



# How to Organize a Spelling Contest

## OREGON SPELLERS

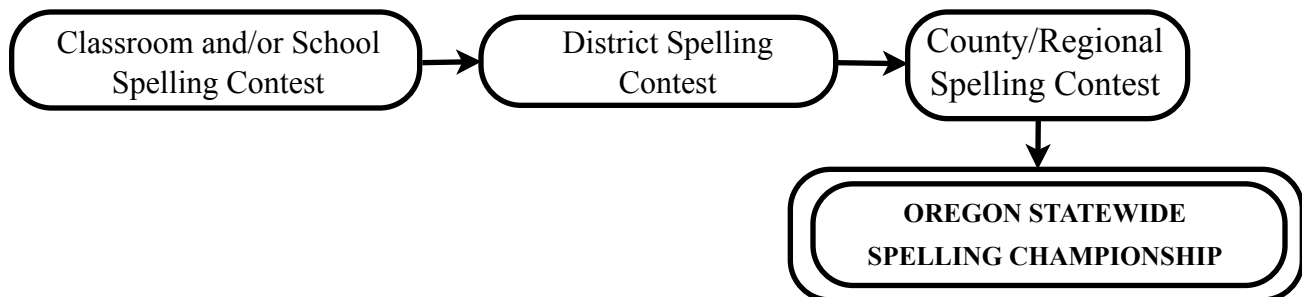
[www.oregonspellers.org](http://www.oregonspellers.org)

### OVERVIEW:

**OREGON STATEWIDE SPELLING CHAMPIONSHIP:** Oregon Spellers, an all volunteer, non-ODE-sponsored entity, accepts the **ONE** top speller (except in case of a first-place tie) from **each** Division in **each** County that participates in a County or Regional Spelling Competition. (e.g., If more than one County holds a Regional contest instead of a County contest, *ONE top speller\* in each Division for EACH of the Counties may advance to the Championship*).

The **OREGON STATEWIDE SPELLING CHAMPIONSHIP** is held at the Oregon State Fair in Salem the first weekend in September. For more information about the Championship go to: [www.oregonspellers.org](http://www.oregonspellers.org) The Oregon Statewide Spelling Championship and all contests leading up to it are **written** spelling contests unlike spelling “bees”, which are oral. The words are pronounced and used in a sentence. The winners of the state contest receive U.S. Savings Bonds and certificates. For local contest prizes and volunteers, consider approaching service organizations (e.g. Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.). Students compete in three Divisions – **Division I – Grades 1-5; Division II – Grades 6-8; Division III – Grades 9-12**

### The Road to the Spelling Championship



**Classroom Contest:** Each Classroom holds a spelling contest to determine that classroom’s top speller.

**School Contest:** The top *one or two* spellers\* from *each* Classroom competes in their Division (see above) of the School level spelling competition. Very small schools might eliminate the classroom contest and just hold a school-wide contest.

**District Contest:** The top *one or two* spellers\* in *each* Division from each school in the district compete in their Division at the District competition.

**County/Regional Contest:** The top *one or two* spellers\* in *each* Division of the District competition compete in the County or Regional Spelling Competition.

*\*Schools and Districts may determine, according to their own population distribution, whether to send one or two top spellers from each Division to the next level of competition. If they send two spellers, they should be the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place winners or two tied 1<sup>st</sup> place spellers. Counties/Regions can only send one top speller to the Oregon Statewide Spelling Championship, except in the case of a first-place tie.*

## **SCHEDULING:**

The County/Region Contest Coordinator sets the timetable for their contest. The school district and individual schools **must** schedule their contests so they are able to meet the County/Region deadline. Oregon Spellers needs to have names of the winners of the County/Regional contests by **May 31<sup>st</sup>**.

**For District and County contests**, after the first year, the Contest Coordinator should **schedule the contest a year ahead** to ensure that adequate facilities are available. It is best to have separate rooms for each Division, then the contest will take about an hour and a half. If the Divisions use the same room sequentially, it may take a little longer to finish. The Contest Coordinator should schedule a small room for those who are judging (if possible one room per Division), so they are not distracted.

If there is a way to let home-schooled students know about this opportunity, make sure they know that they must participate in their resident District Contest to qualify for the County Level contest.

If a student who is eligible to advance is unavailable on Contest day due to a scheduling conflict that is known about in advance, the Contest Manager *may choose* to give that student a spelling test privately.

