Spelling Better for Teachers

Printable Spelling Bee Rules for Students

Students taking part in a bee, and the teachers who run it

About these rules

These rules are a sample for a classroom or school spelling bee. They are not the rules of any official or national competition. Every bee can set its own rules, and the organizer of this bee decides how they are used.

Before the bee

1. Sit in your speller number order and wait quietly for your turn.
2. Listen to the practice round. Practice words do not count.
3. If you need help to take part comfortably, tell your teacher before the bee starts.

When it is your turn

1. Walk to the speaking spot and face the pronouncer.
2. Listen to the word. It is a good idea to say the word before you spell it.
3. You may ask the pronouncer to say the word again.
4. You may ask for the definition, for the word used in a sentence, or for the part of speech.
5. You may ask if the word has another pronunciation.
6. Take your time to think, but keep within the time limit your organizer sets.

Spelling the word

1. Say each letter clearly so the judges can hear it.
2. Say the word again when you finish, so everyone knows you are done.
3. You may stop and start again from the beginning. But you cannot change letters you have already said, or the order you said them in.
4. If you write the word with your finger on your hand while you think, that is fine. Do not write it on paper unless your organizer allows it.

If you misspell a word

- The judges will tell you the word was not spelled correctly. The pronouncer will then say the correct spelling.
- Return to your seat or the audience area as your organizer explains. You are still part of the event, so cheer on the other spellers.
- Missing a word is part of every bee. It does not mean you are not a good speller.

How the bee ends

- The bee continues round by round until one speller is left, or until the organizer's word list or time runs out.
- When only two spellers are left, the organizer explains how the final rounds work.
- If the organizer needs to break a tie, they will use extra words or another method explained before the bee starts.

Be a good sport

- Stay quiet while another speller is spelling. Do not mouth letters or give hints.
- Clap for every speller, whatever happens.
- If you think a mistake was made in judging, tell your teacher or the judges politely after your turn.

For the pronouncer and judges

- Pronouncer: say each word clearly and at a natural pace. Give the definition, sentence or part of speech when asked, and use the same information for every speller.
- Pronouncer: if a speller asks, repeat the word as often as is reasonable within the time limit.
- Judges: listen to every letter and record what you heard on the judging sheet.
- Judges: if you are not sure what a speller said, agree with the other judges before you give a ruling.
- Judges: be calm, kind and consistent. Explain each ruling simply.
- Organizer: decide before the bee how challenges, ties and time limits work, and read these decisions aloud at the start.

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