

## Suggested Rules for Local Spelling Bees

### PREFACE

These suggested 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 that will be in effect in their area. Spelling bee officials include the judges, pronouncer, coordinator(s), and sponsor.

Local spelling bee officials have the prerogative to amend these rules at their discretion, with the following exceptions and cautionary notes:

With regard to Rule 1, any student who does not meet eligibility requirements (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), and (9) will be ineligible for participation in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

Rules 2, 20, and 21 may not be amended.

Local spelling bee officials: If you decide to amend any of the rules listed herein, then you are encouraged to (1) present a copy of your spelling bee rules to the contestants in writing before the start of the competition, (2) announce your rules before the start of the competition, and (3) provide a copy of your rules to the members of the audience.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee has no authority over the conduct of local spelling bees (namely, spelling bees other than the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.). The national office will not render judgments relating to the conduct or outcome of local spelling bees.

Individuals bearing complaints or questions about local spelling bees should register their concerns with local spelling bee officials. **DECISIONS OF LOCAL SPELLING BEE OFFICIALS ARE FINAL.**

The Suggested Rules for Local Spelling Bees are not the rules in effect at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. When a local spelling bee official says, "We use the national rules," he or she is probably indicating that the Suggested Rules for Local Spelling Bees are in effect.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee finals in Washington, D.C., operates under a significantly different set of rules called the Contest Rules of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. These rules, obtainable through [www.spellingbee.com](http://www.spellingbee.com) after February 1, 2005, contain provisions that are specific to unique conditions at the national finals, and their successful implementation at the local level is considered impossible and therefore is not recommended.

### RULES

1. Spellers must qualify under nine basic requirements:

(1) they must not have passed beyond the eighth grade on or before February 1, 2006;

(2) they must not have reached their 16th birthday on or before the date of the national finals, May 31, 2006;

(3) they, their parents, educators, relatives, or acquaintances must not have obtained a copy of the 2006 School Pronouncer Guide for use in studying;

(4) they must not have qualified for the national finals in Washington, D.C., by spelling in their final local spelling bee any words that appear in the 2006 School Pronouncer Guide;

(5) they may not qualify for the 2006 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., by winning their final local spelling bee before February 1, 2006;

(6) once having been disqualified at any level of a sponsor's spelling bee program between June 2005 and April 2006, they remain disqualified for the 2006 Scripps National Spelling Bee and may not seek advancement in the 2006 Scripps National Spelling Bee program through another sponsor and/or enrollment in another school;

(7) they may not eschew normal school activity in favor of preparation for spelling bees;

(8) they, having once won a Scripps National Spelling Bee championship in Washington, D.C., are ineligible for further competition in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, including spelling bees that are preliminary to the national finals in Washington, D.C.; and

(9) they must not have declared to another entity an academic classification higher than eighth grade.

With regard to requirements (1) and (2), spelling bee officials may, at their discretion, set a minimum grade and/or age limit. With regard to requirements (3) and (4), the purpose is to discourage cheating. All sponsors have been notified that their champion speller will be ineligible for the national finals if the 2006 School Pronouncer Guide is used as the word list in their final local spelling bee. With regard to requirement (7), normal school activity shall be defined as adherence to the full school schedule and varied academic course load maintained by a majority of the speller's age-mates and grade-mates.

2. A sponsor may not make participation in its local spelling bee program contingent upon any of the following matters: race, religion, creed, gender, the type of school one attends, membership in an organization, or subscription to a publication.

3. The spelling bee may be conducted orally or in writing or in a manner that is a combination of the two.

4. Local spelling bee officials are responsible for selecting the word lists that will be used at each local spelling bee. Many local spelling bee officials use word lists generated by the Scripps National Spelling Bee office. These lists include many words that appear in the current edition of Paideia as well as some "end-of-bee" words in their spelling bees. All words on Scripps National Spelling Bee word lists may be found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary and its Addenda Section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster.

5. The pronouncer should make every effort to pronounce the words according to the diacritical markings in Scripps National Spelling Bee word lists and Webster's Third New International Dictionary and its Addenda Section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster.

6. In competition, after the pronouncer gives the speller a word, the speller will be encouraged to pronounce the word before spelling it and after spelling it. The judges may not disqualify a speller for failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it.

7. The speller may ask the pronouncer to say the word again, define it, use it in a sentence, provide the part of speech, and/or provide the language of origin. The pronouncer shall grant all such requests until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the speller. Root word questions will not be entertained by the pronouncer and judges.

