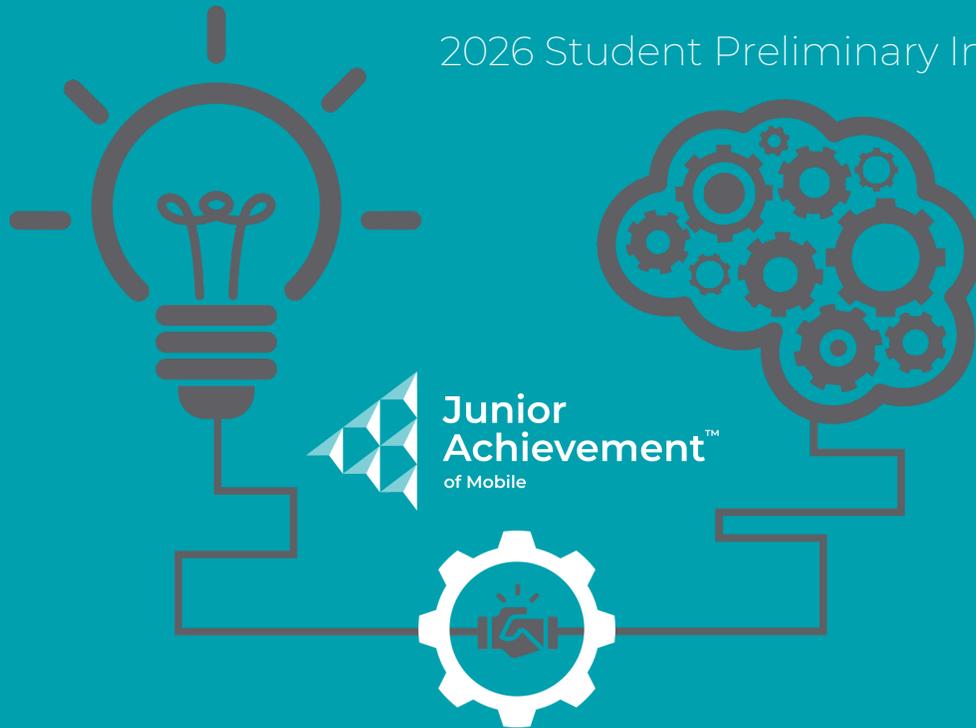


the best way to envision your future is to create it

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT Business Plan Challenge

2026 Student Preliminary Instructions



The JA Business Plan Challenge is an opportunity that allows young people to demonstrate their understanding of business fundamentals, the importance of creative marketing to a target audience, and the power of persuading potential investors during a live pitch. As part of the preparation to compete in the challenge, students are provided the JA Be Entrepreneurial programs. Over the course of these JA in-class programs, students participate in mini-workshops, led by mentors from the business community, and work to develop solutions/businesses they will ultimately pitch to a panel of judges.

When:

Friday, May 1, 2026

Who:

High School Students

Where:

Regions Bank, RSA Tower
Downtown Mobile

\$1,850

IN AWARDS

JA Business Plan Challenge Overview

During the JA Be Entrepreneurial classroom programs, students create professional business plans that showcase an innovative idea for a product or service. The Business Plan Challenge was created as a culminating experience to offer young entrepreneurs additional feedback and guidance as they develop their businesses.

Through participation in the JA Be Entrepreneurial program, students receive advice from their teachers and business volunteers who help them perfect their pitch. Ultimately, students from participating schools compete before a panel of mock venture capitalists—top business professionals and entrepreneurs in the metro Mobile area and educators from local universities.

The phenomenal student teams that compete present their business plans in three ways: **1. PowerPoint Presentation, 2. Pitch Video Presentation, and 3. Commercial Video Presentation.** The judges rate each team on creativity, innovation, presentation skills, and overall merit. At the conclusion of the competition, the top teams take home educational awards, but all participants enjoy a worthwhile, real-world learning experience.

AWARDS:

The following Young Business Leader Awards* will be awarded:

1st - \$1,000

2nd - \$500

3rd - \$250

Finalist - \$100

*For student companies that have multiple students, the award will be split evenly among the company owners.



