

New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs

CLUB SPELLING BEE MANUAL

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HOW TO SET UP A CLUB SPELLING BEE

Before you prepare for the competition:

- Get the support of your club and form a committee to make contacts and organize the Bee.
- Get permission from the local elementary schools and the local library to advertise and distribute information and rules for the contest.
- Find a venue such as your local library, school auditorium, or your own meeting place.
- Secure prizes for the winner and the two runners up. Local businesses may be a good source for donating gift certificates, books or other age-appropriate prizes.
- Source judges for the competition. Some suggestions are teachers, librarians, principals and town officials. A good idea may be to have a representative from each participating school..
- Decide on how many students you would like to be in your Club SpellingBee (30-40 contestants are suggested).

Each Contestant should receive a copy of the following:

These are available on the NJSFWC website under MATERIALS, Education and Libraries and can be copied and emailed to school or contestants.

- Club Contestant Letter with Bee EventDate/Time/Location/Directions
- Photo Release Form
- Copy of the Rules
- Copy of the 4th and 5th Grade Practice Words (the same list each year)

Check your volunteers to make sure you have the following:

- Moderator (usually Club Spelling Bee Chairperson/President)
- Pronouncer (preferably someone without an accent/dialect)
- Three impartial judges (librarians, town officials, etc.)
- Registration/refreshment workers

For the Pronouncer:

In a packet given to the Pronouncer, the words should be in order according to rounds. Each word will have a basic definition, and a basic sentence.

Pronouncers should also receive the word list in advance so they can practice pronunciation ahead of time. If the Pronouncer cannot pronounce a word properly, it is the Pronouncer's prerogative to eliminate that word before and during competition to keep the program running smoothly.

For the Judges:

Supply each Judge with a folder that contains the words and the Contestant List. They should be in order according to the list provided to the Pronouncer. **The folder should also have a copy of the Rules, Instructions, and a pencil.**

You should also include a supplemental word list for the judges and pronouncer.

Printed Program:

If your Club is providing a printed program for distribution to the audience, be sure to include the names of everyone who is participating, helping, judging, or co-sponsoring the event. Include the students' grades and schools if possible.

Prepare the following on the day/night of the event:

- Volunteers should arrive one hour ahead of time to assist with set up.
- Event Chairperson should have the following:
- The official Dictionaries used in the competition:
Merriam-Webster's Elementary Dictionary: Includes definitions, quotes, word history, and illustrations, and is suitable for grades 3–5
Scholastic Children's Dictionary: A dictionary for kids
- Registration lists and contestant numbers
- Waters, Snacks for after the Bee
- Folders for Judges
- Recording device (this is important if there is a challenge)
- Awards/Certificates and Programs

Order of Event:

- Welcome and introduction of officials, Judges, etc. This would be the time to state that there will be an award presentation following the Bee and for the audience to remain seated until conclusion of the event.
- Explain the Rules
- Begin the Spelling Bee
- Hold the award ceremony after the last elimination round
- Take publicity photos

After the Event:

- Submit publicity photos and articles to local newspapers
- Send thank you notes to school/library for use of the facility and any non-members who assisted with the event.

HAVE A GREAT SPELLING BEE!

Official Club Spelling Bee Rules 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 Elementary Dictionary: Includes definitions, quotes, word history, and illustrations. Suitable for grades 3-5. Or Scholastic Children's Dictionary: A dictionary for kids shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of 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 of 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 level 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 return to their original seat but 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

1. 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.
2. 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.

Club Spelling Bee Introduction and Opening Speech - Sample

"Good morning, I am [name, title] of the [Club name]. We are excited to host this year's Club Spelling Bee.

We are a non-profit organization of women whose primary focus is to serve our local community. There are [#] members in our club and 164 Woman's Clubs throughout the state of New Jersey.

Last year, our club volunteered [#] hours and donated [\$] to our community.

I would like to welcome everyone and congratulate all our contestants participating in today's Bee. Please remember you are all achievers! It is important for you to feel proud of yourselves and pleased with your accomplishments.

Please join me in recognizing all our contestants!

To the parents, it is very important that if any questions regarding our procedures or decisions arise, please speak out immediately. We would like to address the questions as they arise, for after the Bee is over, we are unable to make changes or corrections. Also, please refrain from comments (ohh's and ahh's) during a contestant's spelling of a word." Finally, no flash photography is allowed by audience members during the Bee."

(Introduce the judges, the pronouncer and other special guests)

(Read the list of rules aloud)

(Ask the students if they would like a practice round. If yes, have them spell their names, schools or towns.)

IMPORTANT! Explain the following to contestants:

- Tell them to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone.
- Emphasize the importance of SAY – SPELL – SAY (*note that students will not be disqualified for not saying the word prior to or after spelling it*)
- Have the group shake their shoulders and take a deep breath
- Have the parents do the same—it gets everyone to laugh and relax.

Announce how your breaks will be structured and where the rest rooms are located.

"Good luck to all the contestants! Let's begin!"

Instructions for Registrars

Thank you for helping as a Registrar at our Club Spelling Bee!

Below you will find the instructions for Registrars to use for the registration of the contestants on the day of the Bee.

