



# ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

## 2026 ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON STUDENT COMPOSITION/ARRANGING CONTEST

In the spirit of creativity and honoring our jazz legacy, we seek to encourage young musicians to compose and arrange by offering the *Essentially Ellington* Student Composition/Arranging Contest. Each submission will be critiqued by composer, arranger, and saxophonist, Ted Nash, and the winning selection will be announced along with the *Essentially Ellington* Competition & Festival finalist bands on the *EE* web page on Wednesday, January 28, 2026.

The winner will have their composition recorded by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO) at their annual *Essentially Ellington* recording session. In addition, the winning composer will receive a \$1,000 cash prize, a composition lesson with Ted Nash, and a trip to New York City to observe the JLCO recording session and the *Essentially Ellington* Competition & Festival, April 30-May 2, 2026.

In writing their piece, students are to keep in mind the example of excellence set by Duke Ellington.

Submissions must:

- Be **under 5 minutes** in length.
- Include a recording, which must be submitted electronically. While we encourage the submission of live recordings, we understand that this may not be possible for all of our applicants; therefore, midi files will be accepted. All submissions will be judged on their compositional merits, regardless of performance and recording quality.
- Include a full score, also to be submitted electronically via PDF. Please note that sketches will not be accepted. While various file types are accepted, Finale documents are preferred.
- Be scored for the instrumentation of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra: 2 alto saxes, 2 tenor saxes, bari sax, 3 trombones (or 2 trombones and bass trombone), 4 trumpets, piano, bass, guitar/banjo and drums. The following are acceptable doublings for each member of the reed section: alto 1 – soprano sax, piccolo, flute, clarinet; alto 2 – soprano sax, piccolo, flute, clarinet; tenor 1 – soprano sax, flute, clarinet, Eb clarinet, bass clarinet; tenor 2 – soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet; bari sax – soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet. Note: alto flute may be added as a double to alto 1 & 2, and tenor 1.

In order to qualify you must be a high school student between the ages of 13–19 in the United States, Canada, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. Submissions are limited to one per student and must be submitted by **11:59PM EST on January 7, 2026** in order to be considered. Previous winners are not eligible for resubmission. Submit your application via [Accept'd](#). For more information, please contact us at [ee@jazz.org](mailto:ee@jazz.org).

*This Contest is made possible through a generous gift from Dr. J. Douglas White and the King-White Family Foundation.*