



Santa Clara County Spelling Bee

Santa Clara County  Office of Education

District Guidebook

**2024-2025 SCCOE Spelling Guide for District
Staff, Administrators & Teachers
Adapted by the Santa Clara Office of Education
From [RCOE](#) and other web-based resources**

The Guide is presented as an informational guide only. As with any manual, information contained herein is subject to change, amendment, or deletion by the County's Administration and/or Board as deemed appropriate.



Rules and Procedures

Participation in the Santa Clara County District Spelling Bee is open to students attending a public school or private school within a district in Santa Clara County. Charter school students must be enrolled in a charter school whose chartering agency is located within Santa Clara County. Home-schooled students that live in Santa Clara County may participate in the County Spelling Bee if their Home-School organization meets the criteria.

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 advisor. Some of these officials may share multiple roles. Refer to the descriptions for details.

A head judge will act as the spokesperson for the judging panel. The head judge will be the person to communicate with the Spelling Master.

Some words used in the Santa Clara County District Spelling Bees are provided by the Santa Clara County Coordinator and are posted on the Santa Clara County Office of Education Spelling Bee website.

Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>. The Spelling Master will pronounce the word and then use the word in a sentence. The Spelling Master will provide the definition of a word when requested. Information about the etymology or history of a word will not be given. 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 after being provided with a definition and a sentence.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Copyright 2020, Merriam-Webster, Inc. shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of words in the county finals. If a word has two or more accepted spellings, only the spellings set in boldface type and separated by the word "or" at the beginning of the descriptive matter will be accepted as correct. Spelling words having the labels "archaic," "less common," and obsolete (abbreviated obs) and regional labels (like North, Midland, South, British, Irish) that are different from those in boldface type or at main entry, will not be accepted as correct.

If a word has one or more homonyms, the Speller may ask for 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.

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

The Spelling Bee shall be conducted in rounds. Each contestant remaining in the Bee at the start of each round shall spell one word, except as provided in Rule 14. 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.

The contestant should:

- Ask for any pronunciation, meaning, or sentence to be repeated for clarification **before saying the word and before spelling the word**. Timer will begin when the student says 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.
- Repeat the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the contestant heard the correct word.
- Option - write the word on paper. Cross out misspellings. Put the pencil down when finished writing the word. Turn over paper. Then proceed with spelling the word orally. Timekeeper will notify contestant when there is only 15 seconds left. (Written spelling can be used to verify oral spelling if pronunciation of letters is unclear.)
- Look at the Spelling Master or judges when orally spelling the word).
- Spell the word orally.
- State the word again.

A student shall have 30 seconds (45 seconds if the student is also writing the word) to spell a word from the time the student pronounces the word to begin spelling. If the student does not begin spelling when there is 15 seconds left, the student shall be reminded by the timekeeper to begin spelling or that he/she has 15 seconds left. The student will then have the remaining seconds from the time of the timekeeper's reminder to complete the spelling. The timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached the 30-second time limit. (Districts can choose to allot more time but it should be consistent for all participants.)

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.

Upon missing the spelling of a word, a contestant is immediately eliminated from the contest and will leave the podium/stage area and sit in a separate 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.

When two contestants remain in the Bee, the contestants must spell two words in a row to win. The final round shall “volley” back and forth until a contestant misspells a word. The other contestant will spell the previously misspelled word correctly before spelling a new word. A contestant must spell two words, in a row, correctly including the previously misspelled word from their opponent in order to win. 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, then 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).

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. Please refrain from clapping or celebrating, if a student does not spell a word correctly. We will take a minute to congratulate the student for their hard work thus far. The audience is also requested to remain seated until a break to avoid distractions for the contestants. Parents and guardians of disqualified students should stay until the end of the Spelling Bee for the Certificate Ceremony.

Any questions relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the arbitrator 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. 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.

The arbitrator shall have access to the word list with its pronunciations, definitions, and sentences; the dictionary (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster, Inc); the recording of the Bee; the rules; and the timekeeper's record sheet. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the arbitrator shall call for a brief time out to confer with the judges.

District Spelling Bees coordinators should provide accommodations for spellers who have physical challenges. All requests for accommodations of special needs should be provided to the district by the date requested by the District Coordinator. The District Spelling Bee coordinators have discretionary power to amend spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions or disabilities.

