



## 2024 Rules for WHRO District Spelling Bee

### Preface

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

These rules are guidelines designed to assist spelling bee officials and spellers at the district level. Spelling bee officials include the pronouncer, judges, coordinator and sponsor of WHRO.

The SNSB has no authority over the conduct of regional spelling bees and will not render judgments relating to their conduct or outcomes. Individuals bearing complaints about regional spelling bees should register their concerns with regional spelling bee officials. **DECISIONS OF REGIONAL SPELLING BEE OFFICIALS ARE FINAL.**

These *Rules for Regional Spelling Bees* are not the rules in effect at the national finals. When a regional spelling bee official says, “We use the national rules,” they are probably indicating that the *Rules for Regional Spelling Bee* are in effect.

The national finals operate under a significantly different set of rules called the *Contest Rules of the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee*. These rules contain provisions that are specific to unique conditions at the national finals. The implementation of many national finals rules at the regional level is not recommended.

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**1. Eligibility:** A speller qualifying for the 2024 WHRO district finals must meet these requirements:

- (1) The speller is eligible to participate in a regional partner’s program only if they have not completed the eighth grade (or international equivalent) and have not reached their 15th birthday on or before August 31st of the year prior to the applicable National Competition (by way of example, August 31, 2023, for the 2024 National Competition).
- (2) The speller must not have any first-, second- or third-degree relatives (i.e., sibling, parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, half-sibling, first cousin or great-grandparent) who are current employees of The E.W. Scripps Company as of February 1, 2024.
- (3) The speller must not have previously won an SNSB national finals.
- (4) The speller must attend a school that is officially enrolled with the SNSB program for the applicable year.
- (5) 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 the SNSB of the circumstances of grade repetition by March 31, 2024; and the SNSB will, at its sole discretion, determine the speller’s eligibility status on or before April 30, 2024.
- (6) 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.
- (7) The speller must not have earned the legal equivalent of a high school diploma.

- (8) The speller must not bypass or circumvent normal school activity to study for spelling bees. The SNSB 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 22, 2022, and May 15, 2024.
- (9) The speller must have been declared a sole champion (or alternate) of their school spelling bee.

The speller, upon qualifying for the 2024 SNSB national competition, must submit to the SNSB a completed Champion Registration, completed Prerequisite Assessment, an Appearance Consent and Release Agreement signed by a speller and speller's parent/legal guardian, a signed Certification of Eligibility Form, a liability waiver signed by speller and seller's parent/legal guardian, and a photo. The speller will notify the SNSB — at least 24 hours prior to the first day of the SNSB national finals — if any of the statements made on the Certification of Eligibility Form are no longer true or require updating. The speller's sponsor will provide access to the necessary items.

The SNSB 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 2024 SNSB national finals and April 30, 2025 — require any speller who is found to have not been in compliance with any of the eligibility requirements to forfeit the prizes, rank and other benefits accorded to the speller as a result of participation in the 2024 SNSB national finals.

1. **Format:** A spelling bee is conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells one word or answers one word meaning question in each round — except in the case of a written, multiple choice or online test. The spelling bee may be conducted orally, in writing, online or in a manner that is a combination of the three. If, however, the spelling bee officials specify an oral format, the speller may request a written format only as specified in the term of Rule 3: Special accommodations.
2. **Competition list:** Spelling bee officials are responsible for selecting the competition lists for use in their spelling bees and are encouraged to use the appropriate level of competition lists generated annually by SNSB. These competition lists include words that appear in the current edition of two study resources — the School Spelling Bee Study List and *Words of the Champions*. Also, these competition lists end with a section of words that do not appear in the aforementioned study resources and are for use near the end of a spelling bee, if the spelling bee officials determine that their use in the spelling bee is warranted. All words appearing on annual SNSB competition lists are entries in Merriam-Webster Unabridged, the official dictionary of the SNSB, available at <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/>. Merriam-Webster Unabridged is the final authority and sole source for the spelling of words; the primary source used to craft the pronunciations, definitions and language origins for the SNSB competition lists; and the only authority to be consulted by spelling bee officials. Some word information appearing in annual SNSB competition lists may have been drawn from the most recent copyrights of Merriam-Webster publications because the SNSB deemed the information helpful to the speller, however the SNSB is not obligated to draw supplemental material from other publications.
3. **Special accommodations:** Spelling bee officials will strive to provide accommodation for spellers who have diagnosed and documented conditions. All requests for spelling bee officials to provide accommodations should be directed to spelling bee officials well in advance of the spelling bee date. Spelling bee officials have discretionary power to amend oral and/or written spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis.
4. **Pronouncer's role:** The pronouncer pronounces words or reads word meaning questions and answer choices, and provides word information as listed in SNSB competition lists. The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in SNSB competition lists.

Homonyms: If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer indicates which word is to be spelled by defining the word. The SNSB 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.

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.

Pronouncer's sense of helpfulness: The pronouncer may offer word information — without the speller having requested the information.

