



ESCAPE THE VAPE VIDEO CHALLENGE

CONTEST GUIDE

The Escape the Vape Video Challenge is your chance to use your voice and creativity to inform your peers about the dangers of vaping, the shady tactics the industry uses to market its products, and the benefits of being vape-free. Create and submit a powerful public service announcement (PSA) for a chance to win cash prizes.

2026 DATES

December 1, 2025	Contest opens
January 31, 2026	Submissions due
March 2026	Finalists announced and public voting opens
April 2026	Winners announced

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CONTEST RULES

Eligibility

- **Basic requirement:** You must be a student in Minnesota in grades 6–12.
- **Homeschool:** Students who are homeschool and are eligible in the division that corresponds with their age.
- **Team size:** You can submit a video as an individual or as part of one group or team. However, you may only be a part of one entry total. Groups may include a maximum of four students.
- **Required form:** All participants (individual or team member) must complete and submit the required permission forms.

Contest divisions

Your video will be judged alongside submissions in your division. Your division is based on your grade level.

- **High School Division:** Grades 9–12
- **Middle School Division:** Grades 6–8

Videos requirements

To be eligible for judging, your video must meet these requirements:

- **Length:** Be no longer than 30 seconds in total.
- **Facts:** Include one fact about the dangers of vaping. See *Key facts* on page 5.
- **Action:** Include one call to action (a clear message telling viewers what to do next).
- **Originality:** The video must be 100% original, created solely by the student or student group. No help from parents or teachers is allowed!

Language

You can submit videos in languages other than English, but you must include an English translation when you submit your video.

Disqualifiers

Videos must not include:

Vaping devices or products	• Actual vaping devices, accessories, or products, or any commercial tobacco products. • Depicting smoking, chewing, or otherwise using commercial tobacco. • Simulating vaping with an actual device.
Copyright material or brands	• Copyrighted music, movies, books, etc. • Logos, brands, or store signs. • Mention or performance of copyrighted media (music, films, TV shows, etc.).
Inappropriate content	• Anything inappropriate, disrespectful, dangerous, or illegal. • Sexually explicit, obscene, or violent material (e.g., relating to murder, cruelty, abuse). • Discriminatory material (based on race, sex, religion, disability, etc.). • Language or images of the human body that would be inappropriate for a general audience (including small children).
Infringement on others' rights	• Anything that violates another person's rights, including privacy, publicity, or intellectual property rights.

Background music

The music used in your video must be 100% legal to use.

- **Original music:** You can use music that is originally written, performed, and produced by you, the entrant.
- **Royalty-free:** You can use music that is royalty-free and in the public domain. See *Royalty-free background music* on page 8.

Safety first

- **Be smart:** Safety should be your highest priority.
- **No risks:** Do not put yourself or anyone else at risk of harm while making your video.
- **Final call:** Contest organizers reserve the right to disqualify any video at their sole discretion. Judges' decisions are final.

Submission

All videos must be uploaded via the Video Submission Form on the [Escape the Vape Video Challenge website \(https://www.mnescapethevape.org\)](https://www.mnescapethevape.org) by midnight CST on January 31, 2026.

You may only submit one video entry – either as an individual or part of one group submission. If you're submitting as a group, only one team member needs to complete the Video Submission Form. Every section of the Video Submission Form must be completed. Videos submitted with incomplete information will not be judged.

- **Format:** Videos must be submitted as an MP4 file. If we can't open your MP4 video submission, we will email you with the opportunity resubmit. This type of technical issue will not disqualify your entry. See *Video file format* on page 9.
- **Size:** Videos must not exceed 100 MB.
- **Title:** Video submissions should have a unique title. Do not title your video "Escape the Vape Video Challenge".

CREATING YOUR VIDEO

Call to action

What do you want people to do after watching your video? Include a call to action for your audience. These are just a few examples.

- Know the dangers of vaping...
- Don't start vaping...
- Consider quitting...
- Talk to your friends about the dangers of vaping...
- Learn more at...

Key facts

What key facts support your call to action? Videos must include one key fact, but you might choose to include others if they help make your PSA more compelling.

