

Humboldt County Office of Education

County Spelling Bee

Rules and Procedures

These rules are guidelines designed to assist spelling bee officials and spellers at the local level. County Spelling Bee guidelines are based on the National Scripps Spelling Bee guidelines. Spelling bee officials include the pronouncer, judges, coordinator, or sponsor.

Preface: The Humboldt County Elementary Spelling Bee has no authority over the conduct of local spelling bees. Consequently, the Humboldt County Office of Education will not render judgments relating to the conduct of local spelling bees. Individuals bearing complaints about the conduct of local spelling bees should register their concerns with local spelling bee officials. Decisions of local spelling bee officials are final.

Eligibility: This spelling championship is open to two students from each region in Humboldt County in grades 4th – 6th and 7th – 8th who have been certified as region (also known as Pre-Region qualifier by Scripps) champions. These champions will compete together in the oral County Spelling Bee.

Competition Rules

1. This is an oral competition in which students will be eliminated after their first misspelling. A scratch pad and pencil are available at the podium for the spellers to write the word, but the speller must then spell the word orally for competition. Paper, pencil, and other items are not allowed to be kept with students except as provided.
2. Words used in the competition are chosen by Scripps National Spelling Bee. During the competition, the words used in each successive round increase in difficulty.
3. In competition, spellers may pronounce words before spelling, after spelling, or not at all. However, you are *encouraged* to pronounce the word BEFORE spelling to ensure that you heard the word correctly. For example, if you are given the word baseball and you spell baseballs, your spelling will be considered incorrect. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the student to understand the word from the pronunciation, definition and sentence.
4. Once you begin to spell a word, you will not have a chance to change letters once pronounced. A speller may repeat the word orally, provided letters and their sequence are not changed.
5. At any time, a speller may request that a word be re-pronounced, defined, or used in a sentence. Spellers may also request the origin of the word. The Pronouncer shall grant the request(s) until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the speller.
6. Per National Scripps rules Speller's requests: The Pronouncer responds to the speller's requests for a definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin and alternate pronunciation(s) as listed in the competition list. The Pronouncer does not entertain root word questions, requests for alternate definitions or requests for slower pronunciation.

7. One Judge will record in writing, what they hear the speller spell. The other Judge will make an audio recording of the word. Judges have the final authority on whether or not a word is spelled correctly. Judges may disqualify any speller who ignores a request to start spelling the word within a reasonable time period.
8. Homonyms: If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer indicates which word is to be spelled by defining the word. Scripps makes every effort to identify words with homonyms within the competition list; however, there is no guarantee that all homonyms have been identified. The ultimate responsibility for understanding the word to be spelled rests with the speller.
9. Students will be given a number which determines their seat assignment and the order in which they spell. Once a round is started, all students still remaining in the competition MUST spell a word. If at the end of any round, there remains one competitor, they will spell the final competition word. If this word is misspelled, all competitors from the previous round will be reinstated and competition will continue.
10. Speller's Role: In a spelling round, 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 makes an effort to pronounce 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, provide the part of speech, provide the language(s) of origin, and/or provide an alternate pronunciation or pronunciations as listed on the pronouncer's competition list. The speller does not need to note capitalization of a word, presence of diacritical marks, presence of hyphens or other forms of punctuation, or spacing between words in an open compound. To be judged as correct and move on to the next round, the speller must provide the correct letters in the correct order.
11. Errors: Upon providing an incorrect spelling of a word or an incorrect answer to a vocabulary question, the speller is immediately disqualified from the competition, except as provided in Rule 12.
12. End-of-Bee Procedure:

If all spellers in a round misspell their word: 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 spelling round begins.

Ties: All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place. After the champion has been determined, spelling bee officials may opt to conduct tiebreakers (of their own design) if tiebreakers are necessary for the awarding of prizes or the determination of qualifying spellers for the next level of competition.

If only one speller in a round spells correctly, a new spelling round begins and the speller is given an opportunity to spell a 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: In Round 12, an oral spelling round, there are four spellers. Spellers A and B misspell. Speller C spells correctly. Speller D misspells. So, Speller C is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller C begins Round 13 and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller C correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

VERY IMPORTANT: If a speller misspells the anticipated championship word in a one-word round: A new spelling round begins with ALL the spellers who participated in the previous round. These spellers spell in their original order.

13. Any problem relating to the spelling of a word must be referred to the Officials. If the protest is valid, the Judges will be informed immediately (before the beginning of the next round). No protest will be entertained after the round is over or the contest has ended. The decision of the Judges and Pronouncer will be final in all questions.
14. In competition, words will be chosen from any source deemed appropriate by the judges, including the official Elementary Word List. Words will not be limited to any specific list; however, all words will be taken from the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary Unabridged Online Website, the official reference for the competition. If there are multiple pronunciations for any given word, we will use www.dictionary.com as a secondary pronunciation source.
15. The Pronouncer and Judges will be in complete charge of the contest. Their decision will be final on all questions.
16. In the event of a protest or dispute, decisions will be based on Merriam Webster Unabridged Online Website. No other source will be allowed.
17. Once the competition begins, spellers must remain in the competition area. Family and friends are not permitted in the spelling area.
18. Restroom breaks: Spellers may—one at a time—request to use the restroom. Spellers will be escorted. Upon returning to the competition, the next speller who needs to use the restroom may follow the same procedure.
19. To minimize disruptions during this competition we ask audience members to turn off cell phones and electronic devices.

For more information, please contact:

Stacy Young
Spelling Bee Coordinator
syoung@hcoe.org 707-445-7024