

THE VELOCITY PRIZE

Official Competition Rules

A Minecraft Education Capture the Flag Challenge

1. Competition Overview

The Velocity Prize is a global Minecraft Education competition challenging students to find and retrieve a randomly placed flag as quickly as possible. The competition tests problem-solving skills across multiple approaches, from manual gameplay to advanced coding and AI-assisted solutions.

The competition is open to students aged 13-16 from schools worldwide where Microsoft Minecraft Education licences are held. Velocity Prize winners will be selected based on the fastest verified performance. Students submit screenshots of their 3 fastest timed runs, which are averaged to determine their qualifying time. Submissions also need to include a copy of the students solution (code and/or write up). Top submissions will then be reviewed to confirm the results and ensure the submitted solution can be validated and reproduced, the fastest replicated time wins.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Participant Requirements

The Velocity Prize is organized and sponsored by Microsoft, located at 1 Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052, referred to in these rules as the "Organizer."

The competition may be administered on the Organizer's behalf by Minecraft Education. The Organizer remains responsible for final eligibility, judging, verification, and prize decisions unless these rules expressly state otherwise.

2.2 Geographic Eligibility

The competition is open only to eligible students residing in, and attending an eligible school located in, one of the countries or territories which has a Minecraft Education license through their school or educational organization.

The competition is void in any jurisdiction where it is prohibited or restricted by law. Participation remains subject to all applicable national, regional, local, and school requirements.

A Minecraft Education license or access to the challenge does not, by itself, establish eligibility to enter the competition.

2.3 Participant Requirements

To enter, a participant must:

- Be between 13 and 16 years old on **Oct. 13, 2026**.
- Be enrolled at an eligible school in an eligible country or territory.
- Have access through that school to a valid Minecraft Education license.
- Enter as an individual.
- Have the entry submitted by an eligible educator through the official submission portal.
- Obtain all required parent or guardian consent.
- Comply with these Official Competition Rules.
- Entry must be submitted by the participant's school educator (a Minecraft Education licence holder) through the Velocity Prize submission portal - <https://aka.ms/Velocitiesubmission>
- Participants must enter as individuals. Team entries are not permitted.

Each participant may submit only one entry. An educator may submit separate entries for multiple eligible students, and there is no stated limit on the number of eligible students a school may enter.

2.4 Ineligible Participants

The following individuals are not eligible:

- Employees, officers, directors, contractors, or members of the judging or administration team of the Organizer or any entity materially involved in administering the competition.
- A child, dependent, stepchild, adopted child, or member of the same household of an individual described above.
- Any person whose participation would create an actual or apparent conflict of interest, as determined by the Organizer.
- Any person prohibited from entering or receiving a prize under applicable law.
- A participant who does not attend an eligible school or whose entry is not submitted through that school by an eligible educator.

Any narrower definition of affiliated entities or family relationships required by applicable law should be stated in the final Eligibility List or legal addendum.

3. Entry Process

1. **Take on the challenge** - Students play the Velocity Prize challenge in Minecraft Education and work to find and retrieve the hidden flag as quickly as possible. They can experiment with different approaches, from manual gameplay to coding.
2. **Complete at least three timed runs** - Each student completes three runs of the challenge. Because the flag location is randomized, the three times are averaged to determine the student's qualifying time. Note – the student can play more than three times to continue to improve their time but only their three fastest should be submitted.
3. **Save your evidence** - Capture a screenshot of the completion time for each run. Students using code also need to provide the materials required for their solution, such as their MakeCode project or code files and a description of their approach so judges can recreate the solution in testing.
4. **Submit your entry** - The educator submits the entry on behalf of the student at <https://aka.ms/Velocitiesubmission>
5. **Verification & finalist selection** - Submissions are reviewed to verify the results and ensure solutions follow the competition rules. Students using code must be able to explain and demonstrate their work in a submission write up which will be reviewed as a part of their submission solution.
6. **School submissions** - There is no limit to the number of participants a school may enter or the number of submissions an individual educator can input for their class.
7. **There is no entry fee.**
8. The competition requires a minimum of 100 valid entries globally to proceed. If this threshold is not met, the competition will not take place.

4. Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Competition Opens	October 13, 2026
Qualifying Window Opens	October 14, 2026, 09:00 PST
Qualifying Window Closes	November 25, 2026 18:00 PST
Winner Announced	Within 30 days of qualifying closed Minecraft will contact the winners educator and school.

