

SPELLING BEE RULES 2011

1 Heat format

Each heat is a live oral spelling contest and comprises two spelling challenges. All teams will compete in each challenge. The challenges are:

- a) Spelling Play-Off
- b) Quick-Fire Challenge

The winning team of each Spelling Bee Championship heat will be the team with the highest combined score –after adding together the scores from both the Spelling Play-Off and the Quick-Fire Challenge.

2 Spelling Bee event

2a Spelling Play-Off

During the Spelling Play-Off, each contestant will be asked to spell a word. Each correct answer will gain two points for their team. The Challenge will begin with Contestant A/Team 1 being asked their first word, followed by Contestant A/Team 2, Contestant A/Team 3 and so on until Contestant A in all teams has attempted to spell their first word. Then each Contestant B will be asked to spell a word in turn followed by Contestants C. In the local heat, no contestants will be eliminated in the first round even if they misspell their word. However, once the second round of words starts, contestants will be eliminated for incorrect spellings. In the Semi-Finals and Grand Final contestants will be eliminated in the first round if they misspell their word. The words will increase in difficulty as the challenge progresses.

Scoring

Each correct spelling earns the team two points. The individual winner of this Challenge will be the last contestant who has not been eliminated and who has correctly spelt a word in a round (“the Play-Off Winner”). If all the contestants misspell a word in a round, the round will start again. The individual winner may or may not be a member of the top-scoring team. Teams will only be given points for correctly spelling words – no additional points will be awarded to the winner. Play-Off Winners will receive a medal in the local heats and semi-finals.

Time allowed

Each contestant has 30 seconds to start to spell their word. The clock will not be suspended if the contestant asks for further information about the word. If a contestant has started spelling when the 30 seconds runs out, the contestant will be given a reasonable time to finish.

2b Quick-Fire Challenge

This is a challenge to find out which team can spell the most number of words in two minutes. Teams must choose the level of word difficulty - hard, medium or easy words - they want to attempt to spell. Hard words spelt correctly win more points than medium and easy words – see scoring below. Teams must notify the event staff of their difficulty selection during the mid-event break, and may not change their selection once made. Team members must spell the words in turn. The order of the teams in the Quick-Fire Challenge will be by random selection.

Teams may not substitute a contestant during the Challenges, but can make a substitution after the Spelling Play-Off and before the Quick-Fire Challenge. Teams may replace a team player with their reserve player for the Quick-Fire Challenge *only* by notifying the event staff during the mid-event break. Once a substitution has been notified, it may not be changed.

Scoring

Depending on the level of word difficulty teams have selected to answer in the Quick-Fire Challenge, points will be given for each correct spelling as follows:

- Hard words (3 points)
- Medium words (2 points)
- Easy words (1 point)

Teams may “pass” on a word and choose not to spell it, in which case the Spellmaster will announce the next word to be spelt.

Time allowed

If a word has been announced but not spelt when the two minutes runs out, teams will be given a reasonable time to spell or finish spelling the word.

School team with the highest score wins.

The winning team of each local heat will be the team with the highest score – after combining the scores from both the Spelling Play-Off and the Quick-Fire Challenge.

If there is a tie, teams will be asked in turn to spell tie-break words on an elimination basis, until a single team remains. Teams can choose which contestant answers each tie-break word. As with the Spelling Play-Off, a team must correctly spell a word in a round to be the winner – if all the teams misspell a word in a round, the round will start again.

The winning team of each local heat will be invited to attend the Championship Semi-Finals, staged in May. Winning school teams from the Semi-Finals will be invited to compete in the Grand Final which will be held in London in June. The winning team at the Grand Final will be awarded the title: **The Times Spelling Bee UK School Champion 2011**. HarperCollins will also present the Collins Trophy to the Play-Off Winner in the Grand Final.

3 Homophones and alternative variants

If the judge discovers, on the basis of consultation with the Collins English Dictionary, that a word has an allowed variant spelling (“Alternative”), and that the contestant has spelt this alternative correctly, the contestant will receive the full points for one correctly spelt word. Only British variant spellings are allowed. If a word’s only Alternative is an exclusively U.S. or Canadian variant spelling and the contestant spells this correctly (for example c-e-n-t-e-r for centre), no points will be awarded, and no replacement word will be given.

If a word on the list has an allowed Alternative or similar sounding word (eg guess and guest) and a contestant misspells a word because s/he has spelt its Alternative or similar sounding word correctly, the contestant will be awarded the full points. If however the Spellmaster has identified a particular word, by providing a definition for that word, only Alternatives will be judged as correct, and no similar sounding words will be accepted.

