

2025 Spelling Bee Rules

(Edited version of Scripps 24-25 Rules)

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Eligibility

1. Students enrolled in grades three through five are eligible to participate in the elementary spelling bee.
2. Students enrolled in grades six through eight are eligible to participate in the junior high spelling bee.
3. The speller must represent a school that is part of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists or be enrolled at a school that has been invited to participate by event organizers
4. The speller must dedicate time outside of school to study.

Rules

1. Format

A spelling bee is conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells one word in each round. The speller may request a written format only as specified in the term of Rule 3: Speller Accommodations.

2. Competition list

Spelling bee officials are responsible for selecting the competition lists for use in the spelling bee. The competition lists include words that appear in the current edition of two study resources — the School Spelling Bee Study List and Words of the Champions. All words appearing on the competition list are entries in the Merriam-Webster Unabridged dictionary, available at <https://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>. Merriam-Webster Unabridged is the final authority and sole source for the spelling of words; the primary source used to craft the pronunciations, definitions, and language origins for the competition list; and the only authority to be consulted by spelling bee officials.

3. Speller Accommodations

Spelling bee officials will strive to provide accommodation for spellers who have diagnosed and documented conditions. All requests for spelling bee officials to provide accommodations should be directed to spelling bee officials well in advance of the spelling bee date. Spelling bee officials have discretionary power to amend oral and/or written spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis.

4. Pronouncer's Role

The pronouncer pronounces words and provides word information as listed in the competition lists. The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in the competition lists.

- Homonyms: If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer indicates which word is to be spelled by defining the word. The spelling bee officials make every effort to identify words with homonyms within the competition list; however, there is no guarantee that all homonyms have

been identified. The ultimate responsibility for understanding the word to be spelled rests with the speller.

- Speller's requests: The pronouncer responds to the speller's requests for a definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin, and alternate pronunciation(s) as listed in the competition list. The pronouncer does not entertain root word questions, requests for alternate definitions, or requests for slower pronunciation.
- Pronouncer's sense of helpfulness: The pronouncer may offer word information from the competition list without the speller having requested the information.

5. Judges' Role

The judges uphold the rules and determine whether words are spelled correctly, or vocabulary questions are answered correctly. They also render final decisions on appeals. They are in complete control of the competition, and their decision is final on all questions.

- Interaction with the speller: Because seeing the speller's lip movements may be critical in detecting misunderstandings or misspellings, the judges encourage spellers to face them when pronouncing and spelling a word or answering a vocabulary question.
- Notice of rules: Spelling bee officials ensure that all spellers and audience members are given an opportunity to receive a complete copy of the rules prior to the start of the spelling bee.
- Misunderstandings: The judges participate in the exchange of information between the speller and pronouncer if they feel that clarification is needed. Also, the judges listen carefully to the speller's pronunciation of the word in spelling rounds. If they sense that the speller has misunderstood the word, the judges work with the speller and pronouncer until they are satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to assist the speller in understanding the word. Although the judges are responsible for attempting to detect a speller's misunderstanding, it is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until a spelling error has been made. The judges are not responsible for the speller's misunderstanding.
- Pronouncer errors: The judges compare the pronouncer's pronunciation with the diacritical markings in the competition list. If the judges feel that the pronouncer's pronunciation does not match the pronunciation specified in the diacritical markings, the judges direct the pronouncer to correct the error as soon as it is detected.
- Disqualifications for reasons other than error: The judges will disqualify a speller
 - (1) who refuses a request to start spelling or to provide an answer to a vocabulary question;
 - (2) who does not approach the microphone when it is time to receive the word or question;
 - (3) who does not comply with the eligibility requirements;
 - (4) who engages in conduct that does not promote fair honest rivalry, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of competition results;
 - (5) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered;
 - (6) who, in the process of spelling, utters unintelligible or nonsense sounds

Speller's Role

- The speller makes an effort to face the judges and pronounce the word for the judges before spelling it and after spelling it.
- The speller makes an effort to pronounce each letter distinctly and with sufficient volume to be understood by the judges.

- The speller may ask the pronouncer to say the word again, define it, use it in a sentence, provide the part of speech, provide the language(s) of origin, and/or provide an alternate pronunciation or pronunciation as listed on the pronouncer's competition list.
- The speller does not need to note the capitalization of a word, the presence of diacritical marks, the presence of hyphens or other forms of punctuation, or the spacing between words in an open compound.
- To be judged as correct and move on to the next round, the speller must provide the correct letters in the correct order.

7. Errors

Upon providing an incorrect spelling of a word or an incorrect answer to a vocabulary question, the speller is immediately disqualified from the competition, except as provided in Rule 8.

8. End-of-Bee Procedure

- *If all spellers in a round misspell:* If none of the spellers remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells a word correctly during that round, all remain in the competition, and a new spelling round begins.
- *Ties:* All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place. After the champion has been determined, spelling bee officials will conduct tiebreaker rounds to determine individual placements and award prizes.

If only one speller in a round spells correctly: If only one speller spells correctly, a new spelling round begins, and the speller is given an opportunity to spell a word on the list (anticipated championship word). If the speller succeeds in correctly spelling the anticipated championship word in this round, the speller is declared the champion.

VERY IMPORTANT: If a speller misspells the anticipated championship word in a one-word round. A new spelling round begins with ALL the spellers who participated in the previous round. These spellers spell in their original order.

Official Protest Procedure

- Who Can Protest
 - Only the school's designated representative may file a protest.
 - Students cannot protest directly.
- When to Protest
 - A protest must be made immediately after the word is given and spelled, before the pronouncer moves on.
- How to Protest
 - The school representative must approach the judges' table and speak directly to the designated protest official.
Clearly state the reason for the protest (e.g., mispronunciation, incorrect definition, procedural error).
 - Only one representative per school may make the protest for a given word.
- Review Process
 - The protest official will review the situation immediately with the judges and pronouncer.

- Decisions are made quickly and are final.
- Outcome
 - If the protest is valid, the student may re-spell the word or receive an appropriate correction.
 - If the protest is denied, the competition continues normally.
- Respectful Conduct
 - All protests must be calm and professional.
 - Disruptive behavior may result in disqualification.

Amendments

- The organizing committee reserves the right to amend these rules as necessary, with timely communication to all participating schools.