

SWWC REGIONAL

SPELLING BEE



SPELLING BEE



District Coordinator's Handbook 2025-2026

An Academic Enrichment Activity
Sponsored by Minnesota Service Cooperatives

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SWWC

STUDENT ENRICHMENT

General Information

All levels are possible due to the generous sponsors who contribute to the Spelling Bee to help support student programs; Southwest West Central Service Cooperative, Minnesota Service Cooperative, Lathrop GPM, Medica, Wex, Merriam-Webster as a prize donor, and Encyclopedia Britannica.

This year Scripps National Spelling Bee celebrates their 100th year.

Each school district in Minnesota is invited to participate in this event. The following is the sequence of events, which eventually leads up to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in National Harbor, Maryland. Schools have the choice to run one of these or all three.

Classroom Spelling Bee
School Building Spelling Bee
District Spelling Bee

Regional Spelling Bee
National Spelling Bee

Each school district contest determines the champion speller/spellers. These students are then sent to the Regional Spelling Bee. The representation formula is one speller per 1,000 students based on K-12 enrollment.

Please note: Since it is impossible to monitor home or hospital bound contestants participating in the bee virtually, an added rule states that a child must be present at the contest in order to compete.



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Important Dates

August 19, 2025Scripps Open Enrollment
(www.spellingbee.com)

November 20, 2025SWWC Service Cooperative
Registration Deadline
(www.swwc.org/bee)

February 3, 2026Forms Due: District Spelling Bees completed;
submit Winner and District Participation Data
Form online for Regional Spelling Bee to SWWC
Service Cooperative (www.swwc.org/bee)

January 29, 2026.....Regional Bee Information sent to schools.

February 17, 2026Regional Spelling Bee—New location
Marshall YMCA
(Snow Date – February 18)

May 26-27, 2026Scripps National Spelling Bee in
Washington, DC

Note: To qualify for the regional and national spelling bee, a school must
register with both SWWC Service Cooperative (www.swwc.org/bee) and
Scripps National Spelling Bee (www.spellingbee.com)

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STUDENT ENRICHMENT

Sequence of Events

Classroom Spelldown

Each teacher may conduct a classroom spelldown. The contest may be written, oral, or a combination of the two. The teacher selects the words. What is most important is that there is a classroom representative to send to the School Spelling Bee.

School Building Spelling Bee

The School Spelling Bee coordinator directs the School Spelling Bee. This Bee may be held during school hours or in the evening. The School Bee consists of all top winners from each classroom. The coordinator chooses how many from each class will move on the next bee.. An area with a stage and good lighting is best, although libraries are quite fitting places.

A word of caution ... if your school has many classes, you may want to hold a preliminary spelldown before your School Spelling Bee. Twenty to twenty-five contestants make a good spelling bee lasting about an hour.

If you have several school buildings in your district, each building could use the same confidential contest word list to expose all students going to the District Spelling Bee to words of equal difficulty. It is a good idea to hold all of the School Bees at the same time so that no one will know the words ahead of time.

District Spelling Bee

The identical steps in the School Spelling Bee are followed in the District Spelling Bee. You may want to ask someone to give a congratulatory speech to the students. Your School may want to provide refreshments. Make sure you forward the name, address, grade level, and school name of your champion(s) to the Regional Coordinator by filling out the winner and district participation form, as they need this information to make final arrangements for the Regional Spelling Bee. School Building contests must be completed before the District Contest so the champion will be determined in time to attend the District Bee.

Regional Spelling Bee

Each participating district may send their champion speller/spellers to the Regional Spelling Bee coordinated by your SWWC Service Cooperative. The representation formula is one speller per 1,000 students based on K-12 enrollment. Non-public schools may register on their own.

Scripps National Spelling Bee

The regional champion from each Minnesota Service Cooperative region area will advance to the National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC.



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Spellers Role

Each school who registers with Scripps has access to study guides for students. Share with your students. They can also study anything from the Webster Dictionary.

Each school will run oral rounds and can choose to do a written round and/or vocabulary round.

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. The speller makes an effort to pronounce 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 list. The speller does not need to note capitalization of a word, presence of diacritical marks, presence of hyphens or other forms of punctuation, or spacing between words in an open compound. To be judged as correct and move on to the next round, the speller must provide the correct letters in the correct order.

The speller has 30 seconds in which to begin spelling the word. The spelling of the word should take no longer than 60 seconds.

Having started to spell a word, spellers shall not be permitted to change letters already pronounced. They may retrace from the beginning of the word provided letters and sequence are not changed in retracing.



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Rules followed at the Regional Bee

Scripps suggested rules-2026 is available on website www.swwc.org/bee

WRITTEN TEST RULES -- Students must bring a pen to use for the written round!

- A. The words will be pronounced, used in a sentence, and repeated a second time. No word will be repeated more than two times. Sufficient time will be allowed for the spelling to write the words (enough time within reason).
- B. If the speller wishes to rewrite a word, they may cross out the incorrect spelling with a single line and write the word **ONE MORE** time. Additional tries will be marked incorrect. **No erasers are allowed.**

RULES FOR ORAL ROUNDS – *students may use paper and pencil – provided at the podium.*

An oral contest for all participants. Everyone will be given the opportunity to spell three words. No one will be eliminated when they misspell a word.