If the contestant misspells the Alternative, or similar sounding word, no points are awarded and no replacement word will be given.

4 Championship adjudication

Each local heat will be adjudicated by a judge from HarperCollins – official dictionary of The Times Spelling Bee. The judge will oversee the spelling contest, scoring, adherence to the Spelling Bee Championship rules, and the identification of the winning team. The judge’s decision on all matters is final. For rules on disqualification and adjudication appeals – see points 8 and 12.

5 Eligibility of contestants

Teams must be comprised only of full time pupils who will turn (or will have turned) 12 years old between September 1, 2010 and August 31, 2011. Teams must comprise four pupils – three contestants and a reserve. Schools from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are invited to take part. The Times reserves the right to review the eligibility of team members. Any team member or reserve found to be in breach of the age rules for participation, or contravening the spirit of the Championship, may be disqualified before or during the Championship and will have to forfeit any prizes gained through participation.

6 Attendance at Spelling Bee Championship events

6a All members of each team must attend the Championship contest heats, including the reserve student. All teams must be accompanied by a member of staff to supervise the participants. Event staff may use their discretion to allow entry to teams who attend without a reserve member in exceptional circumstances.

6b School uniform (if applicable) must be worn.

6c Each school may bring a total of no more than 15 people, including team members and teacher, to each Championship event. Other guests may be family, friends, colleagues or pupils.

6d Teams, school staff and guests must each bring a completed entrance pass to gain entry to the local heats.

6e The organisers of the local heats reserve the right to refuse entry to anyone not carrying an entrance pass.

6f Special needs: Schools should have informed The Times Spelling Bee in advance if any pupils have special needs, such as wheelchair accessibility. The Times Spelling Bee may in its discretion amend the rules to accommodate medical

conditions in speech, hearing or movement. Rule changes will be for the purpose of making reasonable adjustments to enable any pupil to participate. Rules changes may be applied only to the relevant pupil.

6g It is expected that schools will cover the travel costs of its team, accompanying member of teaching staff and supporters to attend each Championship event. If, in exceptional circumstances, a school is unable to cover travel costs of the school team and accompanying member of teaching staff, which will mean a school team is not able to attend a local heat, or if successful, a Semi-Final and Grand Final, the head teacher should email spellingbee@rapportgroup.com explaining the circumstances. Applications for a travel bursary will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and on an individual case by case basis. Travel expense applications must be received a minimum of two weeks before the relevant event, or earlier, to give time for applications to be considered. If a travel expense application is successful, the bursary will only be paid if the bursary terms are complied with. Bursary terms will be supplied on notification of a successful application.

7 Rules for contestants

7a Only three of the four team members may compete at any one time, with the fourth member acting as a reserve. The teams may substitute a team member with the reserve after each of the local heats and/or the Semi-Final, or between Challenges. Teams may not substitute a contestant during the Challenges. However, schools can substitute a player for the reserve player to play in the Quick-Fire Challenge by notifying the event staff during the mid-event break. Should a contestant fall ill during the event (or, owing to some emergency, request to leave the heat in the middle of a Challenge) it will be at the discretion of the judge to allow the reserve member to join the team as the contestant's replacement for the remainder of the Challenge. No correspondence will be entered into in respect of any decision by the judge or The Times in relation to substitution.

7b All contestants' mobile phones must be switched off during the event.

7c When spelling words, contestants must face the judge and should speak clearly with sufficient volume to be audible. If an adjudicator is unable to clearly hear a letter or spelling, as given by a contestant in the Quick-Fire Challenge, the adjudicator will sound a buzzer to indicate the player must immediately respell the word more clearly and slowly. It is the contestant's responsibility to ensure that they are speaking slowly and clearly enough that each letter can be heard. The judge's decision on whether or not they heard a letter or spelling is final.

7d Once contestants have begun to spell the word, they must continue spelling the word (unless requested by the Judge by use of the buzzer). A contestant cannot retract the spelling, or alter the letters or sequence of letters from those first uttered otherwise no points will be awarded. Contestants may repeat a spelling, provided that they do not alter the letters or sequence of letters.

7e Before starting to spell a word, contestants may request the Spellmaster to:

- give the word's definition
- explain the word's part of speech (eg: noun, verb etc)
- repeat the word

It is the contestant's prerogative to request or not to request this information. Contestants may not ask for this information once they have begun to spell the word. Contestants may only ask for each item of information to be provided once per word. The clock will not be suspended while the information is being given. Contestants may not ask for any information other than the items listed above.

