

Santa Clara County  
Spelling Bee

Santa Clara County  Office of Education

*District Guidebook*

**2023-2024 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

1. Participation in the Santa Clara County District Spelling Bee is open to students attending a public school or private school within a Santa Clara County District. Charter school students may participate and must be enrolled in a charter school whose chartering agency is located within Santa Clara County. Home-schooled students may participate in the Spelling Bee through the district/public school they would attend if they were not home schooled. Home-schooled students may participate in the Spelling Bee without their district/public school if their Home-School Organization meets the criteria.
2. The panel of officials for the 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.
3. 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.
4. The 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.
5. Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Copyright 2002, Merriam-Webster, Inc. 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. 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 may also provide a sentence if a contestant needs clarification. 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.
6. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Copyright 2002, 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", and in some cases the word "also", at the beginning of the descriptive matter will be accepted as correct. Spelling words having the labels archaic 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.

7. 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.
8. 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. Only during the practice round may students misspell a word and continue in the contest.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.

14. 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).
15. 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.
16. 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. 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.
17. 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.
18. 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.

19. Districts must provide Santa Clara County with the District's Bee winner, 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) will represent Santa Clara County at the California State Elementary Spelling Bee. California State Elementary Spelling Bee registration fees for the top two Santa Clara County elementary finishers will be covered by the Santa Clara County Transportation and lodging fees related to the California State Elementary Spelling Bee are not included.
20. 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.
21. Guidelines regarding videotaping, digital recording, and/or the taking of photographs during the District Spelling Bees are decided by District officials.
22. The District Spelling Bee officials' decision shall be regarded as final by the County.



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## 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 Spelling 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. If there is a challenge the Arbitrator cannot settle, the judge(s) will confer with the Arbitrator and make the binding decision.
12. 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. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the Arbitrator shall call for a brief time-out to conference with the judge(s).
4. If a second arbitrator is available, it is their responsibility to look up the indicated word in the dictionary for additional information requested by the Bee Master.
5. The judge(s) decision shall be final.

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



## Challenge Recorder Responsibilities

1. When an individual 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 second person makes an identical challenge, the Challenge Recorder should inform the individual that the challenge has already been made and cannot be repeated.
3. If a second person 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.
4. 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.
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.***



## Santa Clara County District Spelling Bee Forms

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

-  List of participants in alphabetical order
-  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 recording of the Spelling Bee
-  [Webster's Third New International Dictionary, c2002](#)
-  Word lists with sentences, definitions, and pronunciations



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## Round Response Sheet

Student #	WORD	Student #	WORD	Student #	WORD

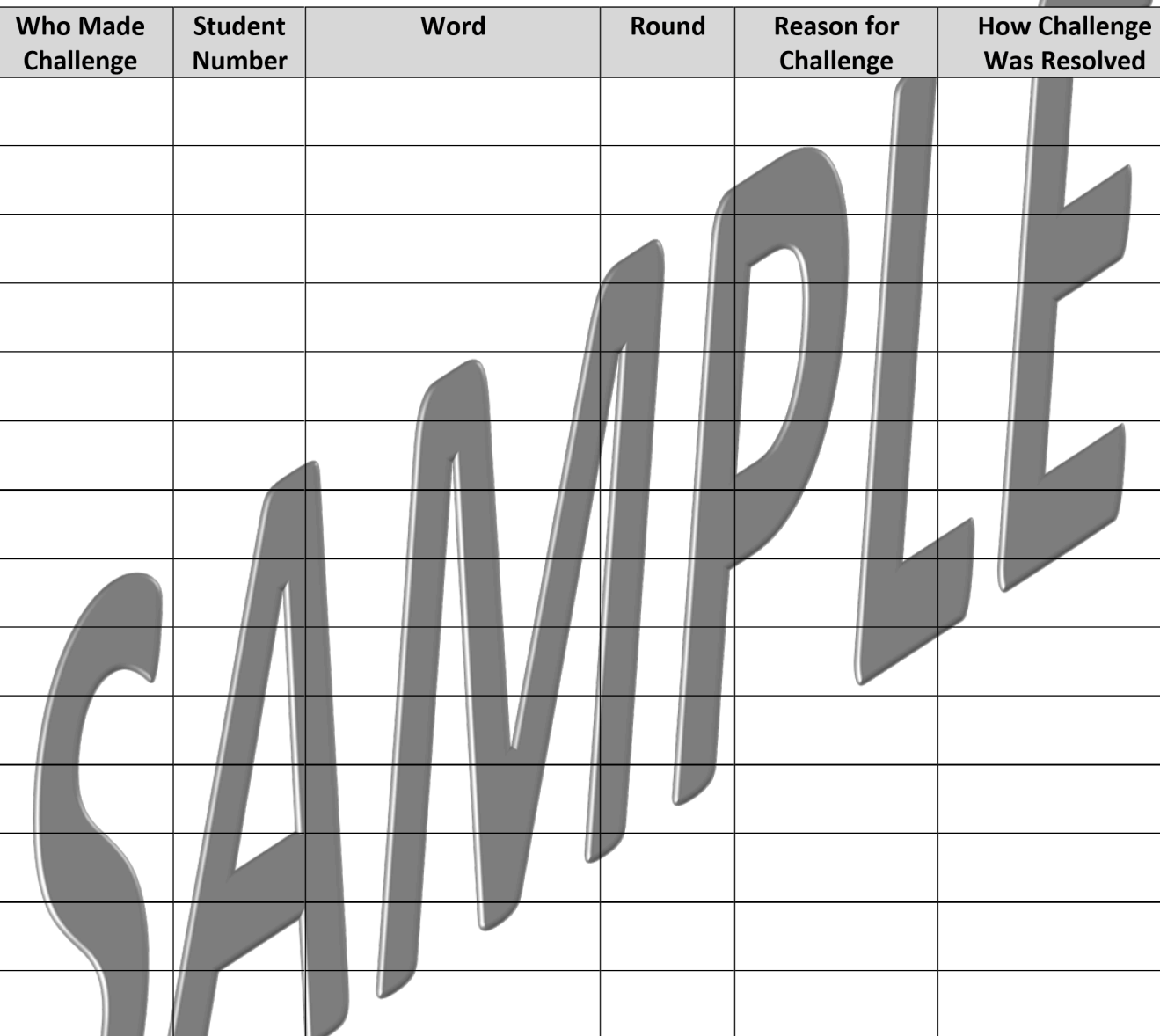
*The day of the Bee, the Round Response sheet should have enough space all spellers participating (i.e., if there are 30 spellers, there should be 3 rows of 10)*

SAMPLE



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## Challenge Recorder's Sheet

Who Made Challenge	Student Number	Word	Round	Reason for Challenge	How Challenge Was Resolved
					





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## Timekeeper's Time Sheet

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



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## 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>	<b>Remit payments to:</b> Santa Clara County Office of Education Curriculum & Instruction Attention: Jhun Madriaga 1290 Ridder Park Drive, MC. 237 San Jose, CA 95131



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## Participating District Roster

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

<i>School District</i>	
<i>District Site Coordinator</i>	

District Winner	
District Runner Up	

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

**SAMPLE**



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## 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
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*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



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**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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 [quirky fact].

complete Online



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<http://www.sccoe.org>**



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