Competition organizers reserve the right to modify dates with a minimum of 5 days notice, communicated through school contacts.

5. The Challenge

5.1 Objective

Participants must locate, collect, and return a randomly placed flag to a designated location in the shortest possible time. The challenge can be approached in three ways:

Beginning: Manually mine and search the world as a player until you find the flag.

Developing: Use Minecraft Education MakeCode integration to automate the search.

Advanced: Connect VS Code to Minecraft and use coding and AI skills to build a service that finds the flag.

All three approaches compete against each other. The fastest average time wins, regardless of method used. Participants are encouraged to develop their skills to maximise their chances of winning. Microsoft will provide introductory information about possible approaches in a student guide available to all participants - <https://aka.ms/VelocityStudentGuide>.

5.2 Challenge Sequence

1. Participant presses the “hide flag” button.
2. The flag spawns randomly within the designated area and the timer starts.
3. Participant locates the flag (which may be underground).
4. Participant exposes and collects the flag (it goes into inventory).
5. Participant returns to the start position and places the flag at the designated location.
6. The game automatically detects the flag placement and stops the timer.

5.3 World Specifications

- Practice world: Available in the Minecraft Education lesson library for skill development.
- Qualifying world: Released when the qualifying window opens. Is different in terrain and dimensions from the practice world.

The flag is a unique block type that does not appear elsewhere in the landscape. Participants must discover the block type themselves; it will not be disclosed.

5.4 Official Runs and Qualifying Time

Participants may make an unlimited number of attempts during the qualifying window. Only the participant's three fastest valid, completed runs may be submitted.

A valid run begins when the participant activates the "hide flag" button and the in-world timer starts. It ends when the participant places the collected flag in the designated return location and the in-world timer stops.

A run is valid only if:

- It is completed in the official qualifying world during the qualifying window.
- The participant follows all competition rules.
- The world, timer, flag system, and challenge mechanics have not been modified.
- The completion time is recorded by the official in-world timer.
- The participant retains the required evidence of the result.

Incomplete, abandoned, glitched, or failed attempts do not need to be submitted.

5.5 Calculation of Qualifying Time

The participant's qualifying time will be the arithmetic mean of the three submitted completion times.

Each run must be entered exactly as displayed by the official in-world timer. The average will be calculated to the whole second and rounded using a whole second.

The organizers' calculation of the qualifying time will be the official calculation. If the information entered in the submission form differs from the supporting evidence, the time shown in the original supporting evidence will control, subject to verification.

6. Permitted Tools, Coding Assistance, and AI

6.1 Permitted

Participants may complete the challenge manually or use code to automate parts of their search. Subject to the restrictions below, participants may use:

- Manual gameplay, mining, and searching.
- Minecraft Education MakeCode using blocks or Python.
- Visual Studio Code connected to Minecraft Education.
- Programmatic block scanning that searches the challenge area for the flag block type.
- Teleportation commands executed as part of the participant's solution.
- GitHub to maintain a private repository of the participant's code.
- GitHub Copilot for coding assistance, provided its use is disclosed and the participant understands and can explain all AI-assisted code.
- Open-source libraries, APIs, or external services expressly identified as permitted in the Student Guide or approved in writing by the competition organizers.

The use of a permitted tool does not exempt a participant from any other competition requirement. All submitted work must be created and understood by the participant.

Use of GitHub Copilot

GitHub Copilot is the only generative AI coding assistant permitted in the competition.

Participants may use GitHub Copilot to:

- Learn about coding concepts.
- Suggest, complete, explain, or debug code.
- Explore possible approaches to the challenge.

Participants who use GitHub Copilot must:

- Disclose that it was used.
- Describe how it contributed to the solution.
- Provide a brief summary of the prompts or assistance received, if requested.
- Review, test, and understand all AI-assisted code.
- Be able to explain how the final solution works.

Participants may not use GitHub Copilot, or any other person or tool, to produce a solution they do not understand or cannot independently explain.

