



## Rules and Regulations – Master Spelling Bee

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Welcome to Master Spelling Bee!

Thank you for showing interest in this wonderful adventure. What you will find here is a complete guide on the workings of a Spelling Bee. Should you have any questions after reading the guide kindly contact us by using the details as provided on the last page.

### Our Purpose:

- To set a platform for learners in South Africa to improve skills associated with good spelling habits.
- To help learners enhance their competitive skills under pressure.
- To provide an opportunity for learners to understand their skills and capability in spelling.

### Who can participate?

- Learners from grade 4 -12 are eligible to participate. A learner may be younger but may not be more than 2 years older than the generally expected age of that specific grade. Example: a grade 4 learner is generally expected to be 10 during their grade 4 year so a participant may not be older than 12 years at the end of the calendar year.
- Although the child must be registered at any school in the Republic of South Africa they do not have to register as part of a school group. Registration can be done individually without the assistance of the school.
- Learners must however register within the scheduled date and time to be eligible for participation.
- Participants must have paid required registration fee as mentioned in the Registration & Fees section below.

### Registration

To participate in the Master Spelling Bee campaign, you must register and pay online before the closing date. Please note that you need to follow the given deadlines of the registration. Registrations after specified date and time will not be accepted.

### Registration Fee

Learners have until the published closing date to pay the applicable fee.

### Refund

No refund is given for the registration fee in case the participant could not attend the spelling bee for any reason. Only in case of cancellation of the Spelling Bee by the organisers, will the complete registration fee be refunded.

### Categories

There are 3 categories based on the grade of the learner.

- Bumble Bees: grade 4-6
- Honey Bees: grade 7-9
- Melittidae Bees: grade 10-12

### Location

Locations for the relevant competitions will be published online and the necessary communications sent out if deemed necessary. Any change to location will be communicated online and via email using the contact email address given during registration.

## Schedule

The following are available on the website: [www.masterspellingbee.co.za](http://www.masterspellingbee.co.za)

-The scheduled dates of competition

-The venues for the respective competitions

Competitions will be held on allocated Saturdays and Sundays and events start at the appropriate time, sharp, unless communicated otherwise. Normal competition times are as follows:

Category	Registration	competition starts
Bumble bee	8.00am	8.30am
Honey bee	10.00am	10.30am or when Bumble bees finish
Melittidae bee	12.00am	12.30pm or when Honey bees finish

Please check your emails to confirm the registration and start time of your competition as times may change based on number of registered participants.

## Winners

From local/regional competitions, the top 10 go to provincials

From provincial competitions, the top 5 go to nationals

At the national competition there will be a total of three winners. One from each group.

## Dress Code

Participants should please wear their school uniform or jeans (black or blue) with the Master Spelling Bee tshirt (can be purchased).

It is the right of the judges to disqualify a participant for not wearing the appropriate clothing.

## Preparation

Master Spelling Bee will provide a word list for each Bee category. The words that will be used in all the Master Bee Competitions for spelling bee contests will only come from that list. However, should there be a need for an elimination round to determine a winner the judges have the discretion to use words that do not fall within the given word list.

## Judges

There will be 4 adjudicators on the judging panel:

1. Head Judge - Facilitate the Spelling Bee and announces the final decision
2. Laptop Judge - Captures the word spelled as is by the participant for auditing purposes
3. Pronouncer - Pronounces the word as per the spelling bee standards
4. Time Keeper - Supports the Head Judge in keeping a speller within the time limits provided

All four judges share responsibility for making decisions. If consensus cannot be reached, the final decision rests on the head judge.

## Volunteers

Take note that volunteers will be clearly distinguishable and assistance should not be requested from those who are not official volunteers.

## Competition Format & Rules

The Master Spelling Bee competition will be in 4 phases.