2026 KEY DATES

Friday, March 27

PowerPoint/Investor
Pitch Video Due

Tuesday, March 31

Finalists Announced

Thursday, April 9

Advertisement Video &
Final PowerPoint Due

Friday, May 1

Business Plan Challenge Finals
Regions Bank, RSA Tower,
Downtown Mobile

GETTING STARTED...

The Business Plan Challenge has 2 rounds, the Preliminary (step 1) and the Final (steps 2 & 3). Students may participate individually or as a team*. For the Preliminary Round, the students will submit a 60-second Pitch video and a PowerPoint Presentation using the PowerPoint template that is provided. **Note: The award amount will be divided evenly among the student team members.*

Step 1 - Submit Student PowerPoint, Pitch Video & Permission Form to JA

The PowerPoint presentation, 60-second Pitch Video, and permission form (page 9) must be submitted to JA by **4 PM on Friday, March 27, 2026**. Students will submit their pieces before the deadline and the teacher will organize each student's submission into a Google Drive folder labeled with the student's name and school (ex: Ashley Horn - ABC High School). The teacher will then send their school's submissions by the deadline to Ashley Horn via Google Drive at ashley.horn@ja.org. Please set privacy to "anyone with a link can view".

Student Finalists will be announced through teachers on **Tuesday, March 31, 2026**. Once finalists have been chosen, students will receive a finalist packet that will contain instructions to help them prepare for the day of the competition.

SO, WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU'RE SELECTED AS A FINALIST?

If you are selected, that means you represent the best of the best! That's a major accomplishment! So, the next step would be to create a video advertisement for your product or service and update your PowerPoint.

The following are three aspects to the Final Round:

- 60-second Commercial/Video Advertisement Competition
- PowerPoint Presentation (with any corrections you make from suggestions during prelims)
- Panel Discussion at Competition

Step 2 - Submit Student Video Advertisement & Updated PowerPoint to JA

Teachers will submit finalists' submissions in the same fashion as the prelim round via Google Drive to ashley.horn@ja.org by **10 AM on Monday, April 9, 2026**.

Step 3 - Student Finalists Compete in Business Plan Challenge

The Junior Achievement Business Plan Challenge is scheduled for **Friday, May 1, 2026, 9 AM – 1:30 PM**. This year's event will be at Regions Bank, RSA Tower in downtown Mobile.

PowerPoint Presentation

A PowerPoint Template is provided for you to create your business plan presentation.

- A copy of the PowerPoint Scoring Sheet is included in this guide.
- You may change style elements (color, background, and font).
- Leave the slide label intact (found at the bottom right corner of each slide), but remove all instructional text before adding your information. You may add headings.

Your PowerPoint presentation should have a minimum of 11 slides and a maximum of 13. A description and criteria for each slide is found in the PowerPoint Assessment. Slides should be in the following order:

- 1)Cover Slide
- 2)Introduction Slide
- 3)Entrepreneur Profile Slide
- 4)Product Slide
- 5)Target Market
- 6)Competitive Advantages Slide
- 7)Ethics
- 8)Financials and Price Slide
- 9)Additional Business Element Slide
- 10)Challenges Slide
- 11)Final Impression Slide

Helpful Hints

- Save often when creating and revising your PowerPoint presentation.
- Proofread and spell-check before submitting.

You may add up to two additional slides for graphics or more information. If added, they should be labeled Extra Slide 1 and Extra Slide 2 (at the bottom right corner) for clarity for the judges. Any additional slides beyond these two will be disregarded.

PowerPoint Assessment

Instructions: The judges will score the PowerPoint presentations using the following criteria. Read the criteria for each slide before beginning work on it. Before submitting your presentation, score yourself in the space provided as a final check.

COVER SLIDE: Provide a creative, personalized cover slide.

____/ 5 points

- Include an original name for the business, product, or service.
- Include an original logo.
- Include an original catchphrase.
- The cover slide should be visually appealing, and draw the interest of the audience.

