

Spelling Bee Rules

1. Officials of the Spelling Bee will include two or three Spelling Marshalls (who will also play the roles of judges) and a Time Keeper/Arbitrator.
2. The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary will serve as the final authority for the spelling and definitions of words used in the competition. If a word has two or more accepted spellings, only the spellings set in boldface type and separated by the word "or" and in some cases the word "also" at the beginning of the descriptive matter, will be accepted as correct. Spellings labeled as archaic, obsolete (abbreviated obs) and regional (like North, Midland, South, Brit(ish), Irish) that are different from those in bold-face type will not be accepted as correct.
3. The Spelling Marshall will make every effort to pronounce the words according to the diacritical markings in the official Spelling Bee dictionary. After pronouncing the word, the Spelling Marshall may clarify the word by using it in a sentence if necessary and also repeat the word. Typically for each grade, the first 2 or 3 rounds will come from the first 50 words in the lists, the next 2 or 3 rounds from the next 50 etc. The Spelling Bee Officials will ultimately decide how many rounds per batch of words will be appropriate. To minimize bias, each word to be assigned to a speller will be determined using a table of random numbers generated for the purpose.
4. Each speller is encouraged to:
 - a. Pronounce the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the student heard the word correctly.
 - b. Say the word again after it is spelled, to indicate spelling is complete.

This "say-spell-say" procedure should be followed to ensure that: (1) the speller understands the correct pronunciation of the word, and (2) the judges know when the spelling is complete and that no more letters will be added. The Spelling Marshall may stop the student if he/she fails to pronounce the word before spelling or if it is pronounced incorrectly. Note: The judges may not disqualify a speller for failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it.

5. For clarification before beginning to spell, the speller may ask the Spelling Marshall to say the word again, define it, or use it in a sentence. Such requests will be granted until the officials agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the speller.
6. A contestant may stop and start over, re-tracing the spelling of a word from the beginning. For contestants of grades 1 - 3, self correction is allowed during re-tracing the spelling of a word i.e after beginning the spelling of the word, he/she may start over and change the order of the letters. In such a case, the final spelling attempt will be the one used in determining the correctness of the word spelled. Although contestants in grades 4-8 will be allowed to re-trace their words, they will not be allowed to self-correct. This means that there can be no change of letters and/or their sequence from those first pronounced. In these grades if letters and/or their sequence are changed in the re-tracing, the speller will be disqualified. For clarity, and to avoid misunderstanding, the student must indicate verbally when he/she is starting over.
7. The student will have 60 seconds in which to spell the assigned word. If the student does not begin spelling after 30 seconds, he/she will be reminded by the Time Keeper to begin spelling. The student will then have 30 seconds from the moment the Time Keeper reminds him/her to begin spelling until he/she must finish spelling the word. The Spelling Marshall will disqualify a student who has not spelled the word by the end of 60 seconds.

8. The competition will be conducted in rounds for each grade with one exception: Where there is only one speller in a particular grade, the Spelling Panel may agree to combine contestants between grades 5 and 8. Each speller will, however, be given words from their respective grade lists. Each speller remaining in the competition at the start of a round will spell one word in that round.
9. When a word is misspelled, the Spelling Marshall will indicate this to the speller, give the correct spelling and then give the next word to the next speller. The student who misspells a word will stand aside (but does not return to his seat) to allow the next student in the waiting area to move up to the microphone. If the case occurs where all spellers in that round have misspelled their words, then a new round will begin and continue until some spellers are disqualified. All spellers eliminated in the same round will be tied for the same place. If only one of the spellers remaining in the competition at the start of a round spells a word correctly during that round, a new round shall begin and the speller shall be given an opportunity to spell the next word on the list. If the speller succeeds in correctly spelling the new word, the speller shall be declared the champion. This process continues until only two spellers remain.
10. At this point, when only two spellers remain, the Spelling Marshall will pause to announce the change in the elimination procedures, which are as follows: If the first speller spells the word correctly, the next word will be given to the second speller. When one contestant misspells a word, the other contestant will be given an opportunity to spell that same word. If the second contestant spells that word correctly, plus the next word on the Spelling Marshall's list, then the second contestant shall be declared the champion. If however the second contestant correctly spells the re-assigned word (the one misspelled by first contestant) but misspells the new word submitted to him/her, then the misspelled new word shall be referred to the first speller. If the first speller succeeds in correcting the error and correctly spells the next word on the Spelling Marshall's list, then he/she will be declared champion. If both spellers misspell the same word, both shall continue in the contest, and the one who first misspelled the word shall be given a new word to spell etc. The competition will continue in this manner until a champion is declared.

There is one exception to the procedures just described. Where spellers in a round are from different grades and either one misspells a word, the word will not be given to the other speller. Instead, each will be given a new word from his/her own grade list. If the first speller misspells a word, the next speller will be given two new words from his/her grade list and the round will continue in the same manner as described before. In these cases, the winner will be the contestant who correctly spells two consecutive words.

11. No talking will be allowed among contestants or between contestants and members of the audience. If a contestant receives assistance from anyone in the audience, he/she will be disqualified. The audience is also requested to remain seated until a break, to avoid confusing or distracting the contestants. Contestants found talking may be disqualified from the Bee.
12. Questions related to the spelling of a word should be referred to any member of the Spelling Panel immediately by going to that person. (It is permissible to approach the panel after notifying the Time Keeper.) If the speller, parent, and/or coach need to make a protest, it needs to be done before the contestant affected would have received his/her next word, if he/she is continuing in the contest. No protest will be entertained after the next word has been given to another speller. When only two spellers remain, a protest must be made immediately; i.e., before the second speller has started to spell the word given him/her, or, if both have misspelled the same word, before the correct spelling is given to the audience.