

RULES FOR



This competition will be for school students of classes 6 to 8 residing in India.

Preliminary heats will be run online using spelling quizzes. The top 36 contestants from the preliminary heats will go through to the live semi-finals. There will be six semi-finals to be run online, each with six contestants. The winner and runner-up from each semi-final will progress to the Grand Finale that will be run as a live event. The Grand Finale will feature 12 competitors.

The competition for the semi-finals and finals will be run in the same way. This competition will follow a traditional knock-out approach.

The words for the competitions will be taken from the *Collins COBUILD Learner's Illustrated Dictionary 3rd edition*, and Collins spelling lists with additional words from *Collins English Dictionary*.

Preliminary Heats Online

11, 12 and 13 August 2025, 5:00 – 5:10 pm IST

Semi-Finals

Semi-final 1: 1 September 2025 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm IST

Semi-final 2: 1 September 2025 5:45 pm – 6:45 pm IST

Semi-final 3: 2 September 2025 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm IST

Semi-final 4: 2 September 2025 5:45 pm – 6:45 pm IST

Semi-final 5: 3 September 2025 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm IST

Semi-final 6: 3 September 2025 5:45 pm – 6:45 pm IST

(Collins will allocate semi-finalists to semi-finals; competitors will not be offered a choice of dates or times.)

Grand Finale Preparation Webinar

To be decided

Grand Finale

27 September 2025, 10:30 am – 1.00 pm IST

Venue

British Council, New Delhi

The rules for the preliminary rounds (the qualifying rounds), semi-finals and the Grand Finale are given in this document.

Heats (Practice Test)

At 5:00 pm India time each day on 11, 12 and 13 August 2025, an online spelling bee preliminary round will go live.

The link to the preliminary rounds will be: <https://bit.ly/collinsspellbee2025>

or Scan the QR Code below



This link will be live for only 10 minutes. There will be 20 questions. Please select the correct option in case of multiple-choice questions. Opening another tab or right-clicking on the text to copy it will be disallowed. The highest scoring 36 participants over the 3 online screening rounds will be selected for the semi-finals.

In case of tied score, the player who takes the least time will be selected.

PLEASE USE THE SAME EMAIL ID FOR YOUR 3 ATTEMPTS

Usage of any unfair means will lead to immediate disqualification

Semi-finals and Grand Finale

1. The competitions will be run as a traditional spelling bee, with competitors spelling words and eliminated for any incorrect spellings.
2. Each competitor will be asked to spell a word in turn.
3. Competitors will go in a set order in each round based on their rankings in the preliminary heats and semi-finals.
4. The semi-finals will consist of as many rounds as needed to eliminate four competitors to be left with two clear winners.
5. The finals will consist of as many rounds as needed to identify first, second and third places. In the event that:
 - a. The two last-standing competitors both spell their words in the same round incorrectly, further rounds will be run until there is a clear winner.
 - b. Two competitors are knocked out in the same round (leaving a tie for third place), we will run a tiebreaker round to establish third place after the winner has been identified.
6. Words will get gradually harder as the competition progresses. However, words for each round will be at approximately the same level for each competitor to ensure fair play.

7. In the **semi-finals, rounds 1 and 2** will include words that competitors should find easy to spell, to help them become more confident.
8. In the **finals, rounds 1 and 2** will be warm-up rounds and competitors will not be disqualified for spelling a word incorrectly. The words that competitors will be asked to spell should be easy for them and should not pose any challenges, to help them to relax and to get used to the competition format.
9. In the **finals, rounds 3 and 4** will include easy words that competitors should be able to spell easily, to help them relax.
10. Homophones – words that sound the same but that are spelled differently, like be and bee (both pronounced /bi:/) – are usually common words that are easy to spell, but competitors need to demonstrate spelling skills to be able to