

Prairie-Hills School District 144
Spelling Bee
District Handbook

Participation and Competition Structure

Participation in the Prairie-Hills School District 144 Spelling Bee is open to all students in Second through Eighth Grade.

The spelling bee will consist of two levels of competition: building-level and district-level.

Building-Level Competition

The first round of the spelling bee will take place within each school building. Students will compete against other students within their same grade level homeroom.

Elementary Buildings

- Grade levels that have multiple classrooms - students will compete within their homeroom. One winner from each classroom will move onto the district level spelling bee.
- If a building has only one classroom for a particular grade level, the spelling bee will be conducted within that classroom.

Junior High

- One winner from each 6,7, and 8th grade ELA period will move onto the district level spelling bee.

District-Level Competition

The grade-level winners from each school building will advance to the Prairie-Hills School District 144 District-Wide Spelling Bee.

At the district level:

- Students will compete against the winners from their same grade level from the other district schools.
- Students will compete in separate competitions by grade level.
- There will be one district spelling bee winner for each grade level,second through Eighth Grade.
- The district-level competition will determine the District Spelling Bee Champion for each grade level.

This structure provides students with an opportunity to compete first within their own classroom before advancing to a district-wide competition with students from across Prairie-Hills School District 144.

Important Dates

Classroom Winners must be determined by **December 18, 2026**. All buildings must then forward the list of winners to Ms. Naik by **December 21, 2026**.

The District Wide Spelling Bee will take place on **February 12, 2027**.



Rules and Procedures

1. The panel of officials for the Spelling Bee should include the Spelling Master, at least two judges, an arbitrator, a challenge recorder, a timekeeper, and a round adviser. Some of these officials may share multiple roles. Refer to the descriptions for details.

2. A head judge, chosen by the District designee, will be chosen and will act as the spokesperson for the judging panel. The head judge will be the person to communicate with the Spelling Master.

3. The words used in the Prairie-Hills School District Spelling Bees are provided by the district office. Other non approved word lists should not be used.

4. Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in a Webster's Dictionary. With the approval of the judges, the Spelling Master may give a fuller explanation of the meaning of a word or part of speech to supplement the dictionary definition or definitions quoted. The Spelling Master may also provide a sentence if a contestant needs clarification. No other information about the etymology or history of a word will be given. If the contestant has a specific root word in mind, the contestant may ask if the dictionary lists that word as the root of the word to be spelled and only receive a "yes" or "no" answer. The Spelling Master shall grant all such requests until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the contestant. The judges may disqualify any contestant who ignores a request to start spelling.

5. If a word has one or more homonyms, the Speller may ask for the word in a sentence or a definition. If the listed word is not properly identified, either by sentence use, defining it, or by distinguishing the homonyms, any correct spelling of any homonym of the word will be accepted.

6. The Spelling Master will initiate the Spelling Bee with a practice round and ask participants they have any questions once the practice round has concluded. <u>Only</u> during the practice round may students misspell a word and continue in the contest.

7. The Spelling Bee shall be conducted in rounds. Each contestant remaining in the Bee at the start of each round shall spell one round word, except as provided in Rule 14. The procedure the Spelling Master will use for each word will be (1) pronounce the word, (2) use the word in a sentence, (3) pronounce the word. The head judge will have responsibility for stopping the student if the student fails to pronounce the word or if the student pronounces the word incorrectly. If the student still begins to spell without pronouncing the word and misspells the word, the student will be disqualified from the contest.

8. The contestant should:
   - Repeat the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the student heard the correct word.
   - Look at the Spelling Master or judges when spelling the word.
   - Spell the word orally. Students are not allowed to write the word on paper or in the air before spelling it.
   - Ask for any pronunciation, meaning, or sentence to be repeated for clarification before saying the word. The judges will grant the request until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the contestant. If a student abuses this rule, the student will be advised by the Spelling Master to begin the spelling and time will begin.

9. A student shall have a full minute to spell a word. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the student pronounces the word to begin spelling. If the student does not begin spelling at the end of the first 30-second period, the student shall be reminded by the judges to begin spelling. The student will then have the remaining seconds from the time of the judge's reminder to complete the spelling. The timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached the 60-second time limit.

10. Having started to spell a word, a contestant may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning; but in the retracing, there cannot be a change of letters or sequence from those first pronounced. If letters and their sequence are changed in the respelling, the speller will be disqualified.

11. Upon missing the spelling of a word, a contestant is immediately eliminated from the contest and will leave the podium/stage area. The next word on the Bee Master's list is given to the next contestant. If none of the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of a round spell a word correctly during the round, all contestants shall remain in the competition.

