



2025-2026

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

REGIONAL SPELLING BEE

Handbook



All information contained in this handbook is
subject to change by contest officials.

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IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

August 19, 2025 – January 30, 2026

Scripps Enrollment Period*

School enrollment in the Bee program for the 2025-2026 year begins August 19, 2025, at spellingbee.com. The per-school enrollment fee will be \$199 from August 19, 2025, to January 30, 2026. Teachers and coordinators can access all student materials by logging into their enrolled school account.

**All spellers in the Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee must be from a school that has enrolled and paid the enrollment fee to Scripps as of January 30, 2026. Independent home-schooled students must also enroll in Scripps by January 30, 2026, to participate within their local public school, with approval of the school. To enroll, visit the [Scripps Spelling Bee website](https://spellingbee.com) during the enrollment period.*

September 3, 2025

Intent to Participate Form Deadline

October 31, 2025

Regional Qualifier Competition List released by Scripps
Only provided to registered District Coordinators for use at District Level Bee.

February 27, 2026

All district and/or private, parochial, or charter school Spelling Bees to be completed by this date

March 6, 2026

Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee District Registration Deadline
District Registration Form - Completed by District Coordinator
Student Participation Form - Completed by Student Winner and Alternate
Registration Fee Form - Completed by District Coordinator

Each district may only send 1 winner and 1 alternate to the Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee.

March 26, 2026

Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee Competition | 9:00 a.m.
RCOE Conference Center (4280 Brockton Ave.
Riverside, CA 92501)
Students arrive at 8:00 a.m.
Orientation for students at 8:30 a.m.
Bee begins at 9:00 a.m.

May 24–29, 2026

Scripps National Spelling Bee Week 2026
Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center,
National Harbor, Maryland

The first-place speller will represent Riverside County at the Scripps National Spelling Bee National Competition. The Riverside County Office of Education will provide a \$2,000.00 stipend to the district of the Regional winner, to be used for the winner and chaperone's travel to attend the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Arrangements for travel will be made by the winning student's school/school district.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. Participation in the Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee is open to students in grades 4 through 8 attending a public school, private school, or charter school located within Riverside County and must be from a school that has enrolled and paid the required enrollment fee to Scripps National Spelling Bee. Home-schooled students may participate in the Spelling Bee through the public school in Riverside County they would attend if they were not home schooled, at the discretion and approval of the public school or school district administration. Those home-schooled students participating in this manner must pay the enrollment fee to Scripps required by home-schooled students, as well as coordinate with the public school in time to participate as a speller at the local school level. In addition, spellers must meet the eligibility requirements per the Scripps Sponsorship Agreement in order to advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee (*see "Eligibility Requirements" for exact requirements.*)
2. The officials of the Bee shall include the Spelling Pronouncer, three judges, an arbitrator, a challenge recorder, a timekeeper, and a round adviser.
3. A head judge will be chosen who will act as the spokesperson for the judging panel. The head judge will speak to the Spelling Pronouncer.
4. The words used in the Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee are provided by Scripps National Spelling Bee.
5. Words shall be pronounced according to the diacritical markings from [Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online](#). With the approval of the judges, the Spelling Pronouncer may give a fuller explanation of the meaning of a word or part of speech to supplement the dictionary definition or definitions quoted. The contestant may ask for the language origin of a word. No other information about the etymology or history of a word will be given. Per Scripps rules, root word questions are entertained only at the National level of competition. The Spelling Pronouncer may also give alternate sentences to those on the word list if a contestant needs clarification. The Spelling 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. [Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online](#) shall serve as the final authority for the spelling of words in the county finals. If a word has two or more accepted spellings, only the spellings set in boldface type and separated by the word "or", and in some cases the word "also", at the beginning of the descriptive matter will be accepted as correct. Spelling words having the labels archaic and obsolete (abbreviated obs) and regional labels (like North, Midland, South, British, Irish) that are different from those in boldface type or at main entry, will not be accepted as correct.
7. If a word has one or more homonyms, the Spelling Pronouncer will indicate through sentence use which word is to be spelled. If the listed word is not properly identified, either by sentence use, defining it, or by distinguishing the homonyms, any correct spelling of any homonym of the word will be accepted.
8. The Spelling Pronouncer will initiate the Spelling Bee with a practice round and ask participants afterwards if they have any questions. Only during the practice round may students misspell a word and continue in the contest.
9. The Spelling Bee shall be conducted in rounds. Each contestant remaining in the Bee at the start of a round shall spell one round word, except as provided in Rule 13. The procedure the Spelling Master will use for each word will be (1) pronounce the word, (2) use the word in a sentence, (3) pronounce the word a second time. The head judge will have responsibility for stopping the student if the student fails to pronounce the word or if the student pronounces the word incorrectly. If the student still begins to spell without pronouncing the word and misspells the word, the student will be disqualified from the contest.
10. The contestant should:
 - a. Repeat the word before spelling. This is to ensure that the student heard the correct word. Once a student pronounces their word, the student may not stop and ask for a definition, repetition, a new sentence, etc. This must be done before the student pronounces the word.
 - b. Look at the Spelling Pronouncer or judges when spelling the word.
 - c. Spell the word orally. Students are not allowed

