

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

### **Guidelines for university student and general public 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 accessible and entertaining article about any mathematical topic you think the world should know about. This could be a mathematical idea or concept you've been brooding about for years, an interesting application of maths you've come across at work or play, a bit of mathematical history, or an individual mathematician — whatever it is, we want to read it! The level of maths is completely up to you. The hardest maths can be communicated in enlightening ways, and simple ideas can be interesting too.

The article should be no more than 1500 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 winners from the [2006](#) and [2008](#) competitions to find out what kind of thing we're looking for.

#### **Researching your article**

Before you start, browse the *Plus* [archive](#) to get a feel for the kind of articles we're after. If *Plus* has already covered your subject extensively, then either try to present it from a new angle, or look for another topic.

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.

The Internet is likely to be a prominent source, but take special care with the information you find — there is a lot of gobbledegook out there. Check various sources and try to assess their respectability — for example articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals or on university research group sites are probably reliable, but text appearing on people's personal homepages or blogs may not be. (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 1500 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, not university level. Your article should be accessible to someone aged 16 studying maths at school, but keep in mind that *Plus* readers include students, university academics and many people from the general public. Your article should be clear, concise, informative and inspiring.

Please do use mathematical formulae and technical expressions if relevant, but make clear what they mean.

Don't shy away from introducing complex and abstract ideas that are important to your topic. You can illuminate even difficult maths by putting it into a broader context, illustrating it with an example or using analogies.

If you feel your piece is a little dry, have a look at its historical background and the people involved. 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, check if you should be entering the [schools category](#), then 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](mailto: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!

## 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. Plagiarism is a serious offence! Do not 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 and there is very reliable software for spotting such entries. 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.