



THE 18th ANNUAL (2025-2026)

RUBBER BAND CONTEST FOR YOUNG INVENTORS

Are you ready to learn about the exciting world of polymers, and stretch your imaginations? Then let's get hands-on with a polymer that has some truly unique and amazing properties!

It's time for the 18th annual Rubber Band Contest for Young Inventors, hosted by the Akron Global Polymer Academy—an outreach division of the School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering at The University of Akron! This contest challenges students in grades 5-8 to design and create a working invention/artwork that incorporates at least 1 rubber band. Students can compete in one of two separate divisions: 1) Arts & Leisure; or 2) Science & Engineering.

This year, the first-place winner in each division will receive \$150.00, while the runner-up in each division will receive \$100.00. The four remaining finalists in each division—who are not a first-place winner or runner-up—will receive \$50.00. The top ten schools with the most student entries will each receive an equal cash prize shared from a prize pool of \$500*.

- The prize pool will be divided equally by the total number of schools in the top ten including any schools that are tied for spots in the top ten. In-eligible/disqualified entries do not count towards school awards, and a minimum of 2 student entries are required to qualify for the school awards.

All entries must be postmarked by February 20, 2026.

OFFICIAL RULES – 18th ANNUAL CONTEST

ELIGIBILITY:

- This competition is open to full-time students who are in grades 5-8 for the 2025-2026 school year. These students must attend an accredited public or private school, charter school, or home school located in one of the fifty United States or the District of Columbia. Employees and their immediate family members and/or those living in the same household of the Akron Global Polymer Academy and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are not eligible.

CONTEST PERIOD:

- The contest period begins **8:00 AM Eastern Standard Time ("EST") on Fri., October 24, 2025.**
- The contest period ends **on February 20, 2026.** All entries must be **mailed** to The Akron Global Polymer Academy and **postmarked by this end date.** Entries postmarked after the above deadline will be subject to disqualification. Make sure to have your entry postmarked.

CONTEST DESCRIPTION:

- **The challenge:** to design and create a working invention/artwork that incorporates at least 1 rubber band. Entrants choose to compete in one of two divisions: 1) Arts & Leisure Division; or 2) Science & Engineering Division. All inventions/artworks must be original. Each entry must be submitted by one student working alone, with the sponsorship of parent(s) and/or a teacher/mentor. **Group inventions will not be accepted.** A student may only submit 1 entry.

HOW TO ENTER:

To enter the contest, submit **ALL of the following required materials** by mail to the Akron Global Polymer Academy ensuring that it is postmarked no later than Friday, February 20, 2026. **Failure to include any required item will result in the entry being subject to disqualification.**

- **Official Entry Form (required):** Submit a neatly completed Official Entry Form. It must be signed by the inventor/artist and his/her parent or guardian. The signatures on this form attest to the originality of the entry and verify that the invention/artwork submitted meets the rules of the competition. **Entry forms lacking the required signatures and/or left incomplete (including the General Release and Promotional/Publicity Release Form) will be disqualified.**
- **Essay (required):** Submit a written description of the invention/artwork. This description should be neatly written in black or blue ink or typed. In your essay, you should give the name of your invention/artwork and **include the following four paragraphs: (remember this is a key part of communicating your ideas to the judges)**
 - **Paragraph 1:** What is your invention/artwork and what is its main purpose?
 - **Paragraph 2:** How does your invention work? Or describe your artwork (style, meaning, etc.)
 - **Paragraph 3:** How does your invention/artwork use rubber bands?
 - **Paragraph 4:** Explain how you think people can benefit from your invention/artwork.
- **Photograph (required):** Submit at least 1 clear **print quality** photograph of your invention/artwork that show(s) it in full view. **Clarity is important for judging. Multiple views and/or something in the photo to show its scale can help the judges get a better understanding of your entry.**
- **Select 1 and only 1 Division to compete in (required):** Indicate on your entry form whether your invention/artwork is to be judged in the Arts & Leisure Division **OR** the Science & Engineering Division.
- **Sketch of Invention (optional):** You may choose to submit 1 drawing/blueprint of your concept.

