



State Spelling Bee

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated August 2023
Subject to change

Q: Should I read the rules?

A: Yes. You and your family should read the rules so everyone understands how the competition is conducted. The rules will be read out loud prior to the start of the competition.

Q: What should I wear?

A: Comfortable clothing. No hats, please.

Q: What information can I request from the Spell Master regarding the word?

A: You can ask for a word's definition and that it be used in a sentence. The Spell Master will not syllabify (divide into syllables) the word or provide the part of speech.

Q: Can I write the word down before spelling?

A: Yes. The competition this year will be ALL written.

Q: Is there a word source for me to study?

A: We only provide suggested word resources.

Q: How are the words chosen for the state competition?

A: Words are selected randomly from any source deemed appropriate by the Spell Master and judges prior to the competition.

Q: Should I pronounce the word before spelling?

A: There will be no need. Spelling will be all written this year.

Q: Once, I begin, can I stop spelling and start over?

A: Yes, but we ask you to cross out the word, and write it again right next to the original word.

Q: Is there a time limit before I must begin spelling?

A: 20 seconds

Q: What if I know the word I am given is a homonym?

A: You should ask for a definition, or if no definition of a homonym is given, the correct spelling of either word shall be accepted as correct. When a speller is given the definition of a homonym, he or she must spell the word defined. (See Rule 8)

Q: Can there be a tie?

A: Yes. The competition continues until we have one winner or until all words have been exhausted.

Q: How many words can I miss before I am eliminated from the competition?

A: When you misspell two words, you will be eliminated from the competition. (See Rule 1.)

Q: How are places determined?

A: We no longer eliminate spellers by the order in which they misspell words. Once a round begins, all spellers remaining must spell a word. Therefore, no places are determined. Among the top remaining spellers, one will be the champion and the others will be named finalists.

Q: What do I do if I misspell a word?

A: One of the judges will circle your misspelled word. The Spell Master will then provide you with the correct spelling. If it is your first misspelled word, you will continue on with the competition. If it is your second misspelled word, you will be congratulated by your judge and have a seat in the audience with your family.

Q: Should my family and I leave after I misspell a word?

A: No. Contestants should stay through the remainder of the competition to lend support to the remaining spellers.

Q: I have special needs. Who should I tell?

A: If you have any hearing, speech, or medical needs, please notify the San Joaquin County coordinator as soon as possible so the proper action can be taken. Please do not wait until the evening before, or the day of the competition to communicate your special needs. Only our team of judges will be notified if necessary, and it will not be printed or shared with anyone else.

Q: What if I have to use the restroom?

A: Restroom breaks will be given after each two rounds. (See Rule 12.)

Q: Will there be a break?

A: There will be a five to ten minute break after the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth rounds.

Q: What is the Bio used for?

A: Information about yourself will be printed in the program.

Q: What can be protested?

A: The spelling of a word

Q: How do I/we protest?

A: Any problem relating to the spelling of a word must be referred immediately to the Protest Official located in the back of the auditorium. If an error is discovered, the Protest Official will submit their findings to the judges. The Spell Master and judges will pause briefly to discuss the protest and announce their decision. The decision of the Spell Master and judges will be final.

Q: Can we use our video camera or tape recorder to aid in our protest?

A: No

Q: How long will the competition last?

A: The competition should be over by 11:30am for elementary and 5:00pm for junior high.

Q: Who notifies my local newspaper?

A: After the competition, the San Joaquin County Office of Education will send a press release and photographs to local media.

Q: Can anyone attend the competition?

A: Yes. In consideration of others, we request that small children who become restless or noisy, be taken to the Chartvilles. A closed-circuit TV is available so they can continue to watch the competition. Noises are distracting to other spectators and make it difficult for the speller to hear the spell master.

Q: How many spellers are participating this year?

A: There are usually more than 60 spellers from over 30 counties.

Q: If I am champion or one of the finalists, do I advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee?

A: No. The California State Spelling Bee Championship is not affiliated with the Scripps National Spelling Bee.