

Davis Spelling Bee Rules

Eligibility

- (1) The speller must not previously have been declared champion of the Davis Spelling Bee.
- (2) The speller must attend a school that is officially enrolled with the Bee.
- (3) The speller must not have passed beyond the eighth grade as of the date of the Final Bee.

Basic Procedure

Spellers should have an assigned order and should remain in that order throughout the Bee. The Pronouncer will give each speller a word in order from the given list. Pronouncers and judges may skip a word or page if they desire, but should be following a specified plan so that they could not be accused of hand-picking a word for a particular student. After the speller has completed their spelling, the Pronouncer will announce that the spelling is correct or incorrect. DO NOT reuse the word if the first student spelled it incorrectly. In a classroom Bee, it is appropriate for the teacher to give the correct spelling of the word for immediate feedback and learning. In a formal School Spelling Bee, it is not customary to give the correct spelling, but to move quickly to the next speller with a new word. All spellers spell one word in each round. Upon incorrectly spelling a word during a spelling round, the speller is eliminated from the competition, except as provided under “End-of-Bee Procedure” herein. All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place.

End-of-Bee Procedure: If all spellers in an oral spelling round misspell, all remain in the competition and a new round begins with the spellers spelling in their original order. If only one speller spells correctly in a round, a new one-word round begins and the speller is given an opportunity to spell the next word on the list (anticipated winning word). If the speller correctly spells the anticipated winning word in this one-word round, the speller is declared the champion. If the speller misspells the anticipated winning word in a one-word round, a new round begins with all the spellers who spelled correctly and incorrectly in the previous round: These spellers spell in their original order.

Pronouncer’s Role: The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in Merriam-Webster Unabridged.

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: In oral competition the pronouncer responds only to the speller’s requests for repetition of the word’s pronunciation, a definition, a sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin and alternate pronunciation(s). When presented with requests for alternate pronunciations, the pronouncer or associate pronouncer checks for alternate pronunciations in Merriam Webster Unabridged. If the speller wishes to ask if the dictionary lists a specific root word as the root of the word to be spelled, the speller must specify a pronunciation of the root (not a spelling), its language and its definition. The pronouncer will grant all such requests as long as they are in accordance with time constraints (2 minutes at the microphone per word).

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 appears in the Word List.

Judges' Role: The judges listen carefully, determine whether or not words are spelled correctly, and uphold the rules. The decisions of the judges are final.

Misunderstandings: The judges will not respond to the speller's question(s) about the word and its pronunciation but, if the judges sense that the speller has misunderstood the word, the judges will direct the speller and pronouncer to interact until they are satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to assist the speller in understanding the word within the time constraints outlined in Rule 5. It is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until a spelling error has been made, and 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 will direct the pronouncer to correct the error as soon as it is detected.

Disqualifications for reasons other than clear misspelling: The judges will disqualify a speller (1) who does not approach the microphone when it is the speller's time to receive the word unless there are extenuating circumstances that, in the judges' sole discretion, merit holding the speller's word in reserve and offering it to the speller after all other spellers in the round have spelled and before the close of the round; (2) who engages in unsportsmanlike conduct; (3) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; or (4) 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, or the presence of a hyphen or other form of punctuation.

Speller's Role 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.

Aids: The speller may not wear or bring to any segment of the competition any object that could be construed as having potential to convey spelling advice unless the object is an approved accommodation. Further, the speller may not bear on the palms of hands or any visible part of the body any inked writing that could be construed as having potential to convey spelling advice.