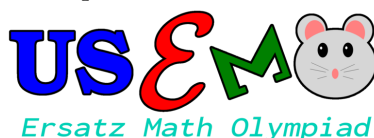


USEMO Rules and Procedures

United States Ersatz Math Olympiad

Last updated 28 October 2025



§I General

- The homepage for the USEMO is web.evanchen.cc/usemo.html.
- The registration and submission are hosted through a portal on the Art of Problem Solving website, available at aops.com/contests/usemo.
- The main contact is usemo@evanchen.cc and all inquiries should be directed there.

§II Eligibility and registration

1. In order to be eligible, you must satisfy the following conditions:
 - a. You must be enrolled in middle/high school or other **K-12 school** and not have graduated high school.
 - b. You need to be at most 20 years of age on the second day of the exam.
 - c. You cannot be a Top Scorer (i.e. top three scores) of a previous instance of USEMO (see item 18 for more details).

Although the timing of the contest is targeted for North America time zones, you do *not* need to go to school in the USA or be a citizen of USA to participate. Just note that you still have to take the contest at the same time as everyone else.

2. Registration is done through Art of Problem Solving at aops.com/contests/usemo. You need to register in advance by the deadline stated on the webpage.
The portal will acknowledge a successful registration and **assign you an ID number**.

§III Format and content

3. Each day of the exam is **4.5 hours**, and carries three problems worth 7 points. You are expected to write **complete proofs** for each problem.
4. There are **two days**; you can participate in either or both. The time of the exam is fixed (and the same everywhere), and announced on the website ahead of time.

5. The difficulty of the exam is intended to be similar to the International Math Olympiad. The easier questions would follow the IMO syllabus. On the other hand, more difficult questions could be more technical. For example, knowledge of results like inversion, quadratic reciprocity, or Turán's Theorem could be expected for some of the hardest problems.
6. The USEMO is an individual contest (collaboration is not permitted).
7. **The only aids allowed are writing utensils (pencils, pens, and eraser, including colored pencils and pens), ruler, compass, and paper.** In particular, protractors, calculators, electronic devices of any kind, textbooks, notes, music players, magic crystal balls, etc. are NOT permitted.

As a corollary, **solutions must be handwritten (not typeset)**. If you have some physical handicap that makes handwriting impossible, please contact the directors for an exception.

§IV Taking and submitting (the most important part!)

8. The problems will become available at 12:30pm ET at aops.com/contests/usemo. You should print the problems and then work until time expires (5:00pm ET).
9. For each problem, you should submit one or more pages consisting of a proof (or attempt at a proof) at the problem.
 - a. You should submit only pages that you wish to have graded.
 - b. The submission should be written in English sentences and read as natural proofs following usual mathematical conventions. Avoid submitting equations with no accompanying explanation, two-column proofs, etc., and write clearly. The graders may deduct points for sufficiently poorly written explanations.
 - c. Passages which should not be graded must be crossed or struck out. This can increase your score as graders may deduct points for false statements.
 - d. Leave a 1-inch margin on all pages.
 - e. Separate problems should be on separate pages.
 - f. There is a suggested limit of 15 pages per problem. (We expect that most solutions will not be anywhere near this limit.) Solutions exceeding this page limit will still be accepted, but they may not be read in entirety.
10. At the end of the exam, you should **label the top of every page you wish to submit as follows:**

ID A . Page X of Y of Problem N .

Here A is your ID, and $1 \leq X \leq Y$ are integers, and $N \in \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$. The page counter should reset per problem.

A **template is provided on the USEMO webpage** which you are welcome to use, but do not have to; writing this heading on unmarked paper is okay too. (If you use the template, you should print several out ahead of time.)

Do not write your name or other identifying information.

11. Immediately after the exam ends, you should scan your work and produce **one PDF file for each problem**. Then, upload the files to aops.com/contests/usemo.

Try to compress the PDF to ensure the file is at most 10MB; larger files could cause technical issues.

12. In addition to the 4.5 hours for the exam, you are given a **one-hour grace period for printing the exams and uploading your work**. In other words, the website will accept submissions up until **6:00pm ET**.

Students are encouraged to **practice scanning before the contest** to avoid issues on the day-of. Many smartphones support this. On Android, the Google Drive App has a scanning feature. For an Apple device, the Notes App can scan as well. Other options include “Tiny Scanner” on iPhone or “Cam Scanner”.