6.2 Prohibited

The following are prohibited:

- Directly querying, reading, or extracting the flag's coordinates from game data, memory, files, logs, metadata, or another source instead of searching for the flag within the challenge environment.
- Modifying the qualifying world, its behavior packs, resource packs, challenge logic, timer, flag-spawning system, or scoring system.
- Using a generative AI coding assistant other than GitHub Copilot.
- Using an unapproved external service, API, library, add-on, modification, or third-party tool as part of the submitted solution.
- Sharing solution-specific code, project files, prompts, scripts, repositories, or reproducible instructions with another participant before the qualifying window closes.
- Copying or submitting work created by another participant or third party.
- Having an adult or another person create, substantially rewrite, operate, or complete the submitted solution or recorded runs.
- Editing, falsifying, or manipulating screenshots, recordings, completion times, code history, or other submission evidence.
- Attempting to bypass or interfere with the challenge's intended operation or verification process.

Participants may discuss general coding concepts, learning resources, and problem-solving strategies. They may not share materials that another participant could directly use to reproduce their solution.

6.3 Automated review

The organizers may use automated tools to assist with identifying similarities, prohibited techniques, or other issues in submitted materials. Automated findings will not, by themselves, determine the outcome of a review. Final eligibility and disqualification decisions will be made by the adjudication panel after considering the available evidence.

7. Submission Requirements

7.1 Submission Requirements

Each entry must be submitted by an eligible educator on behalf of one student through the official Velocity Prize submission portal before the submission deadline.

A complete entry must include:

- The participant information required by the submission form.

- The completion times from the participant's three fastest valid runs.
- One original, unedited screenshot showing the completion time for each submitted run.
- Identification of the approach and tools used.
- A brief participant-authored description of the solution.
- Any code, project files, repositories, disclosures, consent confirmations, or other materials required for the selected approach.
- The educator certification set out below.

The entry, including all required files, must be fully received by the submission portal before **November 25, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time**. Starting an entry before the deadline does not qualify as timely submission if the complete entry is received after the deadline.

The organizers are not responsible for late, incomplete, corrupted, inaccessible, misdirected, or unsuccessfully uploaded entries, except where the organizers determine that a documented failure of the official submission portal prevented timely submission.

7.1 Run Evidence

Each submitted screenshot must:

- Show the complete, final completion time produced by the in-world timer.
- Be legible and unedited.
- Show sufficient game context to allow the organizers to confirm that it came from the official qualifying world.
- Meet any additional identification requirements stated in the submission form or Student Guide.

Participants and educators must retain the original screenshot files and all supporting solution materials until after the winner is announced.

The organizers may request additional evidence from a potential finalist, including a gameplay recording, demonstration, original project file, repository history, or educator confirmation. Additional evidence may be used for verification but may not be used to change or improve the entry after the submission deadline.

7.2 Requirements by Approach

Manual approach

Participants using a manual approach must submit:

- Three required completion-time screenshots.
- A brief description of how the participant searched for and retrieved the flag.

MakeCode approach

Participants using MakeCode must submit:

- Three required completion-time screenshots.
- The original MakeCode project file or another approved project format.
- All code used in the submitted solution.
- A participant-authored description of the approach.
- A disclosure of any GitHub Copilot assistance, if applicable.

A separate code repository is not required for a MakeCode entry unless requested during verification.

Advanced development approach

Participants using Visual Studio Code or another expressly approved advanced approach must submit:

- Three required completion-time screenshots.
- All source code and supporting files required to review the solution.
- Access to a private GitHub repository containing the submitted solution and available version history.
- A participant-authored description of the approach.
- A list of approved libraries, APIs, services, and tools used.
- A disclosure describing any GitHub Copilot assistance.

Repository access must be provided to the competition reviewers in the manner specified in the submission form and remain available through the winner announcement in December 2026.

7.3 Educator Certification

As part of the submission, the educator must certify:

I confirm that I am submitting this entry on behalf of the named participant and that, to the best of my knowledge:

- The participant meets the eligibility requirements.
- The submitted runs were completed by the participant using the official qualifying world during the qualifying window.
- The submitted evidence is original and has not been altered to misrepresent the participant's results.
- The submitted work is the participant's own, except for permitted and disclosed assistance.

- The participant understands and can explain the submitted solution.
- The school has obtained all participation and data-processing consents required by applicable law and school policy.
- The entry complies with the Official Competition Rules.

Educator certification does not require the educator to independently audit every line of code. The educator must, however, disclose any known concern about the accuracy, authorship, or eligibility of the entry.

