

Procedures and Rules

1. Officials of the bee shall include the spelling master, head judge, recording judge, arbitrator, and round keeper. Additional officials may include a timekeeper, additional recording judge, and a host/advocate.
The head judge will also act as spokesperson for the judging panel. This judge will speak to the spelling master.
2. Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*, from which the definition or definitions are provided.
The spelling master may not give the part of speech or the root word; however, if asked, "Is the word a _____?" or "Is the root word _____?" the spelling master may answer yes or no.
3. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition* shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of words. If a word has two or more accepted spellings, only the spellings set in boldface type and separated by the word or, and in some cases the word also, at the beginning of the descriptive matter, will be accepted as correct. Spellings labeled as archaic, obsolete (abbreviated obs), and regional (such as North, Midland, South, British, Irish) that are different from those in boldface type will not be accepted as correct.
4. The spelling master will initiate the spelling bee with one practice round for grades five through eight and may conduct two practice rounds for grades one through four. Ask participants if they have any questions. Only during the practice round(s) may students misspell a word and continue in the contest.
5. The procedure the spelling master will use for each word is to pronounce the word, automatically give a sentence for clarification, and repeat the word.
6. The contestant must do the following:
 - a. Look at the spelling master/judging panel.
 - b. Say the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the student heard the word correctly.
 - c. Spell the word orally. Students will not be permitted to write their words. (Clarification: Students will not be allowed to write the words in their hands, on their pants, or in the air.)
 - d. Say the word again after it is spelled, to indicate spelling is complete.
This is the say-spell-say procedure that must be followed to ensure that (1) the speller understands the correct pronunciation of the word and (2) the judges know when the spelling is complete and that no letters will be added. The head judge will stop the student if he or she fails to pronounce the word before spelling or if it is pronounced incorrectly. Note: Failure to say-spell-say will not, in itself, eliminate the speller from competition, but it will reduce the chances of correct spelling and/or the ability to arbitrate, and may cause the speller to exceed 60 seconds.
 - e. Contestants must speak clearly and loudly. The judges' decision is final in determining the correctness of the spelling, which may be misunderstood if not spoken clearly.
Before beginning to spell, the contestant may ask for a definition of the word for clarification or ask for the definition, sentence, and/or pronunciation to be repeated. Requests will be granted until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the speller. If a student takes advantage of the rule, he or she will be advised by the spelling master to say the word and begin spelling.
 - f. The following procedures are recommended to make the bee run smoothly and efficiently:
After the student spells the word:
 - 1) If it is spelled correctly, the student returns to his or her seat and the student in the waiting area moves up to the microphone. As this occurs, the next student approaches the waiting area.
 - 2) If it is spelled incorrectly (or eliminated by rules infraction), the student goes directly to the round keeper (or to the arbitrator if there is a protest regarding the judge's decision; see rule 12).
 - 3) When a student has been eliminated from a round, the next speller moves up to take the vacated seat, thus keeping spellers sitting together.
 - 4) The above procedures may vary for grades one through four and during the first part for grades five through eight, depending on the facilities available (this includes the use of microphones). However, all procedures must be followed for the district spell-off rounds, the regional bee, and the ACSI National Bee.
7. After clarification (if requested) and after the student pronounces (or is advised to pronounce) the word, he or she shall have 30 seconds to begin spelling. If the student does not begin spelling at the end of the 30-second period, he or she shall be reminded by the judges to begin spelling. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the judges remind the student to begin spelling until he or she must finish spelling the word. The judges will then disqualify the student who has not spelled the word by the end of the 30-second period. The speller will then report to the round keeper.