1. The first phase is a Written Spelling Contest (internal school processes) (optional)
  - a. Oral spelling test (internal school process) (optional)
2. The second phase is an Oral Spelling Contest (At an allocated venue at local level)
3. The third phase is an Oral Spelling Contest (On the stage at provincial level)
4. The fourth phase is an Oral Spelling Contest (On the stage at national level)

### Internal School Contest

#### Guidelines for School Spelling Bees

1. Teachers will distribute spelling lists to learners.
2. Teachers will give adequate study time and announce at least 1 week in advance the date of the classroom spelling bee to give learners adequate time to study.
3. Round 1
  - a. Teachers will give a written spelling test of 20 words chosen randomly from their own study list.
  - b. Teachers may choose the system for selecting words but must announce the method being used to the learners.
  - c. The same method will be used for the second round.
  - d. Learners spelling 80% (or a predetermined percentage) of the words correctly will enter the second round.
4. Round 2
  - a. Those who passed the first round will compete in an oral spell-off.
  - b. The teacher will randomly choose words from their own study list for each of the remaining spellers.
  - c. Each speller receives their own word and must spell it aloud first repeating the word, spelling the word, and then repeating the word when finished spelling.
  - d. Teachers may allow learners to backtrack and re-spell a word provided they have not completed the process.
  - e. Misspelled words will not be spelled by the next speller.
5. Those who spell correctly continue competing but those who misspell are out of the competition.
6. When there are only 2 competitors remaining and one misspells a word, the other competitor must correctly spell the same word in addition to the next word in order to be declared the winner.

Each school has a discretion to pick the number of children whom they will register in the Master Spelling Bee competition. Words not in the given list may be asked as it builds healthy spelling habits and not just parrot learning of the words.

### Oral Spelling Contest rules - local, provincial and national level

Every participant will be given a randomly chosen numbered card during the registration process. This card will be worn visibly and will determine the order in which learners compete in each category. They will also be used for contestant identification by the judging panel.

There are no practice rounds in the contest.

Only the judges, pronouncers and specified volunteers are allowed on the stage. No spectators or video/photographers other than Master Spelling Bee representatives are permitted on the stage.

Spectators are however permitted to observe the Spelling Bee competition provided that they conduct themselves in an orderly manner.

#### General rules:

The Oxford Dictionary/Oxford Learners Dictionary shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of words. 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 it is clearly identified as being a standard variant of the word that the speller has been asked to spell.

The standard spelling of words that will be used is in line with UK English. E.g. colour and not color.

Only the spelling as provided for in the word list will be accepted as correct. No alternative spelling will enable the participating speller to continue in the competition.

Some words on the list may not appear directly in the dictionary (plurals, possessives, etc.). Accepted rules for these words will apply.

Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings in the dictionary, from which the Pronouncer shall select the definition or definitions that they give.

The Pronouncer may give a fuller explanation of the meaning of the word to supplement the dictionary definition or definitions quoted.

The Pronouncer may also give the part of speech as well as alternative sentences, if requested.

#### Spelling Procedure

The Pronouncer will pronounce the word. The pronouncer will make every effort to pronounce the words according to the Oxford Dictionary/Oxford Learns Dictionary.

The participant will then pronounce the word, spell the word, and pronounce the word again.

The participant may ask for a sentence, etymology, alternative pronunciation and part of speech for the given word.

The Head Judge will have the responsibility of stopping the learner if he/she fails to pronounce the word or if the learner pronounces the word incorrectly.

Pronouncing the word before and after is not mandatory but encouraged.

#### Retracting

Having started to spell a word, a learner may stop and start over, retracting the spelling from the beginning. However, in the retracting, there can be no change of letters and their sequence from those first pronounced.

If any letters and/or their sequence are changed in the respelling, the speller will be disqualified.

### *Spell-Bee Elimination (all rounds)*

When a participant misspells a word, he/she immediately drops out of the contest. The next word is given to the next participant.

Top 3 spellers will be announced as finalists of Master Spelling Bee.

#### The participant is encouraged to:

Pronounce the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the learner has heard the correct word.

Look at the Pronouncer when spelling the word.