8. Verification Process

8.1 Qualifying Verification

All submissions will be reviewed before finalists are announced. Verification may include review of submitted code for prohibited approaches, AI plagiarism analysis, assessment of the written statement describing the approach, and requests for participants to explain or demonstrate their solution.

Participants must be able to clearly explain their code, their debugging process, and how they used any AI tools. Inability to explain submitted work will result in disqualification.

All entries may be reviewed to confirm eligibility, compliance, accuracy, authorship, and reproducibility.

Verification may include:

- Reviewing screenshots, recordings, project files, source code, repository history, written explanations, and tool disclosures.
- Confirming that the official qualifying world and approved tools were used.
- Reviewing code for prohibited methods.
- Asking the participant to explain their approach, code, debugging process, and use of AI.
- Asking the participant to demonstrate or reproduce all or part of the submitted solution.
- Asking the educator or school to confirm how the submitted runs were conducted.

Participants selected for additional verification must respond through their educator or school contact within 5 days. Failure to provide requested verification materials may result in the entry being deemed unverifiable or ineligible.

Minor differences caused by permitted device performance or normal challenge variation will be evaluated by the adjudication panel. The organizers do not guarantee that a randomly generated flag location or completion time can be reproduced exactly.

8.2 Determining the Winner

The winner will be the eligible participant with the fastest verified qualifying time, based on the average of the participant's three submitted valid runs.

Verification is intended to confirm that the submitted results are valid and that the participant's solution complies with the rules. A separate demonstration or verification run will not replace the submitted qualifying time unless the organizers determine that the submitted result is invalid or cannot be adequately verified.

If two or more participants have the same verified qualifying time, the tie will be resolved in the following order:

1. The participant with the fastest single submitted valid run.
2. The participant with the second-fastest submitted valid run.
3. If a tie remains, a final method is determined and documented by the adjudication panel in a fair and impartial manner. This will be calculated by using the student's solution to determine which provides the fastest time more consistently over testing.

9. Prizes

Winner: The Velocity Prize trophy, Minecraft swag, an opportunity to meet with Microsoft mentors.

Winner's School: Trophy recognising the school's achievement.

There are no cash prizes or items of monetary value.

Participants: We will randomly select 3 submissions to send Velocity Swag to so be sure to submit your times even if you believe they may not be the fastest.

10. Code of Conduct

Participants must conduct themselves with integrity and respect throughout the competition. The following will result in immediate disqualification:

- Harassment of other participants, organizers, or any individuals connected with the competition.
- Posting disparaging content about other participants or the competition.
- Abusive behaviour toward organisers or Microsoft staff.
- Any attempt to cheat, manipulate results, or circumvent the rules.
- Sharing code with other participants.
- Submitting work that is not the participant's own.

11. Technical Failures and Restarts

11.1 Permitted Restarts

Participants may restart without penalty if the flag glitches and does not spawn correctly, or if the game crashes during a run.

11.2 User Errors

If a participant accidentally destroys the flag or makes any other user error, they must restart. This counts as a failed attempt and they should continue with their remaining runs.

12. Disputes and Disqualification

12.1 Adjudication Panel

An adjudication panel of three Microsoft employees will review all disputes. If a panel member has a conflict of interest (for example, if a finalist from their former school is involved), a reserve panellist will be invoked.

The adjudication panel is the final arbiter of all disputes. Their decisions are final.

12.2 Raising Complaints

Complaints during qualifying must be raised before submission is closed.

12.3 Disqualification

Disqualified participants will be notified via their school contact as soon as practicable. A simple reason will be provided. There is no right of recourse or appeal against disqualification decisions.

13. Data Protection, Consent, and Publicity

13.1 Information Collected

The organizers may collect and process information including:

- Participant name or code name, confirmation that participant is in qualified age range, school, country or region, and other eligibility information.
- Educator and school contact information.
- Completion times and challenge results.
- Screenshots, project files, source code, repository information, and written descriptions.
- Disclosures concerning tools, APIs, and AI assistance.
- Verification materials, which may include recordings or demonstrations.
- Consent records.
- Prize-fulfillment and winner-publicity information.

The submission form and Privacy Notice will identify which information is required to enter and which information is optional.

13.3 Parent or Guardian Consent

Because participants are minors, the participant's school is responsible for obtaining verifiable consent from a parent or legal guardian where required by applicable law or school policy before submitting the participant's entry.

