

## 2026 STATE FAIR SPELLING BEE RULES

1. Individuals competing in the State Fair Spelling Bee must qualify under the following basic requirements:
  - a. They must have completed school in the grade level of competition they enter;
  - b. They must **NOT** have reached **ON OR BEFORE** January 1, 2026 their ninth (9) birthday for First and Second grade competition; their eleventh (11) birthday for Third and Fourth grade competition; and thirteenth (13) birthday for Fifth and Sixth grade competition.
2. Words used in the State Fair Spelling Bee shall be selected from Scripps National Spelling Bee Word list. (Practice lists will be mailed out in July).
3. Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in Scripps National Spelling Bee Word list rules. The pronouncer may give a fuller explanation of the meaning of the words to supplement the dictionary definition or definitions quoted.
4. In competition, after the pronouncer gives the contestant a word, the contestant will be encouraged to pronounce the word before spelling it and after spelling it. However, no contestant will be eliminated for failing to pronounce a word.
5. The contestant may request the pronouncer to pronounce the word again, define it, or use it in a sentence. 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. The pronouncer 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. Having started to spell a word, a contestant 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 respelling, the speller will be eliminated.
7. The State Fair Spelling Bee shall be conducted in rounds. Each contestant remaining in the Bee at the start of a round shall spell one word in the round and each subsequent round.
8. Upon missing the spelling of a word, a contestant immediately drops out of the contest, except as provided in rules 9 and 10.

9. If none of the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of a round spells a word correctly during the round, all shall remain in the competition.
10. If only one of the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of a round spells a word correctly during that round, the contestant shall be given an opportunity to spell the next word on the list. If the contestant succeeds in correctly spelling the new word, the contestant shall be declared the champion. Otherwise, all the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of the round shall remain in the competition. A new round will begin, with all of the contestants spelling in their original order.
11. Ties: all spellers eliminated in the same round are tied for the same place. For example: a round has five spellers, and two misspell their words. Those two competitors would tie for 4<sup>th</sup>.
12. Scripps National Spelling Bee shall serve as the final authority for the spellings of words in the State Fair Spelling Bee. If more than one spelling is listed for a word, any of these spellings will be accepted as correct if the word either matches the pronunciation and definition provided by the pronouncer, or if it is clearly identified as being a standard variant of the word that the contestant has been asked to spell. Spelling at other locations having archaic, obsolete, or regional labels (such as North, Midland, South, British, Irish) that are different from those at the main entry will **NOT** be accepted as correct.
13. If a word has one or more homonyms, the pronouncer will indicate which word is to be spelled. If the listed word is not properly identified, either by defining it or by distinguishing the homonyms, any correct spelling of any homonym of the word will be accepted.
14. Any questions relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the designated official immediately in writing on a grievance form. The deadline for filing a grievance is before the contestant affected would have received his/her next word had he/she stayed in the contest. No grievance will be entertained after that word has been given to another speller. When only two spellers remain, an oral grievance must be made immediately, that is, before the second speller has started to spell the word given to him/her, or, if both have missed the same word, before the corrected spelling is given to the audience.
15. **The judges and all other volunteers are in complete control of the Bee. Their decision shall be final on all questions.**
16. **Previous winners in each Bee may not compete again in the age group they have won.**