Spell the word orally. Participants will not be allowed to write the word before spelling it.

Pronounce the word again after the word is spelled.

Speak clearly and loudly. The officials' decision is final in determining the correctness of the spelling, which may be misunderstood if not spoken clearly.

The participant may ask for any pronunciation, meaning, or sentence to be repeated for clarification before spelling. If a participant takes undue advantage of this rule, the Pronouncer/Head Judge will advise him/her accordingly.

### *Timing*

Each participant will have 2min per round. This includes asking for information and spelling the word.

If the participant is unable to start spelling at the end of the first 30-second period, he/she shall be reminded by the Timekeeper.

The 2 minutes will begin once the pronouncer has pronounced the word and the participant repeats the word. If the participant does not repeat the word, the 2minutes will begin 5 seconds after the pronouncer has pronounced the word.

The judges and pronouncer will not communicate with the speller during the final 30 seconds.

The judges will state incorrect any speller who does not provide a complete spelling before the expiration of time (0 seconds).

If the judges and pronouncer need to discuss a competition-related matter while a speller is contemplating a word, they may pause the time clock, and they will inform the speller when they pause and resume the time clock.

A participant will be disqualified if he/she does not follow the above listed timing rules.

### *Disagreements:*

It is the responsibility of the participant to pose any question relating to the spelling of the word by requesting permission to approach the judges only when it is their turn in the contest. This should not happen when another participant has already been given a word to spell. All the judges have access to the word list, the official dictionary, the rules of Master Spelling Bee and the Spelling Bee record sheet. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the Head Judge will call for a brief time-out to confer with the other judges. The judge's decision shall be final and no appeal or confrontation or argument is entertained.

In any circumstances, no one from the audience should approach the judges' panel. Should there be any query from an audience member there will be a dedicated volunteer who is equipped to answer queries. This person will be made known at the beginning of the competition. Should the volunteer deem it necessary to approach the judges table with the query during competition, they are allowed to do so and will only speak to the Head Judge.

#### *General Procedures*

There are a maximum of 20 rounds per category per competition.

No talking or walking around will be allowed either among the participants or among the audience. This will distract participants and judges.

No assistance from the audience is to be given to any participant. If a participant receives assistance from anyone in the audience, he/she will be immediately disqualified. We expect highest dignity and respect from all participants and audience to encourage all the kids to win the contest. If assistance is given on purpose to another participant, the violators participant will be disqualified instead, and the current participant will be given another word.

We request the audience to remain seated all the time when Spelling Bee in progress. We will have breaks between the competition, and it is expected that participants and audience use those breaks. This will help participants to have better focus and improve their winning chances.

#### *Disqualifications for reasons other than clear misspelling*

The Judges will disqualify a Speller who:

Refuses a request to start spelling;

Does not approach the microphone when it is time to receive the word;

Engages in misconduct; interferes with other spellers or disrupts the proceedings;

In the process of retracting a spelling, alters the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered; and

In the process of spelling, utters unintelligible or nonsense sounds.

The judges' decision to disqualify a Speller is final and cannot be disputed.

#### *Speller activities that do not merit disqualification*

The Judges may not disqualify a Speller for the following reasons:

Failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it;

For asking a question; and

For noting or failing to note the capitalisation of a word or the presence of a pronunciation mark.

#### *Participant misunderstandings*

The Judges may participate in the exchange of information between the Speller and Pronouncer if they feel that clarification is needed

- They listen attentively to the Speller's pronunciation of the word and if they sense that the Speller has misunderstood the word, the Adjudicators work with the Speller and Pronouncer until they are satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to assist the Speller in understanding the word within the time constraints; and
- Whilst the Judges are responsible for attempting to detect a Speller's misunderstanding until a spelling error has been made, they are not responsible for the Speller's misunderstanding.

### *Alternate pronunciations*

When presented with requests from a Speller for alternate pronunciations, the Pronouncer checks for alternate pronunciations in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary and the pronunciation mentioned in the Oxford Learner Dictionary.