- A. The pronouncer says the word, uses it in a sentence, and says the word a second time.
 - 1. The speller has 30 seconds in which to begin spelling the word. The spelling of the word should take no longer than 60 seconds.
- B. Having started to spell a word, spellers shall not be permitted to change letters already pronounced. They may retrace from the beginning of the word provided letters and sequence are not changed in retracing.

General Information Concerning the Spelldown Portion of the Spelling Bee

Words should be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in the Merriam-Webster Unabridged. With the approval of the judges, the pronouncer may give a fuller explanation of the meaning of the word to supplement the dictionary definition or definitions quoted.

The role of the pronouncer is to correctly pronounce the word and give a sentence, definition, and other information about the word at the speller's request. The role of the judges is to determine whether the speller has spelled the word correctly. The role of the speller is (1) to gather as much information as possible to help him or her spell the word correctly and (2) to spell the word correctly. The judges may not disqualify a speller for asking a question.

- A. The following is a description of the participant spelling rotation. The contest shall be conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round shall spell one word in the round. Each speller will be assigned a number at registration. The judges will use a corresponding set of numbers on shuffle cards and select randomly who will spell next. The head judge will indicate either "correct" or "incorrect" after the spelling of each word and give the correct spelling.
- B. The pronouncer says the word, uses it in a sentence, and says the word a second time.
 - 1. The speller may request the pronouncer to re-pronounce the word, use it in another sentence or define it.
 - 2. The speller has 30 seconds in which to begin spelling the word. The spelling of the word should take no longer than 60 seconds.
- C. Having started to spell a word, a speller may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning, but in retracing there can be no change of letters or their sequence from those first pronounced. If letters or their sequence is changed in the re-spelling, the speller will be eliminated.

If a speller misses the spelling of a word, the speller goes back to his/her seat until the end of that round. The next word on the pronouncer's list is given to the next speller.



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Responsibilities of Judges

How many staff volunteers are needed for the spelling bee in your school: 4; one pronouncer, three judges with one being the head judge.

HEAD JUDGE

- Read aloud to the spellers and audience the rules of the spelling bee, including end-of-bee procedures.
- Make the final decision as to the correct or incorrect spelling of a word.
State "correct" or "incorrect" after each speller's spelling of a word.
If "incorrect", spell the word aloud for the speller and audience.
Make the final decision as to any procedure in question. These decisions will be made in consultation with other judges.

RECORDER/Dictionary JUDGE

An audio tape recording of the spelling bee should to be made. As words are pronounced, the number on the recorder dial should be written beside the word on the recorder's spelling list. In case there is a request to re-listen to a word's pronunciation or spelling.
In charge of the dictionary. Honor requests by spellers to have dictionary definitions, part of speech, and language of origin of the word as provided on the word list. Only refer to the dictionary in case of questions.

ROUNDS/RECORDS JUDGE

Shuffle cards are used to track who will be in the next round.
Check each word as it is properly spelled. Record the number of the speller by each word spelled on the word list margin.
Write the contestant's number or name beside any misspelled word. Write the misspelled word on each speller's card as they miss a word.

All judges are responsible for listening carefully to each word's spelling. If you can't hear the spelling clearly, request that the contestant speak louder and more distinctly.

If any judge believes a speller has misspelled a word, the judge will:

Say "delay" to the Pronouncer. The Head Judge will then tell the contestant "Please wait".

Consult the official dictionary regarding the word in question.

If two of three judges concur with a misspelling, the judge who requested the delay will tell the Head Judge, "The word was spelled incorrectly", the Head Judge will then state "incorrect" to the speller and that student is then "down". The Head Judge then correctly spells the word for the speller and the audience.

If only one judge of the three thinks a word was misspelled, or if it is agreed that the word actually was spelled correctly, then the Head Judge tells the contestant "Correct", and the contest will continue.

Any judge may disqualify any contestant who ignores a request to start spelling.

At all times watch for an unconscious tendency to give non-verbal clues to the contestant (raised eyebrow, nod of head, etc.).



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How to Inform the Media & Press Release

Public recognition of teachers and students who excel in language arts is one of the objectives of the Minnesota Service Cooperative Spelling Bee. Local radio, television and newspapers are excellent forums for acknowledging the achievements of those who participate in and organize the spelling bees at the school, district, and regional levels. Local reporters and editors are likely to be interested in the bees from a number of angles. Of course, there will be interest in the winners who go on to represent their town and school at a higher level of competition.

After the bee, contact the media outlets with the student names, parent names and school district of the winner.

NOTE: Do not give out “winning words” as the same lists are used throughout the state.

This is just a **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

Contact: Spelling Bee Coordinator/Coach ____

School Name: ____

AREA SCHOOLS PREPARE FOR THE REGIONAL SPELLING BEE

For Immediate Release

The classroom was quiet, the tension was mounting, not even a buzz of the bee was heard. The annual Spelling Bee was in progress. On ____ (day), ____ (date) ____ (number) students will advance from the classroom Spelling Bee to the ____ School District Spelling Bee.

____ (name) will act as District Pronouncer at the Spelling Bee to be held in ____ (site) at ____ (time).

Students participating at the district level are:
(list students here)

The District Champion(s), ____ (winning student name), will advance to SWWC Service Cooperative's Regional Spelling Bee on February 17, 2026, at the YMCA in Marshall.
The regional winner will advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC in May of 2026.

The Regional Spelling Bee is open to public, private, and parochial school students in grades five through eight and is coordinated by the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative.



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