Participation consent must cover the collection, submission, review, and verification of the participant's entry. A participant may not enter if the required consent has not been obtained.

The organizer may request confirmation or evidence that the appropriate consent was obtained. The educator should not upload the parent or guardian's underlying consent documentation unless the submission process specifically requests it.

13.4 Verification Recordings

The organizers may request a recording or live demonstration from a potential finalist when reasonably necessary to verify the entry.

A recording or demonstration requested solely for verification will not be publicly shared unless separate publicity consent has been obtained. Where practicable, the organizers will provide an alternative verification method if a recording would create an accessibility, privacy, safeguarding, or technical concern.

13.5 Publicity Consent

Publicity consent is separate from consent to participate.

Subject to applicable law and the choices provided in the publicity consent form, the organizer may request permission to use a winner's:

- Name or approved display name.
- School, country, or region.
- Photograph, image, voice, or video.
- Competition result.
- Submitted description, screenshots, or demonstration materials.

Optional photographs, interviews, case studies, videos, and media appearances require separate, explicit permission from the participant's parent or legal guardian.

Declining an optional photograph, interview, video, case study, or media appearance will not invalidate an otherwise eligible entry or verified result. The rules and publicity consent form must separately identify any limited winner information that must be published as a condition of awarding the prize.

13.6 Data Retention and Disposal

Personal information and submitted materials will be retained only for the periods described in the Velocity Prize Privacy Notice and as reasonably necessary to:

- Administer and verify the competition.
- Select and notify winners.
- Resolve eligibility, integrity, or compliance issues.
- Fulfill prizes.
- Maintain records required by law.
- Exercise or defend legal rights.

Different categories of information may have different retention periods.

When the applicable retention period expires, personal information will be deleted, anonymized, or otherwise securely disposed of in accordance with Microsoft retention requirements and applicable law.

13.7 Ownership and Limited Permission to Review Submissions

Participants retain ownership of their original code and other eligible original materials.

By submitting an entry, the participant and their parent or legal guardian grant the organizer a non-exclusive, royalty-free, limited license to access, copy, execute, test, and review the submitted materials solely for competition administration, technical verification, judging, compliance review, and dispute resolution.

Any public use of identifiable participant materials will be governed by the separate publicity-consent provisions above.

14. Accessibility

The following accessibility provisions are available:

- Accessibility tools that are part of Minecraft Education (screen readers, alternative controls) are permitted.
- Alternative submission methods can be arranged for participants for whom standard screenshots or recordings are problematic.

Due to the time-based nature of the competition, extended time allowances cannot be provided.

15. Changes and Cancellation

15.1 Rule Changes

Competition organizers reserve the right to modify these rules, dates, or other competition elements. A minimum of 5 days notice will be provided for any changes, communicated through school contacts.

15.2 Cancellation

The competition requires a minimum of 100 valid entries globally. If this threshold is not met, the competition will not proceed.

The organisers reserve the right to cancel or modify the competition due to unforeseen circumstances.

16. Contact and Communications

All official communications will be sent through school contacts. Participants and parents should direct queries through their school's designated competition contact.

Rules, updates, and resources are available in US English only.

17. Applicable Law and General Conditions

The competition is subject to applicable law and to these Official Competition Rules.

The Organizer reserves the right to reject or disqualify an entry that:

- Does not satisfy the eligibility or submission requirements.
- Contains false, misleading, altered, or incomplete material.
- Uses a prohibited method or tool.
- Cannot be adequately verified.
- Violates applicable law, school policy, platform requirements, or these rules.
- Interferes with the fair or secure operation of the competition.

Where appropriate, the Organizer may request clarification or correction of an obvious administrative omission that does not change the substance, timing, or competitive merit of an entry. The Organizer is not required to permit an entrant to improve or materially modify an entry after the deadline.

To the extent permitted by applicable law, the Organizer is not responsible for technical failures, network interruptions, device incompatibility, lost or corrupted files, or other circumstances outside its reasonable control. Nothing in these rules excludes or limits liability that cannot lawfully be excluded or limited.

17.1 Interpretation

The headings in these rules are provided for convenience and do not affect their interpretation.

If the Student Guide, submission portal, promotional material, or other competition communication conflicts with these Official Competition Rules, these Official Competition Rules will control.

These rules are offered in English only, any translation created subsequently is not an official rule.