____/ 5 points

INTRODUCTION SLIDE: Provide an overview of the entrepreneurial venture.

- Include the name of the business.
- Briefly preview at least three aspects of the business (product or service, target customer, competitive advantage, strength as an entrepreneur, ethics plan, or other business element.)
- The overview should be interesting or creative.
- Capture the audience's attention and make the viewers want to learn more.

____/ 10 points

ENTREPRENEUR'S PROFILE SLIDE: Promote yourself as a viable entrepreneur.

Describe personal traits that foster success as an entrepreneur.

Explain at least one of the following:

- How the business could make a positive difference.
- How the business is related to something in which you have a special interest or specialized knowledge.

____/ 15 points

PRODUCT SLIDE: Promote the product or service.

Offer a detailed description of the product or service.

- The description should be clear and easy to understand. Include visuals, if necessary, for clarity.
- Offer a reasonable explanation as to why this product would be a viable venture. (For example, does it fill a need or solve a problem? Is it being made available in a new place or in a new manner?)
- The product or service should be legal in the United States for persons 18 years of age and under, and should be based on technology, resources, and information currently available.

____/ 15 points

TARGET MARKET SLIDE: Specify a target market.

- Offer a detailed description of the target customers and why they would want the product.
- Explain at least one of the following:
 1. Which demographics would be interested in the product or service?
 2. Is this a new market for the product or service?
 3. Which specific logical or emotional needs are met by the product or service?
 4. What market research has been conducted and what were the findings?

____/ 10 points

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES SLIDE: Detail specific competitive advantages.

- Describe at least two ways in which the business intends to excel above competitors.
- If no competitive advantages are identified, provide a reasonable defense as to why the venture still should move forward.

____/ 5 points

ETHICS SLIDE: Address the ethics and social responsibilities of the business.

Provide details of at least one of the following aspects:

- Describe guiding principles for the business that will foster ethical decisions.
- Address potential ethical pitfalls associated with similar ventures or industries.
- Describe the social responsibilities the business has to various stakeholders, such as suppliers, employees, customers, and shareholders.

____/ 5 points

FINANCIALS AND PRICE SLIDE: Complete the financial and price data.

Provide reasonable data as outlined in the slide spreadsheet.

- List a starting price and a reasonable rationale for the initial price.

____/ 5 points

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS ELEMENT SLIDE: Highlight one other business element.

- Detail at least one other significant aspect of the business plan that offers additional insight, such as a marketing strategy, product distribution plan, human resources strategy, or management policy.

____/ 5 points

CHALLENGES SLIDE: Describe possible business challenges or obstacles.

- Demonstrate forethought and an ability to realistically assess potential concerns.
- Include potential solutions.
- Avoid overstating the problem and driving the investor away.

____/ 5 points

FINAL IMPRESSION SLIDE: Close with a positive impression.

- Summarize at least three of the business's highlights without introducing any new ideas.
- Conclude with a positive pitch to receive the venture capital.

____/ 10 points

REQUIRED VISUALS:

- Include at least two interesting visuals, not including the required financial spreadsheet. For example, pictures, designs, or charts.
- The visuals must add value to the presentation.

____/ 5 points

CONTENT FORMATTING, TONE, AND CONVENTIONS:

- Remove the instructional text from the slide.
- Use the tone of an entrepreneur making a pitch to a venture capitalist.
- The content should be generally free from writing errors (for example, spelling, capitalization, and grammar).

Total PowerPoint Score ____/100 points

Video Presentations

You are asked to include a one-minute Pitch Video (Preliminary Round) and a one-minute Commercial Video (Final Round) as part of your Business Plan Challenge submission.