General vaping facts

- **Minnesota data:** E-cigarettes are the most used commercial tobacco product among Minnesota youth. According to data from the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey:
 - In 2023, 13.9% of Minnesota high school students reported vaping in the past 30 days.
 - Nicotine dependence is increasing among youth who vape. Overall, 79.6% of students who vaped in 2023 report one or more signs of dependence, an increase from 70.4% in 2020.
- **Harmful substances:** Vaping exposes users to harmful substances, including nicotine, heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds.
- **Lungs and heart health:** Vaping poses serious risks to your lungs and heart. Prolonged exposure can lead to chronic lung diseases (like "popcorn lung") and increase the risk of heart problems like high blood pressure and heart attacks.
- **Nicotine:** Vapes can contain extremely high concentrations of nicotine. For example, many of today's disposable vapes contain levels of nicotine comparable to several cartons of cigarettes.
- **Difficulty quitting:** The more nicotine a person uses, the harder it is to quit. Minnesota teens who vape report trying 10 times or more to quit.

Flavors and industry targeting

- **Appeal:** Most youth who start vaping begin with a flavored product.
- **Thousands of flavors:** The tobacco industry sells vapes in over 15,000 flavors, many of which mimic popular candy, fruit, or desserts.
- **Industry marketing:** The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting youth through marketing strategies like flavored products, cartoon mascots, and associating their

products with popular culture and athletes. Internal industry documents have referred to youth as "replacement smokers" and detail how they use marketing to appeal to young people's desire for rebellion or emancipation. Today, these tactics continue, often focusing on new products like e-cigarettes through social media, influencers, and appealing flavors.

Nicotine dependence and mental health

- **Nicotine harms the brain:** The human brain is still developing until about age 25. Nicotine exposure during this time can negatively affect your attention, learning, memory, and impulse control.
- **Nicotine dependence:** Teens can show signs of nicotine dependence quickly – sometimes even before they vape every day. In Minnesota, about 80% of high school and middle school student who vape report signs of nicotine dependence.
- **Stress and anxiety:** Vaping doesn't relieve stress; it can actually make it worse. Nicotine dependence causes stress and mood changes, which can amplify or worsen existing stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Quitting helps:** Quitting vaping or smoking actually lowers levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and improves overall mood and quality of life.

My Life, My Quit™ - free help to quit

- **About:** My Life, My Quit™ helps Minnesota teens ages 13-17 quit vaping, smoking, or using other commercial tobacco and nicotine products.
- **Terms:** My Life, My Quit™ is free and confidential.
- **Services:** Teens can text, call, or chat with quit coaches online. Tips and tools are also available online.
- **Sign up:** To sign up, text "Start My Quit" to 36072 or visit mylifemyquit.com.

Even more facts

- [E-cigarettes and Vaping](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/ecigarettes/index.html)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/ecigarettes/index.html>)
- [Nicotine and Nicotine Dependence](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/nicotine/index.html)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/nicotine/index.html>)
- [Tobacco and Kids: Marketing](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/fact-sheets/tobacco-kids/tobacco-and-kids-marketing) (<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/fact-sheets/tobacco-kids/tobacco-and-kids-marketing>)
- [E-cigarette Use Among Youth | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/youth.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/youth.html>)

Messaging maps

Messaging maps outline your position, or angle, using your key facts and a call to action. You might use messaging maps to help structure and organize the information you want to deliver with your video.

Example: flavors and industry targeting

Position or angle	The tobacco industry uses flavors to attract new, young customers.
Key fact 1	Most youth who start vaping begin with a flavored product.
Key fact 2	The industry sells vapes in over 15,000 flavors, many of which mimic popular candy or fruit and dessert flavors.
Call to action	Don't fall for the trap. Learn more at aroomtobreathe.org.

Example: nicotine dependence and mental health

Position or angle	Vaping can worsen your mental health.
Key fact 1	Vapes contain nicotine which is highly addictive.
Key fact 2	Nicotine dependence can happen quickly, even before a teen starts vaping daily.
Key fact 3	The cycle of nicotine dependence can worsen symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression.
Call to action	Take care of your mind and body – get free help to quit vaping. Text “Start My Quit” to 36072 or visit mylifemyquit.com.