12. When two contestants remain in the Bee, the contestants shall be given an opportunity to spell the next word on the list. The final round shall "volley" back and forth until a contestant misspells a word. The other contestant will not receive a new word until s/he has the opportunity to spell the previously misspelled word correctly. A contestant must spell two words, in a row, correctly including the previously misspelled word from their opponent. For example:
   - As soon as contestant 1 misses a word, contestant 2 shall be immediately given the opportunity to spell the same word (contestant 1 is not out yet)
   - If contestant 2 correctly spells that word, he/she must now spell another word correctly (still, contestant 1 is not out yet)
   - If contestant 2 then spells this his/her second word correctly, they are then declared the champion
   - If contestant 2 does not spell the second word correctly, the it goes back to contestant 1 and they are given the opportunity to then correctly spell the word that contestant 2 just misspelled (contestant 2 is not out yet)
   - This can go back and forth if the contestants can only spell one word correctly instead of two in a row.
   - If both contestants spell the same word incorrectly, then the Spelling Master will give a new word to whichever contestant is up next (both contestants shall continue in the competition).

13. No talking is allowed among the contestants or between contestants and members of the audience while the rounds are in session. If a contestant receives assistance from anyone in the audience, the student will be disqualified. The audience is also requested to remain seated until a break to avoid distractions for the contestants.

14. Any questions relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the judge immediately. Only contestants are allowed to protest. The deadline for making a protest is before the contestant affected would have received their next word if they had stayed in the contest. No grievance will be entertained after the next word has been given to another speller. When only two spellers remain, an oral grievance must be made immediately, that is, before the contestant affected would have received their next word had they stayed in the Bee.

15. District Spelling Bees should provide accommodations for spellers who have physical challenges. All requests for accommodation of special needs involving site, hearing, speech, or movement should be provided to the district by the date requested by the District Coordinator.
    - The judges have discretionary power to amend spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions involving sight, hearing, speech, or movement.

Spelling Bee Master Responsibilities

1. The Spelling Master will have the list of words to be used in the Spelling Bee prior to the start of the contest.

2. The Spelling Master shall have rehearsed the words before the day of the Spelling Bee to ensure correct pronunciation and usage. The Merriam-Webster website provides links to listen for pronunciation to many words. (http://www.merriam-webster.com/)

3. The Spelling Master shall strive at all times to make students feel at ease.

4. The Spelling Master will have the names of all participants. Students will be addressed by their **first** name only.

5. The Spelling Master shall initiate the Spelling Bee with a practice round, and ask participants afterwards if they have any questions. The Spelling Master should announce when the practice round has ended and when the official Bee begins with Round 1.

6. The Spelling Master shall remind students to ask for the repetition of a word, sentence or definition, whenever they need clarification, **before** the student says the word.

7. The Spelling Master shall remind students to say the word before they begin spelling to ensure their understanding of the word. The student should repeat the word when finished spelling the word so judges will know the student is finished.

8. The Spelling Master shall announce the number of each new round, i.e., Round 1, Round 2, etc.

9. After saying the student's name, the Spelling Master shall say the word, use it in a sentence, and repeat the word, enunciating well and speaking slowly.

10. The Spelling Master shall continue presenting words until he hears from the Head judge, "Spelling Master, the correct spelling is …" At this time, the head judge will give the correct spelling of the word.

11. If a mispronunciation occurs, the Spelling Master shall correct the pronunciation and give the same word to the contestant.

**** The Spelling Master cannot serve in any additional roles during the Contest.***

Head Judge Responsibilities

1. There shall be at least two judges for the Spelling Bee. One judge shall be appointed Head Judge and shall communicate the judges' decisions to the Spelling Master.

2. As the Spelling Master pronounces the word for the student and uses it in a sentence, the judge will check the Bee Master's pronunciation and usage. If there is a question about correctness of either the pronunciation or usage, the head judge should tell the Spelling Master before the student begins spelling the word. If the other judge(s) questions the correctness or usage, they should confer with the Head Judge. During the spelling of the word the other judge(s) will write down the spelling given by the speller *(optional at district level contests)*.

3. The judges should listen for the student pronouncing the word before beginning to spell. This will ensure that the student will be spelling the right word. If a student does not pronounce the word before beginning to spell, the head judge should stop the student and ask the student to first say the word.

4. If the Spelling Master pronounces a word or misuses the word in a sentence, the judges should make the Spelling Master aware of the problem before a student begins to spell the word.
    - When a student misspells a word, and after the Spelling Master says, "That is incorrect," the Head Judge will say to the Spelling Master, "Spelling Master, the correct spelling is..." providing the correct spelling for the master, students, and the audience.