8. The judges may disqualify any speller who ignores a request to start spelling.
9. The role of the pronouncer is (1) to correctly pronounce the word and (2) to give a sentence, definition, and other information about the word at the speller's request. The role of the judges is to determine whether the contestant has spelled the word correctly. The role of the speller is (1) to gather as much information as possible to help spell the word correctly and (2) to spell the word correctly. The judges may not disqualify a speller for asking a question.
10. Having started to spell a word, a speller may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning. In retracing, however, there can be no change of letters or their sequence from those first pronounced. If letters or their sequence is changed in the respelling, the speller will be eliminated.
11. The competition shall be conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round shall spell one word in the round, except as provided in Rule 13, Option B.
12. Upon missing the spelling of a word, a speller immediately drops out of the competition, except as provided in Rule 13. The next word on the pronouncer's list is given to the next speller.
13. This rule addresses the procedure that should be followed at the end of a spelling bee. Two sets of procedures are listed: Option A and Option B. Before the start of the competition, the spelling bee officials should decide which option they will use for the end of their spelling bee. Furthermore, before the competition begins, the officials should notify the spellers and audience of the option that will be in effect at the end of the competition. **Option B is used for the Washoe County Spelling Bee.**

#### **Option B (Used in the Washoe County Spelling Bee)**

Option B is patterned after rule provisions in the Contest Rules of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., that were in effect prior to 1991. While this option is no longer used at the Scripps National Spelling Bee finals, it is sometimes best and easiest to administer this option at local spelling bees because many adults are more familiar with it and because there are fewer difficulties associated with prize distribution and local spelling bee qualification schemes.

When the number of spellers is reduced to two, the elimination procedure changes. At that point, when one speller misspells a word, the other speller shall be given an opportunity to spell that same word. If the second speller spells that word correctly, plus the next word on the pronouncer's list, then the second speller shall be declared the champion.

If one of the last two spellers misspells a word and the other speller, after correcting the error, misspells the new word, then the misspelled new word shall be referred to the other speller. If this other speller then succeeds in correcting the error and spells the next word on the list, then he or she shall be declared the champion.

If both spellers misspell the same word, both shall continue in the competition, and the one who first misspelled the word shall be given a new word to spell.

Key Effect of Option B:

The champion is not the champion until he or she corrects the misspelling of the other speller and then correctly spells the next word on the list.

14. Webster's Third New International Dictionary and its Addenda Section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster, shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of words. If more than one spelling is listed for a word that the pronouncer has provided for the speller to spell, any of these spellings shall be accepted

as correct 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 shall not be accepted as correct.

15. Any question relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the designated official immediately in writing on the official appeal form. The official appeal form should contain space for the following: the word in question, the name of the speller, and the reason for the appeal.

16. Appeals may be filed by a parent, legal guardian, or teacher of the speller who is seeking reinstatement in the contest. The judges will not entertain appeals from individuals seeking to dislodge another speller from the competition. The deadline for filing an appeal is before the speller affected would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the competition. No appeal will be entertained after that word has been given to another speller. Under Option A, when only five spellers remain, an oral appeal must be made immediately, that is, before the speller affected would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the contest. Under Option B, when only two spellers remain, an oral appeal must be made immediately, that is, before the speller affected would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the competition.

17. If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer will indicate which word is to be spelled. If the listed word is not properly identified, either by defining it or distinguishing the homonyms, any correct spelling of any homonym of the word will be accepted.

18. The speller shall not be disqualified for failing to note that a word is capitalized (noted as "cap," "usu cap," "often cap," or "sometimes cap" in Webster's Third New International Dictionary and its Addenda Section, copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster).

19. The judges are in complete control of the competition. Their decision shall be final on all questions.

20. Sponsors sending two spellers to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., must have two separate final spelling bees. The champion (last one standing) of the first of these two spelling bees qualifies for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The champion (last one standing) of the second of these two final spelling bees qualifies for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Deviation from this practice may result in disqualification of speller(s) and/or termination of sponsorship.

21. Sponsors sending three spellers to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., must have three separate final spelling bees. The champion (last one standing) of the first of these three final spelling bees qualifies for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The champion (last one standing) of the second of these three final spelling bees qualifies for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The champion (last one standing) of the third of these three final spelling bees qualifies for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Deviation from this practice may result in disqualification of speller(s) and/or termination of sponsorship.