Guidelines regarding videotaping, digital recording, and/or the taking of photographs during the District Spelling Bees should be communicated to spectators.

The Santa Clara County Spelling Bee has no authority over the conduct of local (classroom, school site, or district) spelling bees. Consequently, the Santa Clara County Office of Education will not render judgments relating to the conduct of local spelling bees. Individuals bearing complaints about the conduct of local spelling bees should register their concerns with local spelling bee officials. Decisions of local spelling bee officials are final.

Districts will need to provide Santa Clara County with the District's two winners's names, contact information, and photos per spelling bee (Elementary or Jr. High), and (if applicable) an alternate/runner up. The district winner will represent his/her district in the Santa Clara County Spelling Bee. In the event the district winner cannot participate in the County Spelling Bee, the runner-up will be contacted. No other district participant will be contacted, should the runner up be unable to participate in the County Spelling Bee.

The top two elementary finishers (grades 4-6) and junior high finishers (grades 7-9) will represent Santa Clara County at the California State Spelling Bees. California State Elementary Spelling Bee registration fees for the top two Santa Clara County elementary finishers will be covered by the Santa Clara County Office of Education. Transportation and lodging fees related to the California State Elementary Spelling Bee are not included.



Spelling Bee Master Responsibilities

1. The Spelling Master will have the list of words, sentences, and definitions 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 or assigned number.
5. The Spelling Master will go over the procedures and rules before starting.
6. The Spell Master shall initiate the Spelling Bee with a practice round, and ask participants afterwards if they have any questions.
7. The Spelling Master should announce when the practice round has ended and when the official Bee begins with Round 1.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The Spelling Master shall announce the number of each new round, i.e., Round 1, Round 2, etc.
11. After saying the student's first name, or assigned number, the Spelling Master shall say the word, use it in a sentence, and repeat the word, enunciating well and speaking slowly.
12. 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. The judges should have a copy of the words that will be used in the order that they will be given. Judges will also need a pens.
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.
3. During the spelling of the word the other judge(s) will write down the spelling given by the speller or circle the letter omitted, write in the letter(s) added, or draw an arrow to show the error in the word on the sheet. *(Districts should use the method that will work best for the judges).*
4. 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.
5. When a student misspells a word, 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.
6. The judges should monitor the following of all rules and apply all decisions fairly and equally to all students.
7. The judges should keep track of which student's turn it is. The judges should record on the Round Response sheet which word and which round each student was eliminated.
8. 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 judge should tell the head judge to 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. The judge(s) should monitor the following of all rules.
6. The judge(s) should apply all decisions fairly and equally to all participants.
7. The judge(s) should keep track of which student's turn it is.
8. The judge(s) 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, the judge(s) will confer with the Arbitrator and make the binding decision.
10. 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.***



Arbitrator Responsibilities

1. It is the duty of the Arbitrator to record the Bee proceedings, keep track of the recordings, and make them available in case of a challenge or concern by any of the other officials.
2. Whenever a contestant challenges a judge's decision, the challenge shall be made to the Arbitrator before the student concerned would receive the next word in the next round.
3. The arbitrator is also responsible for looking up the indicated word in the dictionary for additional information if requested by the Bee Master.
4. If the challenge cannot be resolved from reviewing the video or examining the notes of the judges, the Arbitrator shall call for a brief time-out to conference with the judge(s).
5. The judge(s) decision shall be final.

****An Arbitrator may serve in 2-3 roles during the Contest.***



Challenge Recorder Responsibilities

1. When a contestant makes a challenge, the Challenge Recorder will record the word challenged and the reason for the challenge. The Challenge Recorder shall have access to the Arbitrator's challenge sheet for reference, and the judge(s) hearing response sheets.
2. If a contestant makes a challenge on the same word but on a different issue (instead of student spelling, he challenges the Spelling Master's pronunciation), the challenge should be allowed and also recorded.
3. The Challenge Recorder should record whether the challenge was granted or denied.

