

# Spelling Bee Rules and Procedures

These suggested rules are guidelines designed to assist spelling bee officials and spellers at the local level. Spelling bee officials include the pronouncer, judges, coordinator, and sponsor.

**1. Eligibility:** Spellers must meet these requirements:

- (1) They must not have passed beyond the fifth grade.
- (2) They must be students of the Mukilteo School District.

**2. 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. At District Spelling Bee the pronouncer will spell words from speller's grade level for 4 rounds then proceed to the next grade level for 4 rounds and continue to move up grade levels as needed until a champion is reached.

**3. Word list:** Local spelling bee officials are responsible for selecting the word lists for use at each local spelling bee. In the case that there is a spelling stand-off, the spelling bee official may use words from an advanced grade word list.

**4. Special needs:** Spelling bee officials will strive to provide accommodation for spellers who have physical challenges. All requests for spelling bee officials to accommodate special needs involving sight, hearing, speech, or movement should be directed to spelling bee officials well in advance of the spelling bee date. The judges have discretionary power to amend oral and/or written spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions involving sight, hearing, speech, or movement.

**5. Pronouncer's role:** The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the word lists and *Webster's Dictionary*.

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

2)Speller's requests: The pronouncer responds to the speller's requests for a definition, sentence or alternate pronunciation(s). When presented with requests for alternate pronunciations, the pronouncer or an aide to the pronouncer checks for alternate pronunciations in the *Webster's Dictionary*. The pronouncer does not entertain root word questions or requests for alternate definitions.

3)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.

**6. 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, and procedures and course of the Spelling Bee. Parental interruptions to the Judges will be subject to their child's disqualification.

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 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: If the judges feel that the pronouncer's pronunciation does not match the correct word pronunciation, 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 does not comply with the eligibility requirements; (4) who engages in cheating or unsportsmanlike conduct; (5) who, in the process of spelling a word starts over and alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; (6) who, in the process of spelling, utters unintelligible or nonsense sounds; (7) for failing to spell a word with correct punctuation (ie, hyphens & apostrophes; or (8) who's parents harass or interrupt the Judges/or Pronouncer.

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.

**7. 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, and/or provide an alternate pronunciation(s).

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; or (3) the speller correctly spelled a homonym of the word and the pronouncer failed to either offer a definition or distinguish the homonyms.

**8. 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.

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

**10. End-of-bee procedure:**

a. 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.

b. 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.

Example: In Round 12 there are four spellers. Spellers 1 and 2 misspell. Speller 3 spells correctly. Speller 4 misspells. So, Speller 3 is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller 3 begins Round 13—a one-word round—and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 3 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 10. Speller 1 misspells. Speller 2 spells correctly. Speller 2 begins Round 11—a one-word round—and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 2 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 16. Speller 1 spells correctly. Speller 2 misspells. Speller 1 begins Round 17—a one-word round—and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 1 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

c. How to establish 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place will be determined with a spell-off. The 2<sup>nd</sup> place speller is determined using the same method outlined in "b." above. Once the speller proves himself with the championship word, the remaining speller is declared 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

**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.

Example: In Round 8 there are three spellers. Speller 1 spells correctly and Spellers 2 and 3 misspell. Round 9—a one-word round—begins, and Speller 1 is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 1 misspells the anticipated championship word. Round 10 begins and includes Spellers 1, 2, and 3. The rules prescribe that spellers 1, 2, and 3 spell in their original order; so Speller 1 gets the next word on the list even though Speller 1 misspelled the previous word on the list. Round 10 is not complete until all three spellers have spelled.

Tip: Spelling bee officials may find it helpful to designate a record keeper or judge to track the progress of spellers throughout the rounds. The record keeper's information will be helpful in preventing end-of-bee confusion.