

# Rules for SEDC Classroom, School, District and Regional Spelling Bees



## Preface

We encourage spellers, parents, teachers and spelling bee officials to read these rules prior to any spelling bee.

These rules are guidelines designed to assist spelling bee officials and spellers at the local level. Spellers should check with their local spelling bee officials for the rules in effect in their area. Spelling bee officials include the pronouncer, judges, and coordinators.

DECISIONS OF SEDC SPELLING BEE OFFICIALS ARE FINAL.

## Rules

1. **Eligibility:** A speller qualifying for the 2020 SEDC Regional Spelling Bee must meet these requirements:
  - 1.1. The speller must not have passed beyond the eighth grade on or before February 1, 2020.
  - 1.2. 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 SEDC of the circumstances of grade repetition by February 26, 2020; and SEDC will, at its sole discretion, determine the speller's eligibility status on or before March 1, 2020.
  - 1.3. 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.
  - 1.4. The speller must not have earned the legal equivalent of a high school diploma.
  - 1.5. The speller must not have completed or have been enrolled in more than six high school-level courses or two college-level courses on or before February 26, 2020.
  - 1.6. The speller must not eschew normal school activity to study for spelling bees. SEDC 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 15, 2019, and February 26, 2020.
  - 1.7. The speller must not have reached his/her 15th birthday on or before August 31, 2019.
  - 1.8. The speller must have been declared a champion of their district spelling bee taking place on or after February 1, 2020, or be a spelling champion of a school whose district is not providing a district-level competition.
  - 1.9. The speller must be currently enrolled at the time of the Regional Spelling Bee in a school that is in an SEDC Member District or Charter to be eligible to compete in the SEDC Regional Spelling Bee. Member Districts and Charter Schools can be found under the "Our Members" page on SEDC's web site: <https://sedck12.org/our-members/>

- 1.10. Participation of students who are home schooled within the boundaries of a district is at the discretion of that school district.
- 1.11. SEDC may disqualify prior to or during competition any speller who is not in compliance with any of its eligibility requirements; and it may — at any time between the conclusion of the 2020 SEDC Regional Spelling Bee and March 30, 2020 — require any speller who is found to have not been in compliance with any of the eligibility requirements to forfeit any prizes earned in the SEDC Regional Spelling Bee.
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. The spelling bee may be conducted orally or in writing or in a manner that is a combination of the two; however, if the spelling bee officials specify an oral format, the speller may not demand a written format except under the conditions of Rule 4.
3. **Word list:** Local spelling bee officials are responsible for selecting the word lists for use at each local spelling bee. Many local spelling bee officials use word lists found online generated by the Scripps National Spelling Bee. These lists include many words that appear in the current edition of the School Spelling Bee Study List and Spell It! as well as some “end-of-bee” words. All words on the SEDC Regional Spelling Bee word lists are entries in Merriam-Webster Unabridged, the official dictionary of the SEDC Regional Spelling Bee, available at <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/>.
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 diacritical markings in SEDC Spelling Bee word lists.

*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:* The pronouncer responds to the speller’s requests for a definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin and alternate pronunciation(s). When presented with requests for alternate pronunciations, the pronouncer or an aide to the pronouncer checks for alternate pronunciations in either Merriam-Webster Unabridged or Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh edition. The pronouncer does not entertain root word questions, requests for alternate definitions or requests for markedly slower pronunciation.

*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 is presented in the entry for the word in an SEDC provided Spelling Bee word list.

6. **Judge’s Role:** The judges uphold the rules and determine whether or not words are spelled correctly. They also render final decisions on appeals in accordance with Rule 11. They are in complete control of the competition and their decision is final on all questions.

*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 an error has been made. 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 direct the pronouncer to correct the error as soon as it is detected.

Disqualifications for reasons other than error: 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 unsportsmanlike conduct; (5) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; or (6) 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, the presence of a hyphen or other form of punctuation, or spacing between words in an open compound.

7. **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 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, provide the part of speech, provide the language(s) of origin, and/or provide an alternate pronunciation or pronunciations.

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.

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. **Errors:** Upon providing an incorrect spelling of a word, the speller immediately drops out of the competition, except as provided in Rule 10.
10. **End-of-bee procedure:**

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

Example: In Round 12 there are four spellers. Spellers 6 and 21 misspell. Speller 30 spells correctly. Speller 42

misspells. So, Speller 30 is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller 30 begins Round 13 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 30 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 10. Speller 14 misspells. Speller 25 spells correctly. Speller 25 begins Round 11 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 25 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 16. Speller 3 spells correctly. Speller 9 misspells. Speller 3 begins Round 17 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 3 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.