7f Contestants must spell the British spelling of a word (eg: not center for centre; not color for colour) otherwise no points will be awarded. US or Canadian variant spellings will not be considered valid.

7g Contestants may not confer on how to spell a word at any time, or seek clues from the audience or any other source, otherwise no points will be awarded and teams risk disqualification, even if the contestants are not currently competing.

7h Contestants must remain quiet when not spelling. Contestants causing a disruption will be warned, and if they or any other team member causes a second disruption, the team may be disqualified.

7i If a competitor runs out of time before starting to spell the word, then no points will be awarded. However, if there are extraordinary circumstances that prevent a contestant from spelling a word within the required time, the adjudicator may in his or her discretion allow a respell. This, for instance, may include another contestant being disruptive.

7j In the Spelling Play-Off challenge contestants are encouraged, but not required, to say their word before spelling it and again after spelling it ie: "Say it, Spell it, Say it". Contestants will not be penalised, or have any points taken off if they forget, but a contestant will not be entitled to appeal a misspell on the basis that they had misheard the word. A contestant may only appeal a misspell on the basis that they misheard the word if they followed the "Say it, Spell it, Say it" format AND they correctly spelt the word they think they heard, ie if they misspell the word they think they heard, no appeal will be allowed.

7k In the Spelling Play-Off each contestant has 30 seconds to start to spell their word. The clock will not be suspended if the contestant asks for further information about the word. If a contestant has started spelling when the 30 seconds runs out, the contestant will be given a reasonable time to finish.

7l In the Quick-Fire Challenge each member of the team must spell in turn. As soon as any team member says “pass”, the Spellmaster will announce the next word. Teams may not elect to spell a word once any team member has elected to pass that word.

7m If a team is found to be spelling out of turn, or in the wrong order, the round will be started again. The restarting of a round will be at the judge’s and event staff’s discretion.

7n If a word has been announced but not spelt in the Quick-Fire Challenge when the two minutes run out, teams will be given a reasonable time to spell or finish spelling the word.

7o In the Quick-Fire Challenge if the contestant is still spelling out a word when the two minutes allowed is up, the contestant can either continue to complete the spelling of the word, or start afresh and spell the complete word uninterrupted. The contestant will then have a reasonable time to spell or finish spelling the final word.

7p Each school is responsible for providing adequate and appropriate supervision of the team at all Championship events. The Times Spelling Bee will not be responsible for supervising teams at any time (also see rules for audience and rules for disqualification).

7q In the event of an emergency or major distraction happening when a team is spelling during the Quick-Fire Challenge, the clock can be stopped and restarted at the judge’s and event staff’s discretion.

8 Rules for disqualification

Teams may be disqualified by the judge if:

8a Team contestants have not turned off their mobile phone after having been given a warning.

8b The judge is satisfied there has been an incident of cheating.

8c The judge is suspicious that cheating is occurring (of whatever form), and after having given the team a warning, the judge believes cheating still to be occurring.

8d Team contestants (or their guests) don’t sit quietly during any of the Challenges and if in anyway they attempt to disrupt the progress of the contest and after having been given a warning, the behaviour continues (from any member of the team or their guests).

8e The judge is suspicious that members of the audience are influencing the accuracy of contestant spelling by whatever means. The judge will give a warning that such behaviour should stop, but if the judge believes this behaviour to have continued after the warning, the school’s team will be disqualified.

8f A team will be disqualified if they arrive following the close of registration. A team will only be deemed to have arrived once all four team members and their supervising teacher have arrived (unless a team has been reduced in number for any reason). Registration for morning events will close at 9:45am, and will close at 1:15pm for afternoon events.

9 Rules for the audience

9a All mobile phones must be turned off during the event.

9b No attempts should be made in any way to influence the contestants spelling of words. (See rules of team disqualification, 8c and 8d)

9c Guests in the audience should sit quietly during the Challenges and not in anyway attempt to disrupt the progress of any event.

10 Word List

10a Words used in the Spelling Bee are supplied by HarperCollins Publishers. Every effort has been made to ensure the Spelling Bee Word List is appropriate to the age level of the contestants.

10b The Spelling Bee Word List has been derived from the Collins School Dictionary. Special consideration has been given to vocabulary appropriate for 11-12 year olds. A supplementary list of difficult, tie-breaking words has been extracted from the Collins English Dictionary (CED).

10c There is a word list for each event. This list comprises a selection of words of varying word difficulty from the total Word List, including homophones.

10d Words pronounced in the Spelling Play-Off Challenge will increase in difficulty as the Spelling Play-Off progresses.

