

Contest Rules of the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee

Rule 1: Eligibility

A speller qualifying for the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee (the Bee) must meet these requirements:

- (1) The speller must not previously have been declared champion of the Bee.
- (2) The speller must attend a school that is officially enrolled with the Bee.
- (3) The speller must not have passed beyond the eighth grade on or before February 1, 2013.
- (4) The speller must not have repeated any grade for the purpose of extending spelling bee eligibility. If the speller has repeated any grade, the speller must notify the Bee of the circumstances of grade repetition by March 31, 2013; and the Bee will, in its sole discretion, determine the speller's eligibility status on or before April 30, 2013.
- (5) The speller — or the speller's parent, legal guardian or school official acting on the speller's behalf — must not have declared to another entity an academic classification higher than eighth grade for any purpose including high school graduation equivalency or proficiency examinations and/or examinations such as the PSAT, SAT or ACT.
- (6) The speller must not have earned the legal equivalent of a high school diploma.
- (7) The speller must not have completed nor ever been enrolled in more than six high school-level courses or two college-level courses on or before April 30, 2013.
- (8) The speller must not bypass or circumvent normal school activity to study for spelling bees. The Bee defines normal school activity as adherence to at least four courses of study other than language arts, spelling, Latin, Greek, vocabulary and etymology for at least four hours per weekday for 34 of the 38 weeks between August 27, 2012, and May 18, 2013.
- (9) The speller must not have reached the age of 15 on or before August 31, 2012.
- (10) The speller must have been declared a champion of a final local spelling bee on or after February 1, 2013.
- (11) The speller must not have been disqualified at any level of a sponsor's spelling bee program between June 2012 and April 2013. Further, if the speller becomes disqualified at any level of a sponsor's spelling bee program before April 2013, the speller will be ineligible to compete in the Bee and may not seek advancement in the Bee through another sponsor and/or enrollment in another school.
- (12) The speller must not have any first-, second- or third-degree relatives (i.e. sibling, child, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, half-sibling, first cousin or great grandchild) who are current employees of The E.W. Scripps Company.
- (13) The speller, upon qualifying for the Bee, must submit a completed online Champion Profile form, a signed Appearance Consent and Release Form and a hard copy of a photo to the Bee. The speller will notify the Bee, at least 24 hours prior to the first day of competition if any of the statements made on the Certification of Eligibility Form are no longer true or require updating. The speller's sponsor will provide access to the necessary forms.

The Bee may disqualify prior to or during competition any speller who is not in compliance with any of the above Eligibility Requirements; and it may—at any time between the conclusion of the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee and April 30, 2014—require any speller who is found to have not been in compliance with any of the Eligibility Requirements to forfeit any prizes, rank, and other benefits accorded to the speller as a result of participation in the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

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Rule 2: Preliminaries Format

The Preliminaries is the first of three distinct segments of the competition: Preliminaries, Semifinals and Championship Finals.

The Preliminaries consists of a test (Preliminaries Test) delivered by computer on Tuesday, May 28 and two rounds of oral spelling onstage on Wednesday, May 29. Spellers may earn up to 36 points during the Preliminaries: up to 30 points on the Preliminaries Test, three points for correctly spelling in Round Two and three points for correctly spelling in Round Three.

Spellers must report to the Chesapeake F Room in the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center for the Preliminaries Test at their individual appointment times. Individual test appointment times are claimed by spellers prior to Bee Week 2013 through the online Champion Profile Form available to spellers who log into spellingbee.com.

The Preliminaries Test has four sections:

1. In Section A, the speller will spell 24 words using a computer keyboard. Only 12 of the 24 spellings will count toward the speller's Preliminaries score — one point per each correctly spelled score word. The 12 spelling words that count toward the speller's Preliminaries score will be labeled "score spelling words" by Bee officials prior to May 28, but score spelling word status will not be apparent to a speller while taking the test. Score spelling words are the same for all spellers. This part of the test will be labeled as Round One.
2. In Section B, the speller will respond to 24 multiple-choice vocabulary questions. Only 12 of the 24 vocabulary responses will count toward the speller's Preliminaries score — one point per each correctly answered vocabulary question. The 12 vocabulary questions that count toward the speller's Preliminaries score will be labeled "score vocabulary questions" by Bee officials prior to May 28. Score vocabulary questions are the same for all spellers. This part of the test will also be labeled as Round One.
3. In Section C, the speller will respond to one multiple-choice vocabulary question that will be labeled as a Round Two vocabulary question and, if correctly answered, count three points toward the speller's Preliminaries score. The speller's Round Two vocabulary question will be unique to the speller.
4. In Section D, the speller will respond to one multiple-choice vocabulary question that will be labeled as a Round Three vocabulary question and, if correctly answered, count three points toward the speller's Preliminaries score. The speller's Round Three vocabulary question will be unique to the speller.