Example: In Round 8 there are three spellers. Speller 12 spells correctly and Spellers 23 and 37 misspell. Round 9 — a one-word round — begins, and Speller 12 is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 12 misspells the anticipated championship word. Round 10 begins and includes Spellers 12, 23 and 37. The rules prescribe that spellers 12, 23 and 37 spell in their original order; so Speller 12 gets the next word on the list even though Speller 12 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.

11. **Appeals:** The speller's parent(s), legal guardian or teacher may appeal to the judges for the speller's reinstatement provided that the appeal is in compliance with the appeal protocol. The judges render a final decision on the appeal in accordance with the reinstatement protocol.

*Appeal protocol:* A written appeal must be hand delivered to the designated official (usually the spelling bee coordinator/director). The deadline for delivering an appeal is before the speller affected would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the spelling bee; however, to minimize disruptions to the spelling bee, every effort should be made to deliver an appeal by the end of the round in which the speller was eliminated. When five or fewer spellers remain, the written appeal requirement is suspended, and an oral appeal must be made before the speller would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the spelling bee. A written appeal must provide the speller's name, the word in question and the reason the speller should be reinstated.

While the competition is in session, individuals who have filed appeals may not directly approach the judges unless explicit permission to approach the judges has been given. The judges will contact the speller if they decide to reinstate the speller. To minimize disruption to the pace of the spelling bee and the concentration of the spellers, the judges are under no obligation to stop the spelling bee in order to discuss with the speller's parent(s), legal guardian or teacher a denied appeal. The judges' decisions are final and are not subject for review.

#### Reinstatement protocol

*Pronouncer mispronunciation:* An appeal claiming that a speller's elimination from the spelling bee was due to pronunciation error should be denied unless there is agreement that the pronouncer never offered a correct pronunciation.

*Alternate pronunciations:* An appeal claiming that the pronouncer did not offer alternate pronunciations should be denied unless it is determined that the speller requested alternate pronunciations and the pronouncer did not accommodate the speller's request for alternate pronunciations and it appears that the speller's spelling almost

matches the correct spelling.

*Speller's misunderstanding:* An appeal claiming that the speller's elimination from the spelling bee was due to the speller's not understanding the word (its pronunciation(s) and/or other information about the word) should be denied. It is the speller's responsibility to understand the word.

*Speller offered correct spelling for a word in this guide:* An appeal claiming that the speller correctly spelled the word should be denied unless an audio recording of the bee's proceedings or bee officials' recollections clearly indicate that the word was indeed spelled correctly.

Exception: If the speller's spelling is listed in Merriam-Webster Unabridged, the speller should be reinstated if all of the following three criteria are met: (1) The pronunciations of the words are identical, (2) the definitions of the words are identical, and (3) the words are clearly identified as being standard variants of each other. Spellings at other locations having temporal labels (such as archaic, obsolete), stylistic labels (such as substandard, nonstandard), 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.

*Speller offered correct spelling, as indicated in a dictionary other than Merriam-Webster Unabridged:* An appeal claiming that the speller spelled the word correctly according to a dictionary other than Merriam-Webster Unabridged should be denied.

*Homonym in a spelling round:* An appeal claiming that the speller's elimination was unfair because the speller's word is a homonym should be denied unless the pronouncer failed to define the word and the speller correctly spelled a homonym of the word.

*Incorrect or unsolicited information:* An appeal claiming that the speller's elimination was unfair because the pronouncer offered incorrect or unsolicited information about the word should be denied unless it is determined that the pronouncer indeed gave factually incorrect information and it appears that the speller's spelling would have been correct if not for the incorrect or unsolicited information provided by the pronouncer.

*Bee officials failed to correct a misunderstanding:* An appeal claiming that the speller misspelled or incorrectly answered because the judges and/or pronouncer failed to correct the speller's mispronunciation of the word should be denied. It is sometimes impossible to detect a speller's mispronunciation or misunderstanding, and ultimately it is the responsibility of the speller to understand and correctly pronounce the word.

*Disqualification request:* An appeal seeking to dislodge another speller from the spelling bee should be denied.