## **SPELLING LISTS:**

In January or early February, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) will provide contest words for the County/Regional Contest and the District Level Contest. The list will contain 25 words plus 2 lists of 5 words for Tie Breakers (with appropriate sentences) per Division. **Schools need to provide their own lists** for the Classroom and School spelling tests – 25 words plus 2 lists of 5 words for Tie Breakers (with appropriate sentences) per Division.

Word lists for the OREGON STATEWIDE SPELLING CHAMPIONSHIP are created by the Oregon Spellers' "Wordsmith" who is the only person to see the words until the emcee receives them on the day of the contest.

## **CONTEST MANAGER / JUDGES / DAY OF CONTEST HELP:**

The Contest Manager is the person responsible for the running of the spelling contest. The Contest Manager will provide prepared lists of contest words and corresponding sentences to the proctors and judges on the day of the contest. Parents of spellers **cannot** participate as judges or have contact with the spelling lists.

***Pronouncers must be able to pronounce spelling words correctly and enunciate clearly.***

For all contests (**except** in the classroom where the teacher is the "judge" and pronouncer), you **MAY** need:

1. **Pronouncers -- 1 to 3 word pronouncers** — If you have multiple Divisions in your contest (e.g., a K-8 school or District Contest), it's often easiest to have one pronouncer per Division and have the Divisions compete in separate rooms.
2. **Judges — 2 to 8 (or more) judges** — depending on the number of spellers. The more help you have, the faster it goes. They should be good spellers themselves.
3. **Scoring chairperson** helps move papers through the scoring process and determine first, second and third place winners.
4. **One person to put names on certificates**, using computer printer or by hand.
5. **Refreshments** for contestants and families, if desired.

## **Organizing paperwork for the Day of the Contest (not necessarily needed for the classroom):**

1. **Pronouncers need:** envelope labeled with pronouncer's name and Division which contains an **outline of contest procedures**, word list and sentences for the contest and Tie Breakers ;
2. **Judges need:** Word list & Tie Breaker keys (can be color-coded per Division to make it speed up scoring); red pencils, and a dictionary;

3. **Assistant/Room Proctor needs:** extra pencils, paper; (enough for parents if they are attending the contest to “try their hand at the test” — often for District or County contests);
4. **Students need:** a Spelling Contest Answer Sheet or lined paper (can be color coded per Division if desired), pencil, name tag (optional), scratch paper.

#### **AFTER THE CONTEST:**

**At each level, the name(s) of the winner(s), need to be sent on to the next level contest;**

i.e., Schools send information to their District Contest Coordinator; Districts to their County/Regional Contest Coordinator.

**\*\*County/Regional Contests see County Coordinator Specific Information “After the Contest” information below. \*\*\*\***

1. Reprint and mail any certificates that need corrections.
2. Reassemble and file unused parts of the contest (e.g. unused speller answer sheets, paper, etc.).
3. Make notes of anything that didn’t run smoothly and ideas to avoid those problems for next year.
4. File samples of the word lists in an archive file so words aren’t repeated in subsequent years.

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#### **INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO COUNTY COORDINATORS:**

##### **SCHEDULING:**

The County/Regional Coordinator sets the date and time for the County/Regional Contest. Try to schedule rooms from 3pm to 5pm so students don’t miss (too much) school to participate. **Give Districts a deadline for winners’ information**, but allow time to contact winners and parents about the County contest. (Try for at least 2 weeks.)

##### **DISTRICT CONTACTS:**

Create a list of District contacts and update it annually about the first of December so it is ready for use when the word lists arrive from ODE. Using the ODE School Directory the first year, contact the districts and private schools with appropriate grade levels in your county to invite participation and establish a contact. District and private school **coordinator’s name, phone number, and email address** are essential. Be sure they know when the County level contest is, because they will have to schedule their contests before that.

If a school or district has never participated in the spelling contests or would like additional help, Oregon Spellers provides a “**How to Organize a Spelling Contest**” (available at [www.oregonspellers.org](http://www.oregonspellers.org)) to help schools and districts put on the contests that must occur **prior to** the County spelling contest and ultimately, the OREGON STATEWIDE SPELLING CHAMPIONSHIP. If a district opts not to participate, ask them to let you know in advance.