****A Challenge Recorder 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. (This can also be done electronically with slides.)
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. If possible, try to face the contestants away from the audience.
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 30 seconds to spell a word.
2. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the student pronounces the word.
3. If the student does not begin spelling the word after 15 seconds, the student shall be reminded by the Timekeeper to begin spelling. (A timer can be shown on a slide, if possible.)
4. The Timekeeper will disqualify any student who has not spelled the word at the end of a 30 second period. (If the student has already started spelling a word before the time is up, the student doesn't need to be disqualified.)
5. The Timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached either of the 30-second time limits.
6. 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.***



District Spelling Bee Materials List

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

-  List of participants in alphabetical order (with assigned number)
-  A list of practice words that include enough words for each participant to rehearse one time, prior to the official first round.
-  Challenge Recorders Sheet
-  Round Response Sheet(s)
-  Timekeeper's Time Sheet(s)
-  Spelling Bee Rules and Procedures
-  Video and/or Audio equipment
-  <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>
-  Word lists for judges, Challenge Recorder, and Arbitrator
-  Word lists with sentences, definitions, and pronunciations for Spelling Master
-  Webster's Third New International Dictionary unabridged, Copyright 2020, Merriam-Webster, Inc.



Santa Clara County
Spelling Bee
Santa Clara County Office of Education

Round Response Sheet

Student #	WORD	Student #	WORD	Student #	WORD

The day of the Bee, the Round Response sheet should have enough space all spellers participating (i.e., if there are 30 spellers, there should be 3 rows of 10)



Challenge Recorder's Sheet

[illegible]



Timekeeper's Time Sheet

Round Number	Student Number	Word (Optional)	Time :30	Called 1 minute	Notes



District Bee Registration Form

This form must be submitted online, along with the District/Site Winner and Alternate Biography form and Student Participation form.

<i>School District</i>	
<i>School Site (if applicable)</i>	
<i>District/Site Coordinator</i>	
<i>Mail Code</i>	
<i>Contact Number</i>	
<i>E-Mail Address</i>	
<i>District/Site Winner</i>	
<i>District/Site Alternate</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> None

☐ The District/Site has paid the enrollment fee for the Santa Clara County Spelling Bee.

<i>County Registration Fee</i>	<i>\$150.00 - by check, credit card, or purchase order – Made payable to Santa Clara County COE</i>
<i>Registration Deadline</i>	<i>Monday, February 5, 2016</i>
<i>Mail Completed Form/Payment to</i>	Remit payments to: Santa Clara County Office of Education Curriculum & Instruction Attention: Jhun Madriaga 1290 Ridder Park Drive, MC. 237 San Jose, CA 95131



Santa Clara County
Spelling Bee
Santa Clara County Office of Education

Participating District Roster

This form must be completed online. A link will be sent to District Contacts

School District	
District Site Coordinator	

District Winner	
District Runner Up	

Complete by the Monday, February 5, 2016 Registration Deadline.



Autobiographical Sketch

**This form is for the County Winner and Alternate.
This form must be completed online. A link will be sent to District Contact(s).**

<i>School District</i>	
<i>School Site (if applicable)</i>	
<i>District/Site Coordinator</i>	

Check One	<input type="checkbox"/> Winner	<input type="checkbox"/> Alternate
-----------	---------------------------------	------------------------------------

Please type or print all information clearly.

<i>School District</i>	
<i>School Site (if applicable)</i>	
<i>Student Name</i>	
<i>Grade Level</i>	
<i>Parent/Guardian Name</i>	
<i>Parent/Guardian Phone Number</i>	
<i>Mailing Address</i>	

Autobiographical Sketch Page 1 of 2



Santa Clara County
Spelling Bee
Santa Clara County Office of Education

DIRECTIONS FOR THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH: In the space provided, write a paragraph about yourself (maximum 150 words). Include information such as hobbies, pets, favorite subjects, future ambitions, reasons for entering the Bee, how you studied, etc. Autobiographical sketch information will appear as it is written in the program for the Santa Clara County Spelling Bee Communications. *(Please limit paragraph to space provided, either handwritten or typed.)*

Sample:

My name [insert name]. Currently, I attend [insert school] as a 6th grader. My favorite part of school is [] because...

I am participating in the Bee because [insert reason]. It has been a(n) [insert descriptor] experience,

When I'm not at school, I enjoy spending time with [friends, family, pets] and participating in [activities]. You might be surprised to learn that I [quinky fact].



**1290 Ridder Park Dr
San Jose, CA 95131-2304
Phone: (408) 453-6500
<http://www.sccoe.org>**