5. The judges should monitor the following of all rules and apply all decisions fairly and equally to all students.

6. The District Spelling Bee Coordinator and/or head judge will advise the Spelling Master when it is time for a break.

7. The judges should keep track of which student's turn it is.

8. The judges should record on the Round Response sheet which word and which round each student was eliminated.

9. If there is a challenge the Arbitrator cannot settle, judges will confer with the Arbitrator and make the binding decision. The decision of the judges is final.

The Head Judge Master may serve in one additional role during the contest.

Judge Responsibilities

1. There shall be a minimum of two judges for the Spelling Bee. One judge shall be appointed *Head Judge* and shall communicate the other judge(s) communications/decisions to the Spelling Master.

2. As the Spelling Master pronounces the word for the student and uses it in a sentence, the judge(s) will check the Bee Master's pronunciation and usage. If there is a question about correctness of either the pronunciation or usage, the head judge should tell the Spelling Master before the student begins spelling the word. If either of the other judge(s) question the correctness or usage, they should confer with the Head Judge. During the spelling of the word, at least one judge will write down the spelling given by the speller (at county level).

3. The judge(s) should listen for the student pronouncing the word before beginning to spell. This will ensure that the student will be spelling the right word. If a student does not pronounce the word before beginning to spell, the head judge should stop the student and ask the student to first say the word.

4. If the Spelling Master pronounces a word or misuses the word in a sentence, the judge(s) should make the Spelling Master aware of the problem before a student begins to spell the word.

5. When a student misspells a word, the head judge should say to the Spelling Master, "Spelling Master, the correct spelling is...", providing the correct spelling for the master, students, and the audience.

6. The judge(s) should monitor the following of all rules.

7. The judge(s) should apply all decisions fairly and equally to all participants.

8. The local Spelling Bee Coordinator and/or head judge will advise the Spelling Master when it is time for a break.

9. The judge(s) should keep track of which student's turn it is.

10. The judge(s) should record on the Round Response sheet which word and which round each student was eliminated.

11. The decision of the judge(s) is/are final.

A judge who does not serve as the Head Judge may serve in 2-3 roles during the Contest.

Round Advisor Responsibilities

1. The Round Advisor formally announces to the audience the beginning of each round by turning the cards to the next round number each time the Spelling Master gives a new word to the first speller.

2. The Round Advisor ensures that no one in the audience is giving help to a contestant. The Round Advisor faces the audience, usually sitting on stage.

3. If the Round Advisor observes someone giving spelling assistance to a student, the Round Advisor should speak to the person personally, or motion for assistance from Bee officials. If spelling assistance continues, the Round Advisor should ask the judges for a time-out. The Spelling Bee officials will then decide what action should be taken.

4. If the Round Advisor observes people in the audience unconsciously lip spelling or nodding heads as correct/incorrect spelling are given, the audience should be reminded that the students must spell the word without assistance.

This role should be served by the District Spelling Bee Coordinator or designee who is not interacting with the contestants while the Bee is active.

Timekeeper Responsibilities

1. The student shall have a full minute to spell a word.

2. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the student pronounces the word until spelling begins.

3. If the student does not begin spelling the word at the end of the 30-second period, the student shall be reminded by the Timekeeper to begin spelling.

4. The student shall have an additional 30 seconds from the time the Timekeeper reminds the student to begin spelling until they must finish spelling the word.

5. The Timekeeper will disqualify any student who has not spelled the word at the end of a 60 second period.

6. The Timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached either of the 60-second time limits.

7. Once a student pronounces their word, the student may not stop and ask for a definition, repetition, a new sentence, etc. This must be done *before* the student pronounces the word.

A Timekeeper may serve in 2-3 roles during the Contest.

Prairie-Hills School District Spelling Bee Forms

Note: All officials will have access to the following materials the day of the District Spelling Bee:

1. List of participants in alphabetical order
2. A list of practice words that include enough words for each participant to rehearse one time, prior to the official first round.
3. Challenge Recorders Sheet
4. Round Response Sheet(s)
5. Timekeeper's Time Sheet(s)
6. Spelling Bee Rules and Procedures
7. Video and/or Audio recording of the Spelling Bee
8. Webster's Dictionary On-line
9. Word lists with sentences, definitions, and pronunciations

Staff Responsibility List

Staff Names	Responsibility

Round Response Sheet

Student	WORD	Student	WORD	Student	WORD

Elementary Building Grade Level Winners

School:		
Grade Level	**Student Names**	**Student Names**
Second		
Third		
Fourth		
Fifth		

* The students listed on this page will advance on to the District Level competition. Each student will receive an invitation and information for the event.

Junior High Grade Level Finalists

Teacher's Name_____	**Grade Level** ___
Period	**Student Names**
First	
Second	
Third	
Fourth	
Fifth	
Sixth	
Seventh	
Eighth	
Nineth	

* The students listed on this page will advance on to the District Level competition. Each student will receive an invitation and information for the event.