

Spelling Bee Rules and Regulations

Format: The 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.

Pronouncer's role: The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in Scripps National Spelling Bee word lists and Webster's Third New International Dictionary and its addenda section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster.

Homonyms: If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer indicates which word is to be spelled by defining the word.

Speller's requests: The pronouncer must respond one to two times to a speller's requests for a pronunciation, definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin, and alternate pronunciation(s) as indicated in an official 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee pronouncer guide. The pronouncer is not required to entertain requests for root word information, alternate definitions, or markedly slower pronunciation.

The pronouncer may offer word information — without the speller having requested the information — if the pronouncer senses that the information is helpful.

Judges' role: The judges uphold the rules and determine whether or not words are spelled correctly. 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 the word.

Notice of rules: The judges 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; and, 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. While the judges are responsible for attempting to detect a speller's



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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 word 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 clear misspelling: The judges will disqualify a speller (1) who refuses a request to start spelling; (2) who does not approach the microphone when it is time to receive the word; (3) who engages in unsportsmanlike conduct; (4) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; or (5) who, in the process of spelling, utters unintelligible or nonsense sounds.

Speller activities that do not merit disqualification: The judges may not disqualify a speller (1) for failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it, (2) for asking a question, or (3) for noting or failing to note capitalization or punctuation of a word or spacing within a word.

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 while facing the judges makes an effort to utter 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 pronunciations.

Misunderstandings: The speller is responsible for any misunderstanding of the word unless (1) the pronouncer never provided a correct pronunciation; (2) the pronouncer provided incorrect information regarding the definition, part of speech, or language of origin; or (3) the speller correctly spelled a homonym of the word and the pronouncer failed to either offer a definition or distinguish the homonyms.



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Correction of a misspelling: The pronouncer and judges will not ask the speller to correct another speller's misspelling, even in end-of-bee circumstances.

Misspelling: Upon incorrectly spelling a word, the speller immediately drops out of the competition, except as provided in Rule 10.

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 round begins.

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

VERY IMPORTANT: If a speller misspells the anticipated championship word in a one- word round: A new round begins with ALL the spellers who spelled (correctly and incorrectly) in the previous round. These spellers spell in their original order.



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