During the afternoon of Wednesday, May 29 the Bee will publicly identify the 12 score spelling words and the 12 score vocabulary questions on spellingbee.com; also, the Bee will email individual speller Preliminaries Test score reports to parents and spellers.

Eliminations: There are no immediate eliminations for misspelling or providing an incorrect answer in the Preliminaries Test. Upon incorrectly spelling a word in Round Two or Three, the speller is eliminated from the competition. Spellers eliminated during Round Two are tied for the same place. Spellers eliminated during Round Three are tied for the same place. Immediately after Round Three a "maximum of 50" standard is applied to remaining spellers' scores accrued during the Preliminaries. Spellers' scores are plotted on a chart. Beginning at 36 on the chart, spellers at each consecutive scoring level are added until a sum of no more than 50 spellers has been attained. All remaining spellers are eliminated. All spellers eliminated after Round Three and before the start of the Semifinals are tied for the same place.

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Rule 3: Semifinals Format

The Semifinals is the second of three distinct segments of the competition: Preliminaries, Semifinals and Championship Finals.

The Semifinals consists of a test (Semifinals Test) delivered by computer on Wednesday evening, May 29 and two rounds of oral spelling onstage on Thursday, May 30. Spellers may earn up to 36 points during the Semifinals: up to 30 points on the Semifinals Test, three points for correctly spelling in Round Five and three points for correctly spelling in Round Six.

Spellers must report to Chesapeake Room G in the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center for the Semifinals Test on Wednesday, May 29 at 7:00 p.m. EDT.

The Semifinals Test has four sections:

1. In Section A, the speller will spell 12 words using a computer keyboard. All 12 spellings count toward the speller's Semifinals score and will be labeled "score spelling words" by Bee officials prior to May 28. Score spelling words are the same for all spellers. This part of the test will be labeled as Round Four.
2. In Section B, the speller will respond to 12 multiple-choice vocabulary questions. All 12 vocabulary responses will count toward the speller's Semifinals score and will be labeled "score vocabulary questions" by Bee officials prior to May 28. Score vocabulary questions are the same for all spellers. This part of the test will also be labeled as Round Four.
3. In Section C, the speller will respond to one multiple-choice vocabulary question that will be labeled as a Round Five vocabulary question and, if correctly answered, count three points toward the speller's Semifinals score. The speller's Round Five vocabulary question will be unique to the speller.
4. In Section D, the speller will respond to one multiple-choice vocabulary question that will be labeled as a Round Six vocabulary question and, if correctly answered, count three points toward the speller's Semifinals score. The speller's Round Six vocabulary question will be unique to the speller.

During the morning of Thursday, May 30 the Bee will publicly identify the 12 score spelling words and the 12 score vocabulary questions on spelling bee.com; also, the Bee will email individual speller Semifinals Test score reports to Semifinalist spellers and their parents.

Eliminations: There are no immediate eliminations for misspelling or providing an incorrect answer in the Semifinals Test. Upon incorrectly spelling a word in Round Five or Six, the speller is eliminated from the competition. Spellers eliminated during Round Five are tied for the same place. Spellers eliminated during Round Six are tied for the same place. Immediately after Round Six a "maximum of 12" standard is applied to remaining spellers' scores accrued during the Preliminaries and Semifinals. Spellers' scores are plotted on a chart. Beginning at 72 on the chart, spellers at each consecutive scoring level are added until a sum of no more than 12 spellers has been attained. All remaining spellers are eliminated unless, in the course of applying the maximum of 12 standard, it appears that fewer than nine spellers will qualify for the Championship Finals: in this circumstance, spellers at the next consecutive scoring level (or levels) may be named as Championship Finalists if, in sole determination of Bee officials, there is sufficient time and word list content to accommodate additional spellers in the Championship Finals. All spellers eliminated after Round Six and before the start of the Championship Finals are tied for the same place.

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Rule 4: Championship Finals Format

The Championship Finals is the third of three distinct segments of the competition: Preliminaries, Semifinals and Championship Finals.

The Championship Finals consist of rounds of oral spelling beginning with Round Seven and continuing until a champion is declared (or co-champions are declared).

All spellers who have not been eliminated from the competition spell one word in each round. Upon incorrectly spelling a word, the speller is eliminated from the competition except as provided under “End-of-Bee Procedure” herein. All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place.

