
- The contest will be **judged by three or more native speakers** of German.
- **Native and “advantaged” speakers are excluded** from entering (“advantaged” being defined the same way as for the contest system in general except that for the first bullet point below, the age is substantially reduced). Specifically, anyone who meets one or more of the following criteria may not enter the pronunciation competition:
 - They have lived in a German-speaking country six weeks or more at one time since their **5th** birthday (the general rule for our German contests is “since the age of 13,” but for this pronunciation contest, we really want to reward students who have picked up their pronunciation skills from classroom instruction here and not from any extended time living in the German-speaking world).
 - They reside with a native speaker of German who regularly speaks German at home.
 - They speak German at home (for regular family communication).
 - They regularly (annually or biannually) visit or have visited a German-speaking country, visiting German-speaking homes.
 - They have attended a school where all subjects were taught in German for one or more years.
- If students entered in the contest are found to be “advantaged,” they will be disqualified and their school barred from entering the pronunciation contest the following year.
- The pronunciation contest will be **limited to 25 contestants** but must attract **at least 15 contestants** in order to be held at all. The number of students a school may enter will be determined by the number of students it registers for the main Houstonfest contest by the regular deadline, as outlined below. The regular Houstonfest registration deadline for 2022 is Saturday, January 15, 11:59 p.m. (If a school registers for Houstonfest under the late deadline, the school may not enter anyone in the pronunciation competition, and if the school registers additional students between the regular and late deadlines, it will receive no additional slots in the pronunciation contest.)
 - 3-15 Houstonfest registrants = 1 entry to pronunciation contest
 - 16-30 registrants = 2 entries
 - 31-45 registrants = 3 entries
 - 46+ registrants = 4 entries
- **Registration** for the pronunciation contest will open at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 18, 2022, via a time-stamped Google form. That is the Tuesday after regular Houstonfest registration is due, avoiding the Monday MLK holiday, and is a time of day when teachers could be reasonably expected to be free to get online. Any registrations received after the cap of 25 is achieved will be declined, i.e., registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to this caveat: each school completing its registration for the pronunciation contest by 8:00 p.m. on January 18 will be guaranteed one entry in the pronunciation contest. The registration form will ask teachers to prioritize their entrants, in case only some (but not all) of their entrants can be accommodated in the field of 25. If any students who were among the first 25 registered have to be struck from the list to accommodate students accepted under the caveat described above, we will start with the 4th-ranked students from any schools registering 4 contestants (and within that group, starting with the school that has the least number of total registrations for Houstonfest), and so on.

- **Contest procedure**

- All competitors will read the same text, and they will not know what it is prior to the competition time.
- The text will lend itself to meaningful intonation/expression, thus probably literary rather than non-fiction, but prose, not poetry. This is not to say that we will be judging dramatic interpretation of the text – we’re judging solely pronunciation. But a text that the students can “get into” will be more fun for them and better for the judges who will have to listen to it up to 25 times. The goal will usually be to choose a text that a fluent speaker should be able to read aloud at a natural pace in 90 seconds, probably ~200 words, but students will be allowed to read up to 2 minutes before being cut off if they have not reached the end of the text. For 2022, however, the chosen text is somewhat longer, and 3 minutes of reading time will be allowed.
- Procedures for years when contest is held in person follow in gray, with the work-around procedures for 2022’s virtual contest in red; portions in black apply equally to the in-person and virtual environments.
- Contestants will enter the contest room in groups of 3 every 30 minutes, on the hour and the half hour (7 groups of 3, 8th/last group will have 4 contestants if there are indeed 25 contestants). Thus, the total contest time will be about 4 hours. They will sign up for a time on a sheet posted outside the contest room, as students do for many other Houstonfest events. **In advance of the day of contest, contestants will sign up for a specific 30-minute time slot beginning on the hour or the half-hour. At the beginning of their assigned time slot, they will enter a Zoom meeting (the link will be provided to teachers in advance). This Zoom meeting will be on contest day (February 5) from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.**
- Upon entering the room, the 3 (or 4) students will receive a hard copy of the German text with a side-by-side English translation so that they can quickly grasp the meaning of the text. **Upon entering the Zoom meeting, the 3 (or 4) students will be shown via screen-share the German text with a side-by-side English translation.** We are not testing reading comprehension here, i.e., we want the students to know the meaning of what they are reading so that they can concentrate on their pronunciation and fluency. The group of 3 (or 4) will have 15 minutes to read over the text. They may ask the judges/**proctor** questions about the meaning of words or sentences during this time, but they may not ask how any words are pronounced, and the judges/**proctor** will answer questions only in English. The contestants may not access their phones, computers, or any reference materials during this time. They may write on the text.
- At the end of the 15 minutes, the 3 (or 4) contestants will draw/**be assigned** numbers (1, 2, 3, (4)). #1 will stay in the room/**Zoom meeting** and #2 and #3 (and #4) will go into the hallway (leaving the text in the room)/**be sent into the Zoom waiting room where they will have no access to the text.** #1 will read the text to the judges/**proctor**. One judge (or a neutral facilitator) will video-record the reading/**the Zoom meeting will be recorded while the student is reading.** Each reader will have a maximum of 2/3 minutes to read before being required to stop. After reading, the contestant will leave the room/**Zoom meeting**. Then #2 and #3 (and #4) will take their turns reading, following the same procedure. #2 should only have to wait in the hall/**Zoom waiting room** about 3/4 minutes, and #3 up to 6/8 minutes. NO ONE may remove the text from the room at any time.
- The 30-minute cycle will give the judges time between groups to reflect on the readings heard thus far and to make notes.
- When all contestants have read, the judges will consult to determine the winners. They may choose to listen to some of the recordings as part of their deliberations. **The Zoom recordings will be shared with the panel of judges for later evaluation. After an initial review of the entries by each individual judge, the judges may choose to come together via Zoom to discuss the final ranking.**
- This contest will not be included in the Houstonfest sweepstakes calculation.
- If students in 9th, 10th, or 11th grade place 2nd through 5th, they may enter the contest again in subsequent years (assuming that it continues), but their “lifetime” winnings from the pronunciation contest will be capped at \$4000, and once a student has placed in the top 5 for two years, he/she may not enter again in subsequent years. For example, if a student places 4th in 2022, winning \$1000, and then places 1st in 2023, their 2023 prize will be capped at \$3000 (rather than the allotted \$4000), so that their lifetime winnings do not exceed \$4000.