



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Should I read the rules?

A: Yes. You and your family should read the rules so everyone understands how the competition is conducted. The rules will be read out loud prior to the start of the competition.

Q: What should I wear?

A: Comfortable clothing. No hats, please.

Q: What information can I request from the Spelling Master regarding the word?

A: You can ask for the definition of the word and that it be used in a sentence. The Spelling Master will not syllabify (divide into syllables) the word, but may provide the part of speech or the language of origin.

Q: Can I write the word down before spelling it aloud?

A: No

Q: Is there a word source for me to study?

A: Yes. A word list is posted on the SCCOE Elementary Spelling Bee website.
<http://www.sccoe.org/depts/ci/Pages/Santa-Clara-County-Spelling-Bee.aspx>

Q: How are the words chosen for the competitions?

A: Words are selected randomly from the official Word List, Level 1 and Level 2 and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, Online (2013)*.

Q: Should I pronounce the word before spelling?

A: Yes. In fact you are encouraged to pronounce the word before spelling it so that the Spelling Master and Judges know that you heard the word correctly. After you pronounce your word, pause briefly before spelling so the Spelling Master and/or Judges can correct you if necessary.

Q: How shall I spell a word that is capitalized – like Monday?

A: There are two ways. You could say, “capital M” and then spell the rest of the word, or, you could spell the entire word, then say “the M is capitalized”. Use this same method for words requiring punctuation (e.g. hyphens, apostrophes) or accent marks.

Q: Once I begin, can I stop spelling and start over?

A: Yes, but you can't change the letters or their sequence.

Q: Is there a time limit before I must begin spelling?

A: We do not use a stopwatch or buzzer. The Spelling Master and Judges will allow you a “reasonable” time period, then give you a warning if you are taking too long.

Q: Can there be a tie?

A: No. The competition continues until we have one winner.

Q: What if I know the word I am given is a homonym?

A: You should ask for a definition, or if no definition of a homonym is given, the correct spelling of either word shall be accepted as correct. When a speller is given the definition of a homonym, he or she must spell the word defined. (See Rule 9)

Q: How many words can I miss before I am eliminated from the competition?

A: One. When you misspell one word, you will be eliminated from the competition.

Q: How are places determined?

A: Placement is determined by the order in which spellers misspell words. A round does not determine your place. In other words, you do not tie with other spellers that missed a word in the same round as you did.

Q: What do I do if I misspell a word?

A: The Judge will provide you with the correct spelling, congratulate you on your effort, and welcome you back to the audience.

Q: Should my family and I leave after I misspell a word?

A: Participants are to remain until the end of the round. After the round, the decision to stay or leave is up to you and your family. Participants are encouraged to stay through the end of the competition to support one another.

Q: What if I have to use the restroom?

A: You may be excused to use the restroom either before you are given a word to spell or after your turn. You will not be excused to use the restroom after a word has been given to you and before you have spelled the word.

Q: Will there be a break?

A: Yes. There will be short breaks between rounds as needed.

Q: Can anyone attend the competition?

A: Yes. The competition is open to the public. In consideration of others, we request that small children who become restless or noisy be taken out of the room for a short break until they can settle down. Distractions to the students will not be tolerated.

Q: Who notifies my local newspaper?

A: After the competition, the Santa Clara County Office of Education will send a press release to the county newspaper.

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