Frequently Asked Questions
Updated March 2022 and 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. (See Rule 2)

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 7)

Q: Can there be a tie?
A: No. The competition continues until we have one winner. (See Rule 8)

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, only 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 a greeter will escort you to the sit 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. At the end of the competition, all spellers are invited back on stage for the awards ceremony, participation souvenirs, a group photo, and a final round of applause. We encourage all families to stay for this important part of the program.

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 and greeters 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?
STATE SPELLING BEE

A: Restroom breaks will be given after each two rounds. (See Rule 13)

Q: What is a continental breakfast?
A: Coffee, juices, and an array of snacks will be available before the competition. If you have special dietary needs, you should plan accordingly.

Q: Will there be a break?
A: There will be a ten-minute break after the second round and again at the end of round five.

Q: What is the Bio used for?
A: Information about yourself will be printed in the program.

Q: What can be protested?
A: Nothing this year.

Q: How do I/we protest?
A: There will be no protests this year due to covid protocols.

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 11:30 a.m. for Elementary and 5:00 p.m 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 Spell Master and judges to hear the speller.

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 Championship is not affiliated with the Scripps National Spelling Bee.