You should have the following:

- **Copy of the Registration List of contestants**
- **Number tags for contestants to wear**
- **Container with numbers (equal to the number of contestants)**
- **Certificates of Participation**
- **Name tags (if used)**

Proper Registration procedure:

- As a contestant enters, check his/her name on the Registration List.
- Ask the contestant to pick a number from the container. This becomes their placement for the competition. The contestant cannot re-pick or trade the number.
- Record the number next to the contestant's name on the Registration List.
- Give the contestant that number to wear, ask him/her to take that numbered seat, if marked. Also ask the student to return the number on their way out.
- The contestant will be presented his/her Certificate of Participation at the end of the bee. This is so parents and contestants stay to the end of the bee. This may be announced at the beginning of the bee to encourage everyone to stay.

Be aware of how many more contestants are still to arrive. Let the Spelling Bee Chairperson know when everyone is registered, or if anyone needs to be called.

Watch the door during the competition. Do not allow anyone to enter the room while a round is in process. During break periods people will be allowed to enter and exit.

Registrar Spelling Bee Registration List:

[illegible]

Instructions for Judges

Thank you for helping as a Judge at our Spelling Bee! Below you will find the Instructions for Judges for use during the Spelling Bee Competition on the day of the Bee.

You should have the following:

- **Spelling Bee Word List**
- **Spelling Bee Rules**
- **Judge's Form**

Proper Contestant Spelling procedure:

- The contestant **SHOULD** say the word, spell the word, then say the word again. They are not disqualified if they spell the word correctly.
 - The contestant **MUST** indicate all capital letters. For example, Rhode Island should be spelled as follows: "Capital R-h-o-d-e capital I-s-l-a-n-d."
 - Homonyms are asterisked. The pronouncer will read the definition of all homonyms, or even near homonyms (sentry, century).
 - If a contestant chooses to begin spelling a word again, he or she must retrace all letters exactly as already given.
1. When the contestant has spelled a word incorrectly, the judges will ring the bell and confer on the proper spelling. When a decision has been reached, they will inform the pronouncer, who will give the proper spelling of the word.
 2. The pronouncer does not indicate an incorrect spelling of a word.

Proper Use of the Judge's Word List Form:

1. Write the number of the contestant next to the word being spelled.
2. Follow the spelling as the contestant gives each letter.
3. If the contestant makes an error, indicated what the error is next to the word.
4. Alternatively, you may choose to follow along as they spell their word indicating an error by circling or crossing out incorrect letter directly on the word list.
5. If you as a judge do not understand or hear the contestant adequately, you may ask the contestant to repeat the spelling.
6. Please indicate the end of each round by drawing a line under the last word of the round on your Judge's Form. A round is one complete circuit of contestants.

Judge's Word List Form (if you use this form, make multiple copies)

[illegible]

SAMPLE LETTER FOR SCHOOLS

CLUB LETTER HEAD

[Date]
[Name of Principal] [Address of
School]

Dear [Name],

The [Club Name] is sponsoring the [#] Annual Spelling Bee on [date], [snow date]. The bee will take place at [Place], [Address].

The Spelling Bee is open to fourth (and fifth, if applicable) grade students.

The following rules will be used:

1. A pronouncer will say and define the word.
2. The contestant will say the word, spell the word and say the word again.
3. Judges will rule on the spelling.
4. If a word is misspelled, the contestant will be eliminated.
5. **When only two contestants remain**, if a word is misspelled, the remaining student must correctly spell that word, as well as an additional word to be declared the winner.

Please consent to have your students participate. We would like each class to select [#] representatives. The students may be selected by any method you desire. You may hold a spelling bee or you may personally select students you know are natural spellers.

The following information is enclosed for distribution to the students who will be participating in the [Club Name] Spelling Bee.

1. A congratulatory letter which indicates all relevant information.
2. The Spelling Bee rules.
3. A practice word list.

If your school is interested in participating in our Spelling Bee, please send me the names of the students participating by [date]. Please include the home and cell phone number of each student, so that the students may be contacted in the event of a snow cancellation. If you have any questions, please call me at [phone number]. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Name]
Spelling Bee Chairman

SAMPLE INVITATION FOR JUDGES

Club Letterhead

[Name of Invitee] [Business
Name] [Street Address] [City,
State, Zip]

[Date]

Dear [Name of Invitee]:

The [Club Name] is sponsoring the [#] Annual Spelling bee on [date], [snow date] at [time]. The Bee will take place at [location].

The Spelling Bee is open for fourth and fifth grade students.

Our club would be honored to have you attend as a JUDGE (or, fill in position). Please respond by _____ so that we may plan accordingly. Please include a contact cell phone number, so you may be contacted in the event of a snow cancellation. If you have any questions, please call me at [phone number].

Thank you. Sincerely,

[Name]
Spelling Bee Chairman [Address and
phone] [e-mail]
[club website]

CLUB SPELLING BEE CONTESTANT PERMISSION SLIP

I give permission for my child _____

to participate in the Club Spelling Bee sponsored by _____

Date: _____ Snow Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

_____ I have reviewed the **Spelling Bee Rules** with my child and I further understand that an adult must accompany my child to this event.

Parent or Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Cell Phone (in case of snow or other cancellation): _____

Email: _____

PHOTO RELEASE

_____ I hereby give the _____ permission to photograph my child during the Spelling Bee event.

_____ I do not give the _____ permission to photograph my child during the Spelling Bee event.

The photos will be used for newsletters, membership websites, and newspaper articles submitted to our local communities.

Child's Name: _____

Signature Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____