

OTM Writing Tips

- 1) **RESEARCH!** – Later in this packet we will talk about a very good resource, the National OTM Online Database, and how to search it. Use this to search for past winning OTMs on the category you are submitting for and read them to see how they are written. This will help you get a great insight to what can make this a competitive OTM.
- 2) **TYPE! TYPE!** – For OTM nominations, general OTMs have a **MAXIMUM** word limit of 600 words. For program OTMs you have a max word limit of 400 for the description, and 200 for the goals, effects, evaluations, and adaptations. **USE THESE WORD LIMITS WISELY AND TO YOUR BENEFIT.** Just make sure **NOT** to go over these maximums or your OTM will be automatically thrown out.
- 3) **Do Not Try To Treat It Like A English Paper!** – Don't make it harder than it is! This is not an English paper where everything has to be absolutely perfect! Just make sure in general it flows well and overall it sounds good, makes sense, and is **GENERALLY** free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- 4) **Use A Word Processor First!** – Before you put it in the form, type it in a word processor program such as Microsoft Word to check things such as word count and spelling and grammar. Then copy and paste it into your nomination form.
- 5) **Check Grammar and Spelling!!!!** – Here's where the word processor comes in handy. Again it doesn't have to be perfect, but make sure the grammar flows well and it is mostly free of spelling errors.
- 6) **Content** – Make sure that the content is **MONTH SPECIFIC!** You cannot talk about something that someone did in April for a September OTM!! You can mention it, but be careful how you use it. It cannot be a main point in your nomination. In essence, the best thing is to try to avoid it if at all possible!
Also, with content, make sure that it is **CATEGORY ORIENTED.** Make sure that the nomination you are writing is specifically geared toward the category you are nominating for. Use the OTM Guide attached to this packet to check for this.
- 7) **PROOFREAD!!!** – The word processor will not catch everything, so make sure to proofread your nomination once or twice before you submit it to check for all these things!

Using Your Resources

There are plenty of resources you can use to help with your OTMs! One is the OTM Criteria & Guide at the end of this packet. The other is the famous NRHH National OTM Database!

You can access the National OTM Database by going to <http://otms.nrhh.org>. Here you can search for past OTMs submitted and see at which levels the OTMs won at (states/sub-regions are not included in this).

You can search the database by either one of two ways.

1) A basic search for all OTMs for a specific month and year.

2) An advanced search to narrow your search more.

For the advanced search you have the options of searching by region, school, category, award level, month and year, and specific nomination, or any combination of those. You can also set the order by which they show.

Say for example we wanted to search for Social Program OTMs submitted by University of Missouri-Rolla that won a regional award, ordered by year and month.