

***Plus* new writers award 2009 — bring maths to life**

Guidelines for secondary school and sixth form entrants

Your article

This is your chance to communicate your passion to people who'd normally run a mile when they hear the word maths! You're invited to write an article about any mathematical topic you think the world should know about. This could be a favourite bit of maths you learnt about at school, a puzzle, an interesting application of maths, a bit of mathematical history, or an individual mathematician — whatever it is, we want to read it! The maths in your article doesn't have to be hard. You can say really interesting things about simple maths, too.

Your piece should be no more than 1000 words long. It doesn't have to be that long, shorter pieces are equally welcome. Write your piece in a style suitable for *Plus*: light and entertaining and accessible for someone with only a basic knowledge of maths. See the school winners from the [2006](#) and [2008](#) competitions to find out what kind of thing we're looking for. If you're still stuck for ideas, here are some suggestions:

- **Your favourite bit of maths.** Is there a favourite bit of maths you feel needs liberating from its dire textbook existence? Then bring it to the masses with a piece that's easier to understand — and more fun — than the textbooks.
- **The human side** Mathematicians are, and always have been, an odd bunch of people. In their stories you will find passion and triumph, bitter defeat, devious intrigue, mental illness, death sentences and duels. And what role did women play in mathematical history? Find out and tell us all about it.
- **Philosophical maths** Maths is full of mind-boggling concepts: the infinite, the indivisible, the irrational and the multi-dimensional, artificial intelligence, and cats that are simultaneously alive and dead, to name but a few. If it's the philosophical side of maths that takes your fancy, then pick an idea, do some research, and get writing.
- **Historic maths** Some of the most innocent-looking bits of maths have taken centuries to evolve, and often had to overcome staunch resistance. Browse the web for your favourite bit of maths and see how it got to where it is now.
- **Unexpected maths** Have you found maths in unusual places? Maybe you know someone who uses maths in an unexpected way, or have read about an interesting application. Art, music, medicine, sport, space flight — even sociology — all of these use maths, so find out and tell us all about it!

Researching your article

Before you start, browse the Plus [archive](#) to get a feel for the kind of articles we're after. The archive is a treasure trove of information on all aspects of maths: use the keyword index to see what we have on the topic of your choice, or simply enter it into the search field.

Keep track of your sources, whether they are books, papers, interviews, or web pages. Provide the details of your sources in a bibliography, to be submitted with your entry. Include: title, author, publisher for books; author, title of article, title of periodical, volume and/or date for journal, magazine and newspaper articles; and the URL for websites, together with the date you accessed the site. If you're interviewing someone, provide their name and the location and date of the interview.

Take special care with information you find on the Internet — there is a lot of gobbledegook out there. If in doubt, check various sources. You can get some tips on using the Internet for research from [UC Berkeley](#). Try to base your final article on a number of reliable sources and give these in your bibliography.

Writing your article

Entries should be no longer than 1000 words.

Your article won't be judged on the level of difficulty of the maths in it — you can say really interesting things about simple maths, too.

Remember that you are writing for an audience with only a basic knowledge of maths. Your article should be accessible to someone aged 16 studying maths at school, and it should be clear, concise, informative and inspiring.

It's fine to use mathematical formulae and technical expressions, as long as you make clear what they mean — your article should be fun, not hard work!

If you'd like to send in a puzzle, then try and work it into an article format: invent a story to go with the puzzle, embellish it with historical anecdotes, or trace some of the maths that lies behind it.

If you're struggling to bring across a particularly difficult idea, try using examples, analogies and metaphors. You don't have to be as precise as a textbook would be, so feel free to use your imagination!

If you feel your piece is a bit dry, then look up its history and the people involved in its discovery. A juicy anecdote or two can do wonders in livening things up.

Images, diagrams and illustrations are welcome! Please include them in the appropriate place in your article, with a number or caption. They should be of a reasonable quality to be reproduced on the Web. If you use diagrams, images or illustrations that are not your own, then get written permission for their use from the copyright holder. If they are from the Web, you can usually

do this by emailing the contact person, if they are from a print publication, then write to the publisher.

When you're done, get a person with no interest in maths whatsoever to read your article. He or she may have some very useful criticism.

The judges will be interested not only in the content of your article but also in the way you use language to bring it across. They'll be looking for clear, lively and inspiring prose. Make sure that your article is written in good English and that spelling and grammar are correct.

Please note that we are unable to give advice on individual articles before they are submitted, as this would be unfair to others.

Submitting your entry

- Complete the entry form. You can download this as a [Word document](#), as a [PDF](#) file, or as part of our entry pack ([Word](#) or [PDF](#) format), which also includes the guidelines and rules. If you're filling the form in by hand, then please write clearly.
- Print out, complete and sign the copyright form. You can download this as a [PDF](#) file, or as part of our entry pack ([Word](#) or [PDF](#) format), which also includes the guidelines and rules. If you are under 18, have a parent or legal guardian co-sign the form. If you are submitting your entry electronically, include a scanned version of the copyright form with your entry.
- Only include your name on the entry form and copyright form, do not include your name anywhere in the article. We will randomly allocate a number to each entry when it is received, to identify it. This is to ensure the judging is anonymous. Names will be linked back to entries after the judging has been completed.
- Post your entry to:

Plus new writers award
Millennium Mathematics Project
Centre for Mathematical Sciences
Wilberforce Road
Cambridge CB3 0WA, UK

or email it to pluswriters@maths.cam.ac.uk with "*Plus* new writers award" as the subject header.

- If you submit your article by email, send it as a single file, either in Word or PDF. Make sure that all illustrations and images, and the bibliography are included in this file.
- Check you have included the completed entry form, copyright form, your article and bibliography.
- Happy writing!

A note to teachers

Please do encourage your students to take part in the competition and feel free to send us a whole bunch of entries from your class, even if they are all on the same topic. The entries will be judged individually, but if you're interested in running a project involving the whole class, then please [get in touch](#).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined in the [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) as stealing and passing off the ideas or words of another as your own, without crediting the source. It's a serious offence! Don't copy any text, whether from the Internet or a printed source, without clearly marking it as a quotation and stating where it is from. If you are paraphrasing the work from another source without significantly changing the content, you must also credit the source. Plagiarised entries will be disqualified. As part of the entry form, you will be asked to sign (and have your parents co-sign if you are under 18) a copyright form, which states that the work you are submitting is original and your own work.