11 The Judge

11a The judge will uphold the rules of the Spelling Bee and determine whether a word has been spelt correctly. Any appeals against the judge’s decisions must be made immediately after a word has been ruled as misspelt or correct (see

Rule 12 Appeals). For the Quick-Fire Challenge, words will only be ruled as correct or misspelt at the end of the two minutes. Appeals will not be allowed if the next round has commenced.

11b The final authority for the accuracy of the information provided to the Spelling Bee is the Collins English Dictionary. No other dictionary may be used as evidence of spelling (including homophones and spelling variants), pronunciation, definition, or part of speech for the purpose of the Spelling Bee.

11c If the judge believes the Spellmaster has mispronounced a word, it is the judge's duty to point this out, preferably before the contestant spells the word. The judge will then ask the Spellmaster to re-pronounce the word correctly, and spelling will continue. If the contestant has already spelt the word before the judge can point out the error, the contestant will be given a replacement word (unless the spelling was correct).

11d If an adjudicator is unable to clearly hear a letter or spelling, as given by a contestant in the Quick-Fire Challenge, the adjudicator will sound a buzzer to indicate the player must immediately respell the word more clearly and slowly. It is the contestant's responsibility to ensure that they are speaking slowly and clearly enough that each letter can be heard. The judge's decision on whether or not they heard a letter or spelling is final.

11e Only British variant spellings are allowed. If a word's only Alternative is an exclusively U.S. or Canadian variant spelling and the contestant spells this correctly (for example c-e-n-t-e-r for centre), no points are awarded, and no replacement word will be given.

11f If a word on the List has an allowed alternative or similar sounding word (eg guess and guest) and a contestant misspells a word because s/he has spelt its alternative or similar sounding word correctly, the contestant will be awarded the full points. If, however, the Spellmaster has identified a particular word, by providing a definition for that word, only Alternatives will be judged as correct, and no similar sounding words will be accepted. If the contestant misspells the Alternative, or similar sounding word, no points are awarded and no replacement word will be given.

12 Appeals

12a The judge will rule on whether a word has been spelt correctly. Any appeals to a judge's initial decision must be made as soon as the word has been ruled as misspelt or ruled as spelt. For the Quick-Fire Challenge, words will only be ruled as correct or misspelt at the end of the two minutes. Appeals will not be allowed if the next round has commenced.

12b Only decisions on the spelling of a word may be challenged. Contestants and school representatives may not challenge decisions about eligibility, disqualification, or the accuracy of the Collins English Dictionary.

12c Only contestants, or the supervising member of school staff may appeal against the judge's decision. Guests may not appeal any spelling decisions.

12d The judge may consult with other persons regarding a disputed spelling. However, such consultation is not necessary. The judge's second decision on the spelling of a disputed word is final.

12e If an appeal that the Spellmaster has mispronounced a word is upheld by the judge, and the contestant has already spelt the word before the error has been pointed out, the contestant will be given a replacement word (unless the spelling was correct).

12f The final authority regarding the pronunciation of a word is the Collins English Dictionary. No other dictionary will be regarded as evidence of pronunciation for the purposes of the Spelling Bee.

12g If the judge rules that the word was, in fact, pronounced correctly, no replacement word will be given, and no points will be awarded for any misspelt words.

12h If after consultation with the Collins English Dictionary, the judge discovers a word has an allowed Alternative, and the contestant misspells this Alternative, no points are awarded.

12i All appeals will be resolved on the day.

12j The judge will use their discretion as to whether a replacement word should be given or the chance for the word to be respelt in the unlikely event there are exceptional circumstances or distractions that might have affected the contestants performance.

13 Appeal Protocol

In order to minimise disruption to the pace of the event and the concentration of the spellers, the judge is under no obligation to stop the Spelling Bee in order to discuss with school representatives an appeal or denied appeal. The judge's decision is final and is subject neither to review or reversal by HarperCollins or The Times.

14 Notice of rules

A copy of the Spelling Bee rules has been made available to every participating school before the launch of the local events.

15 HarperCollins and The Times reserve the right to amend the rules and terms and conditions of the Championship at any stage. The terms and conditions of the Championship are available to download from the Spelling Bee website: www.timesspellingbee.co.uk.

16 All correspondence and queries in relation to attending the Championship should be directed to: The Times Spelling Bee, Epic House, 128 Fulwell Road, Teddington, TW11 0RQ or email: spellingbee@rapportgroup.com or telephone: 020 8973 0046.

17 Championship events may be postponed or cancelled in exceptional circumstances. Schools will be notified of any cancellation or postponement as soon as reasonably practical.