Championship Words and Provision for Declaration of Co-Champions: At the beginning of any round in which either two or three spellers remain, the pronouncer will move to the 25-word championship section of the word list. If a champion does not emerge in the course of administering these final 25 words, the remaining spellers will be declared co-champions. In the event that a round beginning with more than either two or three spellers ends with only one speller to begin the next and perhaps final round, the pronouncer will not move to the championship section at that point in the competition.

End-of-Bee Procedure: 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. If only one speller in a round 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. If the speller misspells the anticipated winning 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.

Rule 5: Official Dictionary and Source of Words

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary and its addenda section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster, (*Webster’s Third*) 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 Bee; and the only printed authority consulted by officials, as well as the sole source used during the Bee to verify the information in our prepared lists. If more than one spelling is listed for a word, any of these spellings will be accepted as correct if the following three criteria are met: (1) the pronunciations are identical, (2) the definitions are identical, and (3) the words are identified as being standard variants of each other. Spellings having temporal labels (such as *archaic*, *obsolete*), stylistic labels (such as *substand*, *nonstand*) or regional labels (such as *North*, *Midland*, *Irish*) which differ from main entry spellings not having these status labels will not be accepted as correct.

Rule 6: Time Constraints

During the Preliminaries and Semifinals Tests: Spellers are subject to a 45-minute time limit for taking the test, and can view a 45-minute countdown clock on screen as they take the test. If the 45-minute time period expires and the speller has not submitted the test, the test application will close and the speller’s responses on record at that time will be scored by Bee officials.

During oral spelling rounds in the Preliminaries, Semifinals and Championship Finals: The speller’s time at the microphone has a limit of 2 minutes. Time begins when the pronouncer first pronounces the word. For the first 1 minute and 15 seconds, the speller will have the benefit of viewing a monitor displaying a traffic light in green light mode. After 1 minute and 15 seconds, the monitor will show the traffic light graphic in yellow light mode and will also show the time clock as it counts down to the 30-second mark. At the 30-second mark, the monitor will show the traffic light graphic in red light mode and will also show a countdown of the remaining 30 seconds. The judges and pronouncer will not communicate with the speller during the final 30 seconds (red light mode). The judges will disqualify any speller who does not provide a complete spelling before the expiration of time (0 seconds in red light mode). If the judges and pronouncer need to discuss a competition-related matter while a speller is contemplating a word, they may pause the time clock, and they will inform the speller when they pause and resume the time clock.

Rule 7: Special Needs

The Bee strives to provide accommodation for spellers who have diagnosed medical conditions. All requests for accommodation of special needs should be directed in writing to the director of the Bee before May 1, 2013. The judges have discretionary power to amend spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions.

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Rule 8: Pronouncer's Role

The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in *Webster's Third*.

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: In oral competition the pronouncer responds only to the speller's requests for repetition of the word's pronunciation, a definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin and alternate pronunciation(s). When presented with requests for alternate pronunciations, the pronouncer or associate pronouncer checks for alternate pronunciations in *Webster's Third*. If the speller wishes to ask if the dictionary lists a specific root word as the root of the word to be spelled, the speller must specify a pronunciation of the root (not a spelling), its language and its definition. The pronouncer will grant all such requests as long as they are in accordance with time constraints outlined in Rule 6.

Pronouncer's sense of helpfulness: The pronouncer may offer word information — without the speller having requested the information — if the pronouncer senses that the information is helpful and the information appears in the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee word list or *Webster's Third*.

Rule 9: Judges' Role

The judges listen carefully, determine whether or not words are spelled correctly and uphold the rules. The decisions of the judges are final.

Misunderstandings: The judges will not respond to the speller's question(s) about the word and its pronunciation but, if the judges sense that the speller has misunderstood the word, the judges will direct the speller and pronouncer to interact until they are satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to assist the speller in understanding the word within the time constraints outlined in Rule 6. It is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until a spelling error has been made, and 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 will 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 does not approach the microphone when it is the speller's time to receive the word unless there are extenuating circumstances that, in the judges' sole discretion, merit holding the speller's word in reserve and offering it to the speller after all other spellers in the round have spelled and before the close of the round; (2) who engages in unsportsmanlike conduct; (3) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; or (4) 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 the capitalization of a word, the presence of a diacritical mark, or the presence of a hyphen or other form or punctuation.

Rule 10: 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 judge. 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. The speller may also ask root word questions that meet the specifications delineated in Rule 8.

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.