8. A contestant may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning, after having started to spell a word. However, in the retracing, letters and their sequence must be the same as those first pronounced. If a contestant changes letters or their sequence during the retracing, he or she will be disqualified.
For clarity, and to avoid misunderstanding, the student must indicate verbally when he or she is starting over.
9. When a word is misspelled, the spelling master will say, "I'm sorry. That is incorrect," then correctly spell the word for the contestant and give the next word to the next speller.
10. Every speller, upon elimination for whatever reason, will report to the round keeper (or to the arbitrator if there is a protest regarding the judges' decision; see rule 12).
11. No talking will be allowed among contestants or between contestants and members of the audience. If a contestant receives assistance from anyone in the audience, he or she will be disqualified. The audience is also requested to remain seated until a break, to avoid confusing or distracting the contestants. Contestants found talking may be disqualified from the bee.
12. Any questions related to the spelling of a word should be referred to the arbitrator immediately (by going to that person). It is permissible to approach the arbitrator after reporting to the timekeeper.
In any instance, the speller, parent, and coach are the only persons permitted to protest on behalf of the speller they represent. The deadline for making a protest is before the affected contestant would have received his or her next word, had he or she stayed in the contest. No protest will be entertained after that word has been given to another speller. When only two spellers remain, a protest must be made immediately, that is, before the second speller has started to spell the word given him or her. After making a protest, the speller, parent, or coach will move back 15 feet to allow the judges to make a decision. The head judge will communicate to the speller, parent, or coach the final decision. The speller, parent, and coach do not participate in the decision-making process, nor do they have access at any time to the judges' dictionary, tape recording, recording judge's tablet, etc. If a speller is placed back in the spelling bee, the speller will be given a new word to spell for the round and assume his or her original place if the new word is spelled correctly.
13. The arbitrator shall have access to the word list, its pronunciations, definitions, and sentences; the official bee dictionary; the tape recording of the bee; the rules; and the timekeeper's record sheet. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the arbitrator shall call for a brief time-out to confer with the judges. The judges' decision shall be final.
14. If only one of the contestants remaining in the contest at the start of a round spells a word correctly during that round, the contestant shall be given an opportunity to spell the next word on the list. If the contestant succeeds in correctly spelling the new word, the contestant shall be declared the champion. Otherwise, all the contestants remaining at the start of the round shall remain in the competition. A new round will begin, with all of the contestants spelling in their original order. After the champion is declared, a tiebreaker will take place if there is a tie for second, third, or fourth place (see "Tiebreaker" below). In the Spell-Off bee for grades 5-8 ONLY, fifth, sixth, and seventh places will be determined, result in 5 winners and 2 alternates.

Explanation

If all spellers in a round misspell a word, all remain in the competition and a new round begins.

If only one speller in a round spells correctly, a new 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 round, the speller is declared the champion.

Example 1: In Round 14 there are four spellers. Spellers 5 and 20 misspell. Speller 32 spells correctly. Speller 40 misspells. So, Speller 32 is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller 32 begins Round 15 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 32 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example 2: In Round 14 there are two spellers. Speller 20 misspells. Speller 32 spells correctly. Speller 32 begins Round 15 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 32 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example 3: In Round 14 there are two spellers. Speller 20 spells correctly. Speller 32 misspells. Speller 20 begins Round 15 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 20 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

If a speller misspells the anticipated championship word, a new round begins with all the spellers who spelled (correctly and incorrectly) in the previous round. These spellers spell in their original order.

Example 1: In Round 14 there are four spellers. Spellers 5 and 20 misspell. Speller 32 spells correctly. Speller 40 misspells. So, Speller 32 is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller 32 begins Round 15 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 32 incorrectly spells the anticipated championship word. Round 16 begins a new round with Spellers 5, 20, 32, 40 each given a new word.

Example 2: In Round 14 there are two spellers. Speller 20 spells correctly. Speller 32 misspells. Speller 20 begins Round 15 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 20 incorrectly spells the anticipated championship word. Round 16 begins a new round with Spellers 20 and 32 each given a new word.

Tiebreaker: All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place. After the champion has been determined, spelling bee officials will conduct tiebreakers if there is a tie for 2nd, 3rd, 4th. Tiebreakers are necessary for the awarding of prizes or/and the determination of qualifying spellers for the next level of competition. All students who spelled out in the round preceding the championship word will be given two words to spell consecutively to determine a tie-breaker. The speller will spell two words before the next speller is given an opportunity to spell two words. The speller who spells the most words correctly is given the higher place. If the students spell the same number of words correctly, the judges will give each student two additional words to spell consecutively.

15. The ACSI Spelling Bee panel of judges will be in complete control of the spelling bee; their decisions will be final.
16. Copies of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition* may be used during the spelling bee. All word lists, writing tablets, laptops, smart phones, recording devices, pens or pencils, etc. are to be put away during the spelling bee.
17. Each participating school may have one arbitrator in the room to represent their students in the spelling bee whether it is a school representative or a parent. Other parents, grandparents, friends, etc. will be allowed in the room if there is sufficient space available for an audience. This decision will be made by the ACSI Student Activities Coordinator or the chairperson.
18. Any student found in possession of an ACSI list other than the ACSI student published word list at any ACSI district, regional, or national spelling bee event are subject to disqualification.