

NJSFWC

Official Spelling Bee Rules 2024-2025

All rules must be made available to contestants prior to the Spelling Bee and also read out loud to the contestants and audience members on the day of the Spelling Bee before competition begins.

1. **Grade/Enrollment:** Participants must be enrolled in the fourth or fifth grade.
2. **Official Dictionary:** Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of the words. If more than one spelling is listed for a word, any of these spellings will be accepted as correct if the alternate spelling appears in boldface type.
3. **Talking Among Contestants:** Once the Spelling Bee begins, there shall be no talking between the contestants. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in the contestant being disqualified from the remainder of the competition.
4. **Re-pronouncing and Definitions:** The contestant may ask the pronouncer to re-pronounce the word, define it, or use it in a sentence. The pronouncer may grant all the requests until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear. Judges may disqualify any contestant who ignores a request to start spelling.
5. **Pronouncing Words:** In competition, the pronouncer gives the contestant a word. We strongly suggest to the contestants that they pronounce the word before spelling. This will allow the judges to make sure the contestant is spelling the correct word. After spelling the word, the contestant should say the word again to let the judges know they are finished spelling.
6. **Practice Word Lists:** Every contestant will receive a practice word list. Some words for the Bee may be chosen from the practice word list. Additional words will be added. No contestant at the Club, District, or State levels will receive any official competition word lists.
7. **Homophones:** During competition, a contestant may receive a word that is a homophone, meaning a word could have two different and correct spellings with two distinct meanings. Example: "plane" vs. "plain." In these instances, the pronouncer will automatically define the word. Should the pronouncer not provide the definition, the contestant can spell either of the homophones.
8. **Proper Nouns:** During competition, contestants may receive a word or words that are proper nouns, meaning that the word or words must include capital letters. All capital letters must be indicated during the spelling of the word. For example: if the word "Rhode Island" is given, then the contestant must spell as follows: "Rhode Island (pause) capital R-h-o-d-e capital I-s-l-a-n-d (pause) Rhode Island."
9. **Pauses or Re-starts to Spelling:** Having started to spell a word, a contestant may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning, but in retracing, there can be no change of letters and their sequence from those first pronounced. If letters or their sequence is changed in the respelling, the contestant will be eliminated.

10. Questions Related to Word Spellings: Any question relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the judges immediately, before the correct spelling is given.

11. Misspelled Words: Upon missing the spelling of a word, the contestant will be informed by the pronouncer or judge that the word is incorrect and must immediately drop out of the contest and exit the spelling area to join the audience as a spectator. Competition continues with the next word being given to the next contestant.

12. Final Decisions: The decisions of the judges shall be final on all questions.

13. The Spelling Bee will be video recorded.

END OF BEE PROCEDURES: Once the Bee is down to THREE CONTESTANTS

A. If all spellers in a round misspell, all remain in the competition and a new round begins with the spellers spelling in their original order

B. 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 winning word). If the speller succeeds in correctly spelling the anticipated winning word in this one-word round, the speller is declared the champion.

C. If the speller misspells the anticipated winning word in a one-word round, the new round begins with all the spellers who spelled correctly and incorrectly in the previous round: These spellers spell in their original order.

END OF BEE PROCEDURES: Once the bee is down to TWO CONTESTANTS

D. When the number of spellers is reduced to two, the elimination procedure changes. At that point, when one speller misspells a word, the other speller shall be given an opportunity to spell that same word. If the second speller spells that word correctly, plus the next word on the pronouncer's list, then the second speller shall be declared the champion.

E. If one of the last two spellers misspells a word and the other speller, after correcting the error, misspells the new word, then the misspelled new word shall be referred to the other speller. If this other speller then succeeds in correcting the error and spells the next word on the list, then he or she shall be declared the champion. If both spellers misspell the same word, both shall continue in the competition, and the one who first misspelled the word shall be given a new word to spell.

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