

Wilson Commons Spelling Bee

Official Rules

Terminology

Wilson Commons Spelling Bee = WCSB

Eligibility

1. Must be 55 years old or older.

Short Version of Rules

1. **Format:** Conducted orally and in rounds. If you spell it correctly, you move on to the next round; if you spell it incorrectly, you are out. Any request for any accommodations must be made at time of registration.
2. **Competition List:** Merriam-Webster Unabridged is the official dictionary for the WCSB.
3. **Requests:** The speller can request a definition and the word to be used in a sentence.
4. **Spellers:** When it is your turn, you must approach the microphone; once you start spelling you must keep going, you cannot go back and change the spelling.
5. **Champion:** If only one person remains at the end of a round, then the next round begins with the one speller. They must spell the next word correctly to become the champion.
6. **Have fun!**

Full Rules

1. **Format:** The spelling will be conducted in rounds. Each speller remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells one word. If spelled correctly, the speller will continue to the next round. If spelled incorrectly, the speller is out. The spelling bee will be conducted orally.
2. **Competition List:** Spelling Bee officials are responsible for selecting the competition word list. All words are entries in Merriam-Webster Unabridged, which will be the official dictionary for the Wilson Commons Spelling Bee, available at <https://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>. Merriam-Webster Unabridged will be the officials' resource for pronunciation, definition, and language origin.
3. **Speller Accommodations:** WCSB officials will strive to provide reasonable accommodations for spellers with documented conditions. All requests for accommodations must be made at time of registration. WCSB officials have discretionary power to amend oral requirements on a case-by-case basis.
4. **Pronouncer's Role:** Pronounces words and provides word information. The pronouncer strives to pronounce words according to the diacritical markings.
 - a. **Homonyms:** If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer will indicate which word is to be used by defining the word.
 - b. **Speller Requests:** The pronouncer responds to the speller's requests for a definition and used in a sentence. The pronouncer will not entertain root word

questions, part of speech, language of origin, or requests for alternate definitions, or requests for slower pronunciation.

- c. **Pronouncer's Sense of Helpfulness:** The pronouncer may offer word information from the competition list without the speller having requested the information.
5. **Judges' Role:** The judges uphold the rules and determine whether words are spelled correctly. They also render final decisions on appeals in accordance with Rule 9. They are in complete control of the competition and their decision is final on all questions.
 - a. **Interaction with the speller:** Because seeing the speller's lip movements may be critical in detecting misunderstandings or misspellings, the judges encourage spellers to face them when pronouncing and spelling a word.
 - b. **Notice of Rules:** WCSB officials ensure that all spellers and audience members are given an opportunity to receive a copy of the rules prior to the start of the spelling bee.
 - c. **Misunderstandings:** The judges participate in the exchange of information between the speller and the pronouncer if they feel that clarification is needed. Also the judges listen carefully to the speller's pronunciation of the word. If they sense that the speller has misunderstood the word, the judges work with the speller and pronouncer until they are satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to assist the speller in understanding the word. Although the judges are responsible for attempting to detect a speller's misunderstanding, it is sometimes impossible to detect a misunderstanding until a spelling error has been made. The judges are not responsible for the speller's misunderstanding.
 - d. **Pronouncer Errors:** The judges compare the pronouncer's pronunciation with the diacritical markings in the competition list. If the judges feel that the pronouncer's pronunciation does not match the pronunciation specified in the diacritical markings, the judges direct the pronouncer to correct the error as soon as it is detected.
 - e. **Disqualifications for Reasons Other than Error:** The judges will disqualify a speller
 - i. Who refuses a request to start spelling
 - ii. Who does not approach the microphone when it is time to receive the word
 - iii. Who does not comply with the requirements
 - iv. Who, or whose family, engages in conduct that does not promote fair, honest rivalry, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of competition results
 - v. Who, in the process of retracting a spelling, alter the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered
 - vi. Who, in the process of spelling, utters unintelligible or nonsense sounds
 - f. **Speller Activities that do Not Merit Disqualification:** The judges may not disqualify a speller
 - i. For failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it
 - ii. For asking a question
 - iii. For noting or failing to note the capitalization of a word, the presence of a diacritical mark, the presence of a hyphen or other form of punctuation or spacing between words in an open compound.