§V Aftermath

13. Discussion of the exam with others is permitted after 7:00pm ET on the day of each exam, two hours after the end of the exam.
14. When the initial scoring is complete, your **score will be displayed** along with your submission at aops.com/contests/usemo, together with **comments and feedback**, if any, from the graders. The rubric for each problem will also be posted.
15. You may appeal your score on any problem by emailing the USEMO directors within 48 hours of receiving your score. In your appeal, you should state what score you think you deserve and an explanation of why.
 - a. Disagreement with the rubric is not a valid reason to appeal.
 - b. Any problem may be appealed at most once. After this, the score can be adjusted (either up or down) and that decision cannot be further appealed.
 - c. In some cases, the graders may request additional clarification in response to the appeal. If this occurs, it is the contestant’s responsibility to reply within 24 hours, otherwise the appeal may be discarded.
 - d. Unsurprisingly, the graders have final discretion in all cases.

§VI Prizes

16. We award prizes for each of the following:
 - a. **Top Scorers** (x3): The three highest scores.
 - b. **Youth Prize**: The highest score in 10th grade or below not already recognized.
 - c. **Top Female**: The highest female score not already recognized.
 - d. **Highest Day 1**: The highest score on the first day not already recognized.
 - e. **Highest Day 2**: The highest score on the second day not already recognized.

Ties are broken either by elegance and clarity of solutions (as determined subjectively by the graders), or by a random-number generator if there is not judged to be a substantial difference. In either case, all eligible students with a tied score are acknowledged, but only one earns a monetary prize (as in item 17). This procedure always generates seven distinct students, without repetition.

17. In year Y , each of the seven students in the previous category earns:
 - a. A gift card or check of $\frac{Y}{100}$ USD, and

- b. Optionally, a donation of up to $\frac{Y}{100}$ USD to a charity or nonprofit organization of their choice. I try to make the donation in the name of the student when possible, but not all donation websites seem to support this.

You must be able to reasonably accept payments from a US-based source in order to claim a prize. In the past we typically send prizes via Amazon gift cards or Paypal. It's also not uncommon for winners to donate their prize to the same charity (thus doubling the donation amount to $\frac{Y}{50}$).

18. Top Scorers (i.e. the top three scores of each year) become ineligible for competing in future years. (However, they become eligible for submitting problem proposals.) This helps ensure a rotation of winners.
19. On the webpage, we will also recognize
 - a. An **Honorable Mention** to the next approximately 5-7 highest scores after the Top Scorers. (The exact number is subject to change each year.)
 - b. A **Distinction** for any student who earns at least 14 points or in the top 25, whichever is more inclusive.
 - c. In some years the graders may also award a **Brilliance Award**, for an unusually elegant solution.

§A Mathematical conventions

The USEMO will use the following conventions and terminology in problems and solutions documents.

- A.1. Problems on the USEMO always require a full proof even when asking for a quantity, regardless of which imperative words are used. For example, “what is x ?”, “find x ”, and “determine, with proof, all possible values of x ” all have the same meaning.
- A.2. The sets \mathbb{Z} , \mathbb{R} , \mathbb{Q} , \mathbb{C} have their usual meanings.
- A.3. We let $\mathbb{N} = \mathbb{Z}_{>0} = \{1, 2, \dots\}$ denotes the set of *positive* integers (i.e. 0 is not a natural number). We use the notation $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$ for nonnegative integers.
- A.4. The graph-theoretic terms “graph”, “vertex”, “edge”, “connected”, “degree”, “directed graph”, and “tournament” will be used freely (rather than referring to cities and airlines, etc.).
- A.5. Graphs are *simple graphs* unless otherwise specified, meaning that every edge has two distinct endpoints, and every pair of vertices has at most one edge.
- A.6. The functions $\lfloor \bullet \rfloor$ and $\lceil \bullet \rceil$ denote the floor and ceiling functions.
- A.7. We say 0 divides itself, but not any other integer.
- A.8. Polygons are assumed to be non-self-intersecting unless stated otherwise.
- A.9. A lattice point is a point all of whose coordinates are integers.
- A.10. If D is a positive integer, and a and b are rational numbers whose denominators (in simplest form) are relatively prime to D , then $a \equiv b \pmod{D}$ means that the numerator of $b - a$ is divisible by D when written in simplest form.
- A.11. An empty sum is equal to 0, while an empty product is equal to 1.
- A.12. We accept the Axiom of Choice.