- **Mail Your Entry Materials:** Send all entry materials including required Official Entry Form, Essay, and Photo(s) to:

MAIL TO:
Jason Miller
The University of Akron
Auburn Science and Engineering Center
Room 228
Akron, Ohio 44325-3901

DO NOT SEND YOUR ACTUAL INVENTION/ARTWORK!

- **Entry Deadline:** All entries must be **mailed** to The Akron Global Polymer Academy and **postmarked** by **Friday, February 20, 2026**. Entries postmarked after this deadline will be disqualified.

FINALISTS:

- **Contestants who are selected as finalists must have a parent/guardian help them create and submit a Finalist Video no later than Monday, May 11, 2026.**
 - A finalist whose Finalist Video (and all accompanying requested information) is not received by this date will be subject to disqualification.
 - **Finalists will receive a Finalist Video submission guide and parental consent and release form, which will need to be signed and returned.**

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT THE CONTEST:

- **NO ELECTRONIC ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED – You must mail the original signed paper forms.**
- **WE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTING ANY ENTRY VIDEOS during the entry phase of the contest. Please do not send any form of video with your entry. We will not be able to watch it.**
- Original inventions/artworks must incorporate the use of at least 1 rubber band.
- Permission to Duplicate. Students, teachers, and parents are welcome to duplicate any part of this competition information (including the Official Entry Form). All entries must be accompanied by a copy of the Official Entry Form for this year's contest.
- **NOTE:** All materials submitted as a part of the contest including but not limited to: the contest entry form/materials (consisting of entry form, essay, sketch, photo(s), and post-contest publicity materials (including additional photos and finalist videos submitted by contestants and their parent/guardians) will become the permanent property of the Akron Global Polymer Academy and will not be returned to the contestants.

JUDGING:

- Each individual contestant is limited to one entry. **No Group Entries will be accepted.**
- The decisions of the judges are final and binding in all matters.
- **Round 1:** Each entry will go through an initial screening process to determine whether it meets all required entry criteria. The Akron Global Polymer Academy will score each qualifying entry according to the following general areas of consideration:
 - **Creativity/Originality** (25%)
 - **Effectiveness/Usefulness** (25%)
 - **Design/Execution** (25%)
 - **Essay** (10%)
 - **Integration of Rubber Band(s)** (15%)
- The entrants will be ranked in order according to their round 1 score (from highest to lowest). **The six highest scoring entries in each division will be deemed finalists in their respective divisions** and will move on to the second round of judging. In the event of any ties, the entrants' "Integration of Rubber Band(s)" scores will be used to determine a tiebreaker. If contestants remain tied, The Akron Global Polymer Academy will determine a tie-break winner.
 - **Finalists will be notified of their selection on or about Friday, April 10, 2026.**
 - **Contestants who are selected as finalists must have a parent/guardian help them create and submit a Finalist Video no later than Monday, May 11, 2026.**
 - A finalist whose Finalist Video (and all accompanying requested information) is not received by this date will be subject to disqualification.
 - **Finalists will receive a Finalist Video submission guide and parental consent and release form, which will need to be signed and returned.**
- **Round 2:** Each finalist will go through an initial screening process to determine whether they have met the Finalist Video guidelines and submitted all requested information, including a signed parental consent and release form. A panel of judges (made up of scientists, artists, and educators) will score each qualifying Finalist Video according to the following general areas of consideration:
 - **Creativity (of video and invention/artwork)** (25%)
 - **Effectiveness/Usefulness (of the invention/artwork)** (25%)
 - **Communication/Persuasiveness** (25%)
 - **Presentation (overall presentation of video and invention/artwork)** (10%)
 - **Integration of Rubber Band(s)** (15%)
- Judges' score cards will be tallied, and finalists will be ranked in order according to their

total overall round 2 score (from highest to lowest). The highest scoring finalist in each division will be deemed the first-place winner of their respective division. The next highest scoring finalist in each division will be deemed the runner-up of their respective division. In the event of any ties, the entrants' "Integration of Rubber Band(s)" scores will be used to determine a tie-breaker. If contestants remain tied, the judges will convene and determine a tie-break winner.

- **First Place Winners and Runners-up will be notified of their selection on or about Thursday, May 28, 2026.**
- The final results will also be announced on or about Thursday, May 28, 2026 on the Rubber Band Contest website: rubberbandcontest.org.