Misconceptions and “false facts”

Be careful not to fall into the trap of using “false facts”. Videos will be disqualified if they overstate facts or include false or misleading information.

Common misconception	Reality
<i>“Vaping causes cancer.”</i>	While cancer is definitely a concern given vaping introduces a host of chemicals into the lungs, e-cigarettes and vapes haven't been around long enough for us to learn whether or not they cause cancer.
<i>“Vaping helps people quit smoking.”</i>	Vapes are not FDA-approved for quitting smoking or the use of other commercial tobacco products. They haven't gone through the rigorous testing required to be officially recommended to help people quit – they come in many different types and people use them in various ways, which makes it hard to draw broad conclusions about their effectiveness in helping people quit.

<i>"Vaping helps relieve stress."</i>	Vapes contain nicotine, and exposure to nicotine can affect how the brain develops. For example, it may cause problems with learning, memory, and attention. Using nicotine can also worsen anxiety, depression, and stress.
<i>"It's just harmless water vapor."</i>	It's actually not a vapor at all. It's an aerosolized mixture that contains nicotine, heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds. Prolonged exposure to these chemicals can lead to chronic lung diseases, such as bronchiolitis obliterans (commonly known as "popcorn lung"), and may increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases like high blood pressure and heart attacks. Studies also suggest vaping may impair immune function and contribute to long-term neurological effects due to nicotine's impact on brain development. Secondhand aerosol from vapes is also dangerous. Unlike secondhand smoke from cigarettes, e-cigarette aerosol contains ultrafine particles, nicotine, and toxic chemicals that can be inhaled by bystanders. Exposure to secondhand aerosol has been linked to respiratory irritation, increased risk of asthma attacks, and potential cardiovascular effects.

Background music

To avoid copyright issues or infringement, use background music from the pre-approved list below that includes two types of royalty-free music. You may also create your own background music.

Types of royalty-free music:

- **CC0 – Public Domain Dedication/No Rights Reserved:** The artist waived all their rights to their music, and you may modify and use the music as you wish without giving credit.
- **CC BY – Attribution Licensed:** You may modify and use the music for your video as long as you give credit to the creator somewhere in the video.

Royalty-free background music

These are just a few places to find royalty-free background music.

- [Legal Music for Videos | Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos/) (<https://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos/>)
- [Background Music Free Download | Chosic](https://www.chosic.com/free-music/all/) (<https://www.chosic.com/free-music/all/>)
- [Free Music Archive | Tribe of Noise](https://freemusicarchive.org/home) (<https://freemusicarchive.org/home>)
- [Royalty Free Music Downloads | Pixabay](https://pixabay.com/music/) (<https://pixabay.com/music/>)
- [FreePD | Free Public Domain](https://freepd.com/) (<https://freepd.com/>)

Video file format

You may use any device or method to create your video, but all videos must be submitted as an MP4 file and be no larger than 100 MB in size.

Checking your video format

- **On Android devices:** Navigate to the video, select the three dots for more options, and then Details to see the meta data like date created, video format, and size.
- **On Apple devices:** Your video is most likely a MOV file unless you have already changed this setting. To change the recording format on an Apple device, navigate to Settings > Camera > Format and switch from high efficiency to most compatible.

Converting your video format

If you are having issues recording your video in an MP4 format, you might convert your video using free editing software like:

- Cloudconvert.com
- Adobe Express
- Movavi.com
- Kapwing.com

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Ready to submit your video? Use the checklist below to help make sure you submit a qualifying video.

- ☐ My video is no longer than 30 seconds.
- ☐ My video has a call to action.
- ☐ My video includes at least one key fact from page 5.
- ☐ The music in my video was created by me or my teammates or is from the pre-approved list on page 8.
- ☐ My video does not show real vapes or images of vapes.
- ☐ My video does not mention or show official brand names.
- ☐ My video does not show people other than myself or the members of my group (e.g. no siblings, parents or teachers, students from other groups).
- ☐ Permission Forms for me and my group members have been submitted by our parents or guardians.
- ☐ One Video Submission Form has been submitted for me and my group.

If you have any trouble uploading your video, email mnescapethevape@gmail.com.