##### **AFTER THE COUNTY/REGIONAL CONTEST:**

1. Give each **First Place winner** (one per Division except in case of a tie) in the County Contest an Oregon Spellers’ “**Individual County Winner Registration Form**” and direct them to fill out the form online at [www.oregonspellers.org](http://www.oregonspellers.org) or mail it to Oregon Spellers **immediately**. These forms will be sent out to County Coordinators by ODE with the Word Lists and also by Oregon Spellers.
2. Complete Oregon Spellers’ “**County Coordinator’s Winner Form**” for First and Second Place winners and submit one for **EACH** County (if a Regional Contest) to **Oregon Spellers**.
3. **Compile a list of First, Second, and Third place winners** for dissemination to local print media.
4. **Follow the regular “After the Contest” procedures above.**

## CONTEST GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

1. **Each Spelling Contest should have the following (per Division if applicable):**
  - a. Spelling Contest Answer Sheet or writing paper for the contestants & possibly parents
  - b. Pencils with working erasers for the contestants & possibly parents (so they can spell along)
  - c. Dictionary
  - d. A copy of the Written Spelling Contest Rules (see below)
  - e. An envelope for each pronouncer with 1 copy of 25 words with sentences and two lists of 5 words with sentences each for Tie Breakers (see Spelling Lists from the “How to” information sheet)
  - f. Spelling Contest Results Sheet
2. Before starting, pass out Spelling Contest Answer Sheets and sharpened pencils to each contestant. Have students fill out the Spelling Contest Answer Sheet (Name, Date, School/District/County and Division).
3. Remind the students of the following:  
**WRITTEN SPELLING CONTEST RULES**
  - a. Put your first and last name on your paper.
  - b. Please PRINT words clearly.
  - c. After the 25 words are pronounced, students will be able to ask for any word and sentence to be repeated. A word may only be repeated once.
  - d. Students must do their own work – any student caught cheating (as determined by the proctor, pronouncer, or other contest official) will be expelled from the contest.
4. Administer the set of twenty-five (25) words, by pronouncing the word, reading it in the sentence containing the word, and pronouncing it again.
5. After pronouncing all the words, ask if anyone would like a word repeated. If requested, repeat the word, the sentence containing the word, and the word again. No other prompts should be given.
7. Collect the papers. At **least two** judges (if it isn't a classroom contest) should score **EACH** paper *separately* to ensure accuracy. Each judge should initial each contestant's paper and write the total number of words correctly spelled and total number of words missed in the appropriate blank. There is no partial credit. There are no negative points for incorrect answers. The contestant will be awarded one point for each correct answer.
8. If there is a disagreement about the spelling of a word, the dictionary should be consulted by the judges before they make their final ruling. The decisions of the judges are final.
9. If there is a tie for first or second place, pass out the Tie-Breaker forms, pronounce an additional set of five words for **ALL** contestants to maintain suspense and fairness. Record the number of words correctly spelled in the Tie Breaker column. If the Tie is not resolved, repeat the Tie-Breaker process with another set of five words. If the Tie is not resolved after 2 Tie Breakers, that position (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>) is declared a Tie and both spellers share that placement. If the tie is for 1<sup>st</sup> place, then both spellers will advance to the next level.
10. The student with the greatest number of words correct is first place winner; the second greatest number correct is second place. Clearly record 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place winners at the top of the Spelling Contest Results Sheet.

# SPELLING CONTEST ANSWER SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please print*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School, District or County:

\_\_\_\_\_

Classroom

School

District

County

Regional

Words Correct		# Words Missed	
Tie Breaker #1 Correct		Tie Breaker #2 Correct	

*Division I (Grades 1-5)*

*Division II (Grades 6-8)*

*Division III (Grades 9-12)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_\_

20. \_\_\_\_\_

21. \_\_\_\_\_

22. \_\_\_\_\_

23. \_\_\_\_\_

24. \_\_\_\_\_

25. \_\_\_\_\_

## SPELLING CONTEST TIE-BREAKER ANSWER SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please print*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tie-Breaker Words Correct</b>		<b>Tie-Breaker # Words Missed</b>	
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Name of School, District or County:  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_



## SPELLING CONTEST TIE-BREAKER ANSWER SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please print*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tie-Breaker Words Correct</b>		<b>Tie-Breaker # Words Missed</b>	
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Name of School, District or County:  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