- The video should be a one-minute pitch to potential investors to finance your business.
 - Video can be submitted in most formats (CD, wmv, flv, swf, mov, avi, mp4).
 - You can shoot your video with a cell phone camera, a flip cam, built in computer camera, a regular HD camera or a professional camera. The main point is to make an impressive pitch. Just make sure that judges can understand what you are saying or showing. Note: JA staff may provide assistance for participants without video equipment available.
 - Copies of the Video Scoring Sheets are included in this guide.
 - Rehearse your material for content and timing. (*Tip: Consider using cue cards.*)
 - Record in a quiet place.
 - **Don't backlight.** Make sure light is on your face and not behind it — i.e. don't sit in front of a bright window.
 - Preview your final video for sound, lighting, performance, and technical errors. Re-record, as necessary.
-

Pitch Video Assessment

Instructions: The judges will score the Investor Pitch Video presentations using the following criteria:

- Read the criteria before beginning production on the video. Before submitting your presentation, score yourself in the space provided as a final check.
- The objective is to create a one-minute video pitch persuading an investor to finance the business, product, or service outlined in the PowerPoint presentation. The video can be shorter than one-minute but should not exceed 60 seconds. The entrepreneurial venture must be legal in the United States for persons 18 years of age and under. The venture must be based on technology, resources, and information currently available.

Student Assessment: Video Pitch

TIME: The video presentation should not exceed 60 seconds in length.

- Deduct two points for every 5 seconds the presentation is over 60 seconds. _____/ 10 points

BUSINESS CONTENT: The ad should have each of the following elements:

- Name of the business, product, or service. _____/ 5 points
- An original logo or catchphrase. _____/ 5 points
- A clear, positive message about the business, product, or service. _____/ 5 points

INVESTMENT RATIONALE: The ad should target a specific demographic.

- Is it clear who is being pitched in the presentation; for example, a banker in the elevator, a venture capitalist on the street, or friends and family of the entrepreneur at a dinner party? _____/ 10 points
- Does the pitch offer specific reasons and benefits to persuade an investor to finance the venture? _____/ 5 points
- Is the pitch effective in sending its intended message to the specific investor? _____/ 5 points

VISUAL PRESENTATION: The video should be presentable.

- Is the video visually appealing—does it draw the interest of the audience? _____/ 5 points
- Is the video generally free from sound, lighting, technical, and performance errors? _____/ 5 points

Total Investor Video Pitch Score _____/50 points

JA Be Entrepreneurial Business Plan Challenge Permission Form Date: _____

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____

Student's Business Name: _____

Student's Product or Service: _____

Student Email: _____ (please write legibly)

Teacher Name: _____ Teacher Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please read the following information with your parent or guardian and sign below.

By signing below, you and your parent or guardian give the JA staff permission to use your submission, business plans, name, picture, likeness, biographical data, and other information at their discretion to publicize and promote the program in any media and format.

JA USA (Junior Achievement) and *JA Be Entrepreneurial* activities are intended to teach general business principles as an educational experience, and are not intended to give any specific business, financial, legal, or other professional advice. Business ventures are subject to risk. It is the responsibility of the entrepreneur and his or her parent or guardian to make informed decisions through research, professional advice, and by weighing risks and outcomes.

JA Be Entrepreneurial material carries no guarantee or warranty against loss of money, personal injury, or damage to property. All feedback and guidance from the judges or program staff should be viewed as generalized assistance for do-it-yourself business planning. The experts provided were chosen to judge business plans based on specific academic criteria. Inclusion as a judge is not a referral or recommendation for professional services, paid or unpaid. If you (student or parent/guardian) would like additional assistance, it is strongly recommended that you research and consider multiple professionals before selecting professional advice.

You, the participating student, should consult your parent or guardian and professional advisors familiar with your particular factual situation for advice before making any decision or implementing any business plan. It is recommended that your parent/guardian should be present for all exchanges with judges and seek professional advice before acting on any suggestions provided.

Positive scores and comments from participating judges and entrepreneurial experts related to a business plan submission do not constitute an endorsement of or indication of success in the business venture. Business plan submissions are not being reviewed for safety standards or conformity to any laws, including production, distribution, and consumption standards. JA recommends that student entrepreneurs have their products and services evaluated by a professional company for any potential liability issues and conformity to applicable laws.

All federal, state, and local laws apply to the Business Plan Challenge, and parent/guardian permission for further contact and an actual prize award may be required.

Student Name (printed)

Parent Name (printed)

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Parent Contact Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Address: _____