PRIZES:

- **2 Grand Prizes** – Each division winner will receive the following:
 - \$150.00
 - An engraved first-place contest award & contest t-shirt
- **2 Runner-Up Prizes** – Each division runner-up will receive the following:
 - \$100.00
 - An engraved runner-up contest award & contest t-shirt
- **8 Finalist Prizes** – Each division finalist who was not selected as a winner or runner-up will receive the following:
 - \$50.00
 - A contest finalist award ribbon & contest t-shirt

ADDITIONAL PRIZE DETAILS:

- All federal, state and local taxes are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. All federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply.
- **In order to claim a cash prize, finalists will be required to have their parents/guardians submit other necessary information to The University of Akron (for tax filing purposes at UA). Failure to provide all required information will result in forfeiture of cash award portion of the prize package.**
- Failure to follow all contest rules and/or failure to meet all contest deadlines will result in disqualification and forfeiture of all prizes.

RESTRICTIONS, RIGHTS, AND RELEASE:

Note: The *Contest Host* is the Akron Global Polymer Academy of the University of Akron.

- The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are not responsible for any injuries or damages to participants in this competition.
- The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are not responsible for events beyond their

control, including, without limitation, acts of God, war, strikes or government restrictions, or any other circumstance of force majeure, nor, in the absence of their own negligence for personal injury, accidents, death, property damage or loss, delay caused by person not controlled by the Contest Host or any and all Contest Sponsor(s). All contestants and their parents and/or guardians shall agree to be bound by all rules and regulations specified by the Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s). Further, such contestants and their parents and/or guardians shall be bound by all the terms and conditions set forth in all documents relating to the Rubber Band Contest for Young Inventors (including without limitation, the **GENERAL RELEASE AND PROMOTIONAL/PUBLICITY RELEASE FOR MINOR CHILD**).

- The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) reserve the right to amend any portion of the contest, including contest guidelines, dates, publicity and prize packages.
- The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are granted permission, upon a student's entry into the competition, to use (in their sole discretion) the contestant's name, photograph, likeness, and all entry materials and post-contest materials submitted by the contestants (including the invention/artwork and the child's name/likeness), for publicity purposes. The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are granted permission, upon entry into the competition, to use (in their sole discretion) the contestant's name, photograph, likeness, and all post-contest entrant submitted materials including any entrant submitted videos (including the "Finalist Video" and post-contest contestant submitted photo(s)), for publicity purposes.
- Acceptance of the prizes constitutes permission to the Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) to use the prize winner's name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising and promotion and trade without further compensation unless prohibited by law. By accepting the prize awards, prize winners agree to hold harmless the Akron Global Polymer Academy and any and all Contest Sponsor(s), their respective officers, directors, agents, employees, attorneys, shareholders, partners, controlling persons, predecessors, subsidiaries, affiliates, parent corporations, insurers, successors, and assign against any and all claims and liability arising out of their participation in this contest or the use of the prizes. Prize winners assume all liability for any injury or damage caused or claimed to be caused, by the participation in this contest or use or redemption of any prize. By participating in this contest, contestants agree to be bound by the Official Rules and the decision of the judges.
- The Contest Host and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) are not responsible for: lost, late, mutilated or illegible entries nor for mail or shipment errors or delays resulting in omission, defect, delay, theft or destruction or unauthorized access to or alterations of entry materials, or for technical limitations of any kind, or inaccurate transmissions of or failure to receive entry information by the Akron Global Polymer Academy or any and all Contest Sponsor(s) on account of technical problems, or shipment problems or errors. This is applicable to all shipments related to the Rubber Band Contest for Young Inventors.

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES:

These general safety guidelines are for your general knowledge and are not a substitute for professional advice or common sense. Be sure to thoroughly research the proper safety requirements prior to constructing and testing your invention/artwork.

- The Akron Global Polymer Academy and any and all Contest Sponsor(s) **strongly** encourage the observation of all safety guidelines and precautions when building the invention/artwork.

- Parents, teachers and any adult mentors or advisors should stress the importance of wearing eye-protection (i.e. goggles) when working with tools. Students must operate all tools with the guidance of parent, teacher, or other adults.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Website: <https://rubberbandcontest.org>
- Email: rbcontest@uakron.edu
- Mailing Address:

MAIL TO:
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Akron, Ohio 44325-3901