

2026 Rules for QSI Spelling Bee

These spelling bee rules are adapted from the Scripps National Spelling Bee suggested rules ([linked here](#)), accessed on Oct 15, 2025 (The rules may be updated yearly).

The spelling bee uses the [Word Club app](#) from the Scripps National Spelling Bee as a support for the whole school community – students, teachers, pronouncer, judges and parents. The app helps with word lists, definition/pronunciation/details for each word and groupings for the school-level competition.

[Public details on the QSI-level bee will be here at the following link.](#)

Rules

1. Class and School-level Bees: 6YO- 13YO & S1/S2 classes will conduct class level spelling bees in the weeks leading up to the QSI Spelling bee. Each class will have 2-3 winners that will advance to the school level spelling bee.

The school-level and QSI-level spelling bee will be in the following groupings, based on the Word Club grouping:

- One Bee - 6YO, 7YO, 8YO
- Two Bee – 9YO, 10YO, 11YO
- Three Bee – 12YO, 13YO, S1, S2

The dates for the QSI-level bee will be the following:

- 12-13YO, S1, S2 - February 11, 2026
- 9-11YO - February 12, 2026
- 6-8YOs - February 13, 2026

Students should represent their literacy class group. For example, if a 9YO student goes up to the 10YO for literacy, that student will take part in the 10YO class bee and represent the 10YO students in the school-level bee. If that student wins in the 9-11YO bee for the school, then that student represents their school for the 9-11YO bracket in the QSI bee. Likewise, if a student is in the 9YO class but goes to the 8YO class for literacy, then they are in the 6-8YO bracket.

At the class-level, homeroom/literacy teachers can follow an adapted version of rules, *as they see fit*. At the school-level and QSI-level bee, the rules followed will be as below.

2. Format: A local spelling bee is conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells one word. The spelling bee will be conducted orally, unless a student specifies in advance particular reasons for written format participation. See Rule 4: Special needs.

3. Word lists: The word lists will be based off the Word Club spelling app from the Scripps National Spelling Bee (SNSB) dated 2025. Students are encouraged to study using the Word Club app to help with learning definitions and pronunciation. Printed word lists (based of the app) will be provided to students and [accessible to the community at this link](#).

All words appearing in the 2026 SNSB word lists and Word Club app 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 word lists; and the only authority to be consulted by spelling bee officials.

4. Special needs: Local spelling bee officials will strive to provide accommodation for spellers who have physical challenges. All requests for spelling bee officials to accommodate special needs involving sight, hearing, speech or movement should be directed to them well before the school-level spelling bee date. The spelling bee judges have discretionary power to amend oral and/or written spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions involving sight, hearing, speech or movement.

5. Pronouncer's role: The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings in 2026 SNSB word lists. At the school-level and final spelling bee, the pronouncer will use the Word Club app as an aid for correct pronunciation. There will only be spelling rounds, and no Vocabulary rounds (testing word meanings and definitions) as in the SNSB.

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

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 word list produced by the SNSB. 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 — if the pronouncer senses that the information is helpful and the information is presented in the entry for the word in a 2026 SNSB word list.

6. Judges' role: The judges uphold the rules and determine whether or not words are spelled correctly. They also render final decisions on appeals in accordance with Rule 11. 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. No masks or face coverings are allowed.

Notice of rules: The judges 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; 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. While the judges are responsible for attempting to detect a speller's misunderstanding, it is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until an 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 word 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. *At the school-level spelling bee, the pronouncer will use the Word Club app as an aid for correct pronunciation.*

Disqualifications for reasons other than error: The judges will disqualify a speller (1) who refuses a request to start spelling or to provide an answer to a word meaning question; (2) who does not approach the microphone when it is time to receive the word or question; (3) who, or whose family, engages in conduct that does not promote fair honest rivalry, courteous relations and graceful acceptance of competition results; (4) who, in the process of retracing a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; (5) 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.

7. 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. No masks or face coverings are allowed. 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 as listed on the pronouncer's competition word list produced by the SNSB.

8. Correction of a misspelling: The pronouncer and judges will not ask the speller to correct another speller's misspelling, even in end-of-bee circumstances.

9. Errors: Upon providing an incorrect spelling of a word, the speller immediately drops out of the competition, except as provided in Rule 10.

10. End-of-bee procedure:

If all spellers in a round misspell or answer word meaning questions incorrectly: 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 one-word 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 one-word round, the speller is declared the champion.

Example: In Round 12 there are four spellers. Spellers 6 and 21 misspell. Speller 30 spells correctly. Speller 42 misspells. So, Speller 30 is the only speller in the round to spell correctly. Speller 30 begins Round 13 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 30 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 10. Speller 14 misspells. Speller 25 spells correctly. Speller 25 begins Round 11 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 25 correctly spells the anticipated championship word and is declared champion.

Example: Two spellers spell in Round 16. Speller 3 spells correctly. Speller 9 misspells. Speller 3 begins Round 17 — a one-word round — and is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 3 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 12 spells correctly and Spellers 23 and 37 misspell. Round 9 — a one-word round — begins, and Speller 12 is offered the anticipated championship word. Speller 12 misspells the anticipated championship word. Round 10 begins and includes Spellers 12, 23 and 37. The rules prescribe that spellers 12, 23 and 37 spell in their original order; so Speller 12 gets the next word on the list even though Speller 12 misspelled the previous word on the list. Round 10 is not complete until all three spellers have spelled.