5. **Judges' role:** The judges uphold the rules and determine whether words are spelled correctly or word meaning questions are answered correctly. They also render final decisions on appeals in accordance with Rule 9. 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: Spelling bee officials 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 in spelling rounds; 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. Although the judges are responsible for attempting to detect a speller's misunderstanding, it is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until a spelling 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 competition 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 or question; (3) who does not comply with the eligibility requirements; (4) who, or whose family, engages in conduct that does not promote fair honest rivalry, courteous relations and graceful acceptance of competition results; (5) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; (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.

6. **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.
7. **Errors:** Upon providing an incorrect spelling of a word or an incorrect answer to a word meaning question, the speller immediately drops out of the competition, except as provided in Rule 8.

## 8. 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 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 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.

Example: In Round 8 there are three spellers. Speller A spells correctly and Spellers B and C misspell. Round 9 begins, and Speller A is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller A misspells the anticipated championship word. Round 10 begins and includes Spellers A, B and C. The rules prescribe that spellers A, B and C spell in their original order; so Speller A gets the next word on the list even though Speller A misspelled the previous word on the list. Round 10 is not complete until all three spellers have spelled.

Tip: Spelling bee officials are encouraged 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.

9. **Appeals:** Provided that the appellant adheres to the Time and Manner Requirements specified herein, the judges will review appeals and render decisions on the following five grounds:

A. The speller correctly spelled the word but was eliminated for misspelling it; failing to say the word before or after spelling it; failing to indicate capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks; or incorrectly indicating capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks.

Judges: Do your records or an audio or video recording indicate that the speller offered the correct letters in the correct order and never changed the order of letters?

If yes, reinstate the speller even if the speller failed to say the word before or after spelling, or failed to indicate or incorrectly indicated capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks.  
If no, deny the appeal.

B. The speller correctly spelled a homonym of the word in question and was not given the definition of the word..

Judges: Did the pronouncer provide a definition? Refer to Rule 4.

If no, reinstate the speller. If yes, deny the appeal.

C. The speller correctly spelled an alternate spelling of the word as listed in Merriam-Webster Unabridged (1) whose pronunciation is identical to the word in question, (2) whose definition is identical to the word in question, and (3) that is clearly identified as a standard variant of the word in question.

Judges: Check Merriam-Webster Unabridged online.

If all three criteria are met, reinstate the speller.

If fewer than three criteria are met, deny the appeal.

Also, note that variant spellings having temporal labels (such as archaic, obsolete), stylistic labels (such as substandard, nonstandard), or most regional labels (such as North, Midland, Irish) will not be accepted as correct. If a word has an alternate spelling labeled "British" or "chiefly British" and that alternate spelling is listed on the same page as the headword, the alternate spelling will be listed in SNSB guides and should be accepted by judges as correct. For example, both "color" and "colour" should be accepted as correct, but "tyre" should not be accepted as correct if a speller is asked to spell "tire," since the British spelling is not found under the headword entry for "tire."

D. The officials did not adhere to Rule 8, the end-of-bee procedure.

Judges: Carefully examine Rules 8.

If you erred and the competition is still under way, reinstate the speller.

If you erred and the competition has concluded, contact the spelling bee coordinator for the next level of spelling bee for authorization to send both your declared champion and the speller (or spellers) affected by the error to the next level of competition.

If you did not err, deny the appeal.

**Invalid grounds for reinstatement:** The judges will not entertain appeals on the following grounds:

1. The pronouncer allegedly mispronounced the word.
2. The pronouncer offered pronunciations and/or word information that the speller did not request, and the unrequested information contributed to the misspelling.
3. One or all Bee officials indicated to the speller that the speller was pronouncing the word correctly, but the speller's spelling indicates that the speller wasn't pronouncing it correctly.
4. One or all Bee officials did not inform the speller before spelling that the speller's pronunciation was incorrect and/or that the speller was misunderstanding the word, and this inaction contributed to the misspelling.
5. The speller offered a correct spelling as indicated in a dictionary other than Merriam-Webster Unabridged or other online or print sources.
6. The pronouncer did not answer a root word question or provide the correct root word.
7. The pronouncer did not honor the speller's request to slow down the pronunciation of the word, break the word's pronunciation into syllables, or provide an alternate definition or sentence.

**Time and Manner Requirements:** A written appeal must be hand-delivered to the designated official (usually the spelling bee coordinator/director) indicating the speller's name, the name and contact information of the person filing the appeal, the relationship of the person filing the appeal to the speller (must be a parent, guardian, teacher or principal of the speller), the word in question, and the grounds for reinstatement. (See Grounds A-E herein.) The deadline for delivering an appeal is before the speller affected would have received their next word had they stayed in the spelling bee. To minimize disruptions, however, 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 their next word had they stayed in the spelling bee. While the competition is in session, individuals who have filed appeals may not directly approach the judges. The judges will make an announcement 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 to discuss with the speller, speller's parent(s), legal guardian or teacher a denied appeal.