RULES AND PROCEDURES

to write the word on paper, but may “air spell” against his or her arm, hand, or back of their placard, etc. Following the guidelines that are in place at the Scripps National Bee, a speller does not have to cease air spelling when he or she is speaking the letters for the judges.

d. Ask for any pronunciation, meaning, or sentence to be repeated for clarification before saying the word. The judges will grant the request until the judges agree that the word has been made reasonably clear to the contestant. If a student abuses this rule, the student will be advised by the Spelling Pronouncer to begin the spelling and time will begin. NOTE: Speller activities that do not merit disqualification include:

e. The judges may not disqualify a speller (1) for failing to pronounce the word either before or after spelling it, (2) for asking a question, or (3) 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.

11. A student shall have a full minute to spell a word. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the student pronounces the word to begin spelling. If the student does not begin spelling at the end of the first 30-second period, the student shall be reminded by the judges to begin spelling. The student shall then have an additional 30 seconds from the time the judges remind the student to begin spelling. The timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached the 30-second time limit.

12. Having started to spell a word, a contestant may stop and start over, retracing the spelling from the beginning; but in the retracing, there cannot be a change of letters or sequence from those first pronounced. If letters and their sequence are changed in the respelling, the speller will be disqualified.

13. Upon missing the spelling of a word, the contestant immediately drops out of the contest. The next word on the Bee Pronouncer's list is given to the next contestant. If none of the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of a round spell a word correctly during the round, all shall remain in the competition.

14. If only one of the contestants remaining in the Bee at the start of any 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.

15. At the judges' discretion, a tie may be called for second, third, or fourth place winners.

16. No talking will be allowed among the contestants or between contestants and members of the audience. If a contestant receives assistance from anyone in the audience, the student will be disqualified. The audience is requested to remain seated until a break to avoid distractions for the contestants.

17. Any questions relating to the spelling of a word should be referred to the Arbitrator immediately. The deadline for making a protest is before the contestant affected would have received their next word if they had stayed in the contest. No grievance will be entertained after the next word has been given to another speller. Only the student, the student's parent(s), or the student's teacher/ district coordinator may file a grievance for their respective student. When only two spellers remain, an oral grievance must be made immediately, that is, before the contestant affected would have received their next word had they stayed in the Bee.

18. The Arbitrator shall have access to the word list with its pronunciations, definitions, and sentences; the dictionary ([Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online](#)); the recording of the Bee; the rules; and the timekeeper's record sheet. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the arbitrator shall call for a brief time out to confer with the judges.

19. The first place finisher will represent Riverside County at the Scripps National Spelling Bee. In the event the first place finisher is not able to attend the Scripps National Spelling Bee, an alternate will not be sent. (Per Scripps rules, only the first place finisher is eligible.)

RULES AND PROCEDURES

20. The Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee has no authority over the conduct of local (classroom, school site, or district) spelling bees. Consequently, the Riverside County Office of Education will not render judgments relating to the conduct of local spelling bees. Individuals bearing concerns about the conduct of local spelling bees should contact their local spelling bee officials. Decisions of local spelling bee officials are final.
21. The Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee provides accommodations for spellers who have special needs. All requests for accommodation of special needs involving site, hearing, speech, or movement should be directed to the Riverside County Office of Education on or before March 6, 2026. The judges have discretionary power to amend spelling requirements on a case-by-case basis for spellers with diagnosed medical conditions involving sight, hearing, speech, or movement.
22. Videotaping or digital recording and taking of photographs are allowed only during the practice session of the Bee. After the practice round, only RCOE-authorized media and staff may take photos, video, or digitally record the Bee.