6. **Speller's Role:** 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, and to use it in a sentence. The speller does not need to note capitalization of a word, presence of a 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. Once the speller starts to spell the word, they must continue; the speller is not allowed to go back and change the original order of the letters they provided.
7. **Errors:** Upon providing and incorrect spelling of a word, the speller is immediately disqualified from the competition, except as provided in Rule 8.
8. **End-of-Bee Procedures:**
 - a. If all spellers in a round misspell: If none of the spellers remaining in the spelling bee at the start of a round spells a word correctly during that round, all remain in the competition and a new round begins.
 - b. Ties: All spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place. After the champion has been determined, spelling bee officials may opt to conduct tiebreakers if tiebreakers are necessary for the awarding of prizes.
 - c. If only one speller in a round spells correctly: If only one speller spells correctly in a round, a new round of spelling begins and the speller is given an opportunity to spell a word on the list (anticipated championship word). If the speller succeeds in correctly spelling the anticipated championship word in this round, the speller is declared the champion.
 - d. VERY IMPORTANT – If a speller misspells the anticipated championship word in a one-word round: A new spelling round begins with ALL the spellers who participated in the previous round. These spellers spell in their original order.
9. **Appeals:** Provided that the appellant adheres to the Time and Manner Requirements specified herein, the judges will review appeals and render decisions only on the following four grounds.
 - a. The speller correctly spelled the word but was eliminated for misspelling it; failing to say the word before or after spelling it; failing to indicate capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks; or incorrectly indicating capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks.
 - i. Judges: Do your records indicate that the speller offered the correct letters in the correct order and never changed the order of letters?
 1. If yes, reinstate the speller, even if the speller failed to say the word before or after spelling, or failed to indicate or incorrectly indicated capitalization, hyphen, spaces or diacritical marks.
 2. If no, deny the appeal.
 - b. The speller correctly spelled a homonym of the word in a question and was not given the definition of the word:
 - i. Judges: Did the pronouncer provide a definition? Refer to Rule 4.
 1. If no, reinstate the speller.

2. If yes, deny the appeal.
- c. The speller correctly spelled an alternate spelling of the word as listed in official dictionary (1) whose pronunciation is identical to *all* pronunciations of the word in question, (2) whose definition is identical to the definition provided for the word in question, and (3) that is clearly identified as a standard variant of the word in question.
 - i. Judges: Check official dictionary.
 1. If all three criteria are met, reinstate the speller.
 2. If fewer than three criteria are met, deny the appeal.
 3. Also, note that variant spellings have temporal labels (such as archaic, obsolete), stylistic labels (such as substandard, nonstandard), or most regional labels (such as North, Midland, Irish) will not be accepted as correct. If a word has an alternate spelling labeled “British,” “chiefly British,” or “less commonly” and that alternate spelling is listed on the same page as the headword, the alternate spelling should be accepted by judges as correct. For example, both “color” and “colour” should be accepted as correct, but “tyre” should not be accepted as correct if a speller is asked to spell “tire,” since the British spelling is not found under the headword entry for “tire.”
 - d. The officials did not adhere to Rule 8, the End-of-Bee Procedure:
 - i. Judges: Carefully examine Rule 8.
 1. If you erred and the competition is still underway, reinstate the speller.
 2. If the competition is over, there is nothing the WCSB officials can do.
 - e. Invalid grounds for reinstatement: The judges will not entertain appeals on any of the following grounds:
 - i. The pronouncer allegedly mispronounced the word.
 - ii. The pronouncer offered pronunciations and/or word information that the speller did not request, and the unrequested information contributed to the misspelling.
 - iii. One or all WCSB officials indicated to the speller that the speller was pronouncing the word correctly, but the speller’s spelling indicated that the speller wasn’t pronouncing it correctly.
 - iv. One or all Bee officials did not inform the speller before spelling that the speller’s pronunciation was incorrect and/or that the speller was misunderstanding the word, and this inaction contributed to the misspelling.
 - v. The speller offered a correct spelling as indicated in a dictionary other than Merriam-Webster Unabridged or other online or print sources.
 - vi. The pronouncer did not answer a root word question or provide the correct root word.

- vii. The pronouncer did not honor the speller's request to slow down the pronunciation of the word, break the word's pronunciation into syllables, or provide an alternate definition or sentence.

10. Time and Manner Requirements: Efforts should be made to appeal a judge's ruling before the end of the round you are out on.

- a. If you are still at the microphone, you may appeal right then and there.
- b. If the bee has moved on to the next speller, fill out an appeal form and hand to an event coordinator (April or Rose).
 - i. If there are less than five people in the round, do not use the appeal form, verbally appeal at the end of the round.

11. Have fun!