### *Pronouncer errors*

The Judges compare the Pronouncer's pronunciation with the pronunciation markings in the word list. If the Judges feel that the Pronouncer's pronunciation does not match the pronunciation specified in the pronunciation markings, they will direct the Pronouncer to correct the error as soon as it is detected.

### *Misunderstanding of the word*

The Speller is responsible for any misunderstanding of the word unless:

The Pronouncer never provided a correct pronunciation;

The Pronouncer provided incorrect information regarding the definition, part of speech, or language of origin; and

The Speller correctly spelled a homonym (word with a different spelling but same sound. e.g. blue and blew) of the word and the Pronouncer failed to either offer a definition or distinguish the homonyms when requested.

### *Special instructions:*

Each Speller is assigned a number;

At the start of the competition, Spellers sit in rows of chairs in sequential order. This sequence will change with eliminations;

When the first Speller leaves their seat to go and spell, Spellers move down one place to occupy the seat that has been vacated; and

After a Speller spells a word they move to the end of the line of chairs and take a seat.

### *The Speller*

May request the Pronouncer to provide a definition, sentence, part of speech, language(s) of origin and alternate pronunciation(s);

May ask if the dictionary lists a specific root word as the root of the word to be spelled; and must specify a pronunciation of the root (not a spelling), its language and its definition. The Pronouncer will grant all such requests as long as they are in accordance with time constraints;

Should make an effort to face the Judges and pronounce the word for the Adjudicators before spelling it and after spelling it;

Should make an effort to utter each letter distinctly and with sufficient volume to be understood by the Adjudicators;

If they choose, 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/s. The Speller may ask root word questions that meet the specifications; and

Spells incorrectly they give their number to the assigned volunteer and return to their seat. The Speller does not leave the classroom or stage until asked to do so.



### *Rounds*

For all Rounds except the Elimination Round, all Spellers who have not been eliminated from the competition will spell only one word in each Round;

If a Speller spells a word incorrectly, before they leave the podium they must give their number to the assigned volunteer, who will cross their name off the list. The Speller returns to his/her seat on stage. They will only leave the stage during the break after the Round ends;

After every round there is an acknowledgment of the Spellers' efforts— applause. Spellers who were eliminated are then asked to leave the stage, and sit in their designated area. After every 5 rounds there will be a 2 minute break;

The Elimination Round includes words the Spellers may not have studied from the Spelling Bee Word List, but would likely have encountered in reading. The premise is not to promote learning to spell by rote, but foster learners' ability to break down a word into syllables and use logic to spell;

Spellers who have not been eliminated in the previous Rounds compete in the Elimination Round;

All Spellers must leave the room during the Elimination Round. They re-enter one at a time and are given the same word to spell;

In the Elimination Round, each word is a Round;

Elimination Rounds continue until there is a winner; and

All Spellers eliminated in the same Round are tied for the same place.

### *Elimination Round process*

All Spellers leave the stage and wait in an area where they will not be able to hear the proceedings

The first Speller, whose turn it is to spell, enters the competition area and is given a word to spell from the "Elimination Round" List;

If she/he spells the word correctly, they take the first seat onstage. If they are incorrect, they are eliminated. The Speller must remove their number, give it to the assigned volunteer, and leave the stage;

If the previous Speller misspelled the word, the next Speller in line receives the same word that was misspelled; and

A new word is given only when the next Round begins.

Elimination can only happen for a maximum of 3 rounds before declaring them tied.

Round 15-20 in competition can also be considered elimination rounds and words given to learners that may not be found in the Word List.

### *Progression of competition*

At the beginning of any Round in which either two or three Spellers remain, the Pronouncer will move to the championship section of the word list; and if a champion does not emerge in the course of administering these final 20 words, the remaining Spellers will be declared co-champions.

The judges decision is final

### *After the competition*

The participants who are to progress to the next level of competition will be announced at the end of the competition for that category. Email communication will also be sent in the week following the competition.