23. The officials' decision shall be final.

NOTE: The student advancing to the Scripps National Spelling Bee will be expected to compete in the vocabulary component of the National Spelling Bee.

SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE ELIGIBILITY

A speller qualifying for the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee (SNSB) National Competition must meet these requirements. SNSB does not control eligibility for competitions other than the national competition.

Who they are:

1. The speller is eligible to participate in a regional partner's program only if they have not completed the eighth grade (or international equivalent) and have not reached their 15th birthday on or before August 31st of the year prior to the applicable National Competition (by way of example, August 31, 2025, for the 2026 National Competition).
2. The speller must not have any first-, second- or third-degree relatives (i.e., sibling, parent, step-parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, half-sibling, step-sibling, or first cousin) who are current employees of The E.W. Scripps Company as of February 1, 2025.

What they do:

3. The speller must not previously have won an SNSB National Competition.
4. The speller must represent a school that is enrolled in the SNSB program for the applicable year.
5. The speller must not have repeated any grade for the purpose of extending spelling bee eligibility. If the speller has repeated any grade, the speller must notify the SNSB of the circumstances of grade repetition by March 31, 2026, and the SNSB will, in its sole discretion, determine the speller's eligibility status on or before April 30, 2026.
6. The speller - or the speller's parent, legal guardian or school official acting on the speller's behalf - must not have declared to another entity an academic classification higher than eighth grade for any purpose including high school graduation equivalency or proficiency examinations and/or examination such as the PSAT, SAT or ACT.
7. The speller must not have earned the legal equivalent of a high school diploma.
8. The speller must not bypass or circumvent normal school activity to study for spelling bees. The SNSB defines normal school activity as adherence to at least four courses of study other than language arts,

spelling, Latin, Greek, vocabulary, and etymology for at least four hours per weekday for 34 of the 38 weeks between August 19, 2025, and May 24, 2026.

9. Once having been disqualified at any level of a regional partner's spelling bee program between August 2025 and April 2026, the speller may not seek advancement in the 2026 SNSB program through another regional partner and/or enrollment in another school.
10. The speller must have been declared a champion of an SNSB-sanctioned regional spelling bee on or after February 1, 2026 or be named by a regional partner as a national competitor by competing in an official SNSB program or by an SNSB regional partner.
11. Additionally, the speller may not be a first-, second- or third-degree relative of any person directly involved in organizing the regional partner's program.

The speller, upon qualifying for the 2026 SNSB National Competition, must submit to the SNSB a completed Champion Registration, completed Prerequisite Assessment, an Appearance Consent and Release Agreement signed by speller and speller's parent/legal guardian, a signed Certification of Eligibility Form, a liability waiver signed by speller and speller's parent/legal guardian, and a photo. The speller will notify the SNSB, at least 24 hours prior to the first day of the SNSB national competition, if any of the statements made on the Certification of Eligibility Form are no longer true or require updating. The speller's regional partner will provide access to all necessary items.

The SNSB may disqualify any speller prior to or during the National Competition who is not in compliance with any of the above eligibility requirements. Further, the SNSB may, at any time between the conclusion of the 2026 SNSB National Competition and April 30, 2027, require any speller who is found to have not been in compliance with any of the above eligibility requirements to forfeit and/or return any prizes, rank and other benefits accorded to the spelling as a result of the participation in the 2026 SNSB National Competition.

SOURCE: Scripps National Spelling Bee, 2026 Suggested Rules for Spelling Bees

DISTRICT SPELLING BEE COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Set-up district meetings to disseminate Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee rules, timelines, and suggestions to participating schools' coordinators.
2. Facilitate schools registering and paying enrollment fees to Scripps National Spelling Bee. Be sure that schools understand how to access word lists to be used for studying and words that are to be used at school bees.
3. Select date for district Bee and reserve place where it will be held. All district Bees must be completed by February 27, 2026.
4. Scripps National Spelling Bee will provide word lists and study materials.
 - a. Regional Qualifier Competition List - may be used for oral formatted district bees. Regional Qualifier Competition Lists are to be kept confidential and not intended to be used as study materials for students. The guide will be sent to district coordinators, once released by Scripps, by the Riverside County Office of Education.
5. Contact and arrange for a Spelling Pronouncer, Arbitrator(s), three (3) Judges, Timekeeper, Challenge Recorder, and a Round Advisor, and alternate for each role. (*See Officials' Job Description for duties.*)
6. Provide letters of confirmation and special invitations.
7. Organize committees for selection of awards and certificates and district Spelling Bee set-up.
8. Contact local newspapers for publicity before your Bee and to publicize winners after the Bee.
9. Oversee District Bee.
 - a. Arrange for a practice session, if needed.
 - b. Provide a method of selecting the order of contestants and their practice round word.
 - c. Arrange for set up of facility for Bee, including microphones (minimum of two), recorder with blank tapes, table(s) for officials, etc.
10. Send a letter of congratulations and information concerning the Regional Bee, including rules, to the winner and alternate.
11. Submit District Registration Form for Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee and \$250 fee by due date, March 6, 2026.
12. Send the registration link to the student winner and alternate to submit the Student Participation Form, which includes student autobiographical information. Ensure district's winner and alternate submitted Student Participation Form to the Riverside County Office of Education by deadline date of March 6, 2026. Make necessary arrangements for substitutes for the teacher of the winner and/or alternate.
13. Send thank you notes to all who helped with the District Bee.
14. Attend any follow-up meetings regarding the Regional Bee.

SPELLING BEE PRONOUNCER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Spelling Pronouncer shall have rehearsed the words before the day of the Spelling Bee to ensure correct pronunciation and usage.
2. The Spelling Pronouncer shall strive at all times to make students feel at ease.
3. The Spelling Pronouncer will have the names of all participants. Students will be addressed by their first name.
4. The Spelling Pronouncer will have the list of words to be used in the Spelling Bee.
5. The Spelling Pronouncer shall initiate the Spelling Bee with a practice round, and ask participants afterwards if they have any questions. The Spelling Pronouncer should announce when the practice round has ended and when the official Bee begins with Round 1.
6. The Spelling Pronouncer shall remind students to ask for the repetition of a word, sentence or definition, whenever they need clarification, **before** the student says the word.
7. The Spelling Pronouncer shall remind students to say the word before they begin spelling to ensure their understanding of the word. The student should repeat the word when finished spelling the word so judges will know the student is finished.
8. The Spelling Pronouncer shall announce the number of each new round, i.e., Round 1, Round 2, etc.
9. After saying the student's name, the Spelling Pronouncer shall say the word, use it in a sentence, and repeat the word, enunciating well and speaking slowly.
10. The Spelling Pronouncer shall continue presenting words until hearing from the Head Judge "Spelling Pronouncer, the correct spelling is ..." At this time, the Head Judge will give the correct spelling of the word.
11. If a mispronunciation occurs, the Spelling Pronouncer shall correct the pronunciation and give the same word to the contestant.

JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES (INCLUDING HEAD JUDGE)

1. There shall be three judges for the Spelling Bee. One judge shall be appointed Head Judge and shall communicate the judges' decisions to the Spelling Pronouncer.
2. As the Spelling Pronouncer pronounces the word for the student and uses it in a sentence, the judge will check the Bee Pronouncer's pronunciation and usage. If there is a question about correctness of either the pronunciation or usage, the head judge should tell the Spelling Pronouncer before the student begins spelling the word. If either of the other two judges question the correctness or usage, they should confer with the Head Judge. During the spelling of the word, the other two judges will write down the spelling given by the speller (*at regional level*).
3. The judges should listen for the student pronouncing the word before beginning to spell. This will ensure that the student will be spelling the right word. If a student does not pronounce the word before beginning to spell, the head judge should stop the student and ask the student to first say the word.
4. If the Spelling Pronouncer pronounces a word or misuses the word in a sentence, the judges

should make the Spelling Pronouncer aware of the problem before a student begins to spell the word.

5. When a student misspells a word, the Head Judge should say to the Spelling Pronouncer, "Spelling Pronouncer, the correct spelling is..." and then give the correct spelling for the pronouncer, student, and the audience.
6. The judges should monitor the following of all rules.
7. The judges should apply all decisions fairly and equally to all students.
8. The Spelling Bee Coordinator and/or head judge will advise the Spelling Pronouncer when it is time for a break.
9. The judges should keep track of which student's turn it is.
10. The judges should record on the Round Response sheet which word and which round each student was eliminated.
11. If there is a challenge the Arbitrator cannot settle, judges will confer with the Arbitrator and make the binding decision.
12. **The decision of the judges is final.**

ARBITRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. It is the duty of the Arbitrator to record the Bee proceedings, keep track of the recordings, and make them available in case of a challenge or concern by any of the other officials.
2. Whenever a member of the audience or a student participant challenges a judge's decision, the challenge shall be made to the Arbitrator before the student concerned would receive the next word in the next round.
3. If the challenge cannot be resolved from one of the above resources, the Arbitrator shall call for a brief time-out to conference with the judges.
4. If a second arbitrator is available, it is their responsibility to look up the indicated word in the dictionary for additional information requested by the Bee Pronouncer.
5. **The judges' decision is final.**

CHALLENGE RECORDER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. When an individual makes a challenge, the Challenge Recorder will record the word challenged and the reason for the challenge. The Challenge Recorder shall have access to the Arbitrator's challenge sheet for reference, and the judges' hearing response sheets.
2. If a second person makes an identical challenge, the Challenge Recorder should inform the individual that the challenge has already been made and cannot be repeated.
3. If a second person makes a challenge on the same word but on a different issue (*for example, instead of student spelling, the challenge is the Spelling Pronouncer's pronunciation*), the challenge should be allowed and also recorded.
4. The Challenge Recorder should record whether the challenge was granted or denied.

ROUND ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Round Advisor formally announces to the audience the beginning of each round by turning the cards to the next round number each time the Spelling Pronouncer gives a new word to the first speller.
2. The Round Advisor ensures that no one in the audience is giving help to a contestant. The Round Advisor faces the audience, usually sitting on stage.
3. If the Round Advisor observes someone giving spelling assistance to a student, the Round Advisor should speak to the person personally, or motion for assistance from Bee officials. If spelling assistance continues, the Round Advisor should ask the judges for a time-out. The Spelling Bee officials will then decide what action should be taken.
4. If the Round Advisor observes people in the audience unconsciously lip spelling or nodding heads as correct/incorrect spelling are given, the audience should be reminded that the students must spell the word without assistance.

TIMEKEEPER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The student shall have a full minute to spell a word.
2. The student shall have 30 seconds from the time the student pronounces the word until spelling begins.
3. If the student does not begin spelling the word at the end of the 30-second period, the student shall be reminded by the Timekeeper to begin spelling.
4. The student shall have an additional 30 seconds from the time the Timekeeper reminds the student to begin spelling until they must finish spelling the word.
5. The Timekeeper will disqualify any student who has not spelled the word at the end of this 30-second period.
6. The Timekeeper shall keep a record of all students who have reached either of the 30-second time limits.
7. Once a student pronounces their word, the student may not stop and ask for a definition, repetition, a new sentence, etc. This must be done before the student pronounces the word.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL SPELLING BEE FORMS

Note: All officials will have access to the following materials the day of the Riverside County Regional Spelling Bee:

- List of participants in alphabetical order
- Practice words for each participant
- Challenge Recorders Sheet
- Round Response Sheet
- Timekeeper's Time Sheet
- Spelling Bee Rules and Procedures
- Audio recording of the Spelling Bee
- [Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online](#)

SAMPLE ROUND RESPONSE SHEET

The day of the Bee, the Round Response sheet should have enough space for all spellers participating (i.e., if there are 30 spellers, there should be 3 rows of 10)

SAMPLE CHALLENGE RECORDER'S SHEET

SAMPLE TIMEKEEPER'S TIME SHEET

RIVERSIDE COUNTY **REGIONAL SPELLING BEE**



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**
EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools