

Finding Joy

Joy is not a single feeling but a way of noticing. It can flicker through small routines, through laughter shared with a friend, or through the quiet satisfaction of doing something well. Though it may not always be easy to hold onto, joy has a way of reminding us of what it feels like to be fully alive and present in the world.

Prompt

Write a personal essay (300–500 words) exploring the theme of joy as it appears in your own life or observations. Your piece may take the form of a personal narrative, creative nonfiction, or memoir, and it should move beyond description to reflection. Consider what joy means to you, where it comes from, and what it reveals about how you live.

As you write, you might ask yourself:

- When have you encountered joy unexpectedly—or struggled to find it?
- What moments or people have helped you understand the nature of joy?
- Can joy coexist with pain, doubt, or change?
- What does it mean to *choose* joy, rather than simply feel it?

Guidelines

Your essay should balance storytelling with insight. Use concrete detail and sensory language to draw the reader into your experience, then step back to consider what that experience means. Avoid turning your essay into a speech or argument; instead, let your thoughts unfold naturally, showing how one moment or idea leads to another.

This contest values voice, tone, and imagery. A winning essay will feel personal and anchored in lived experience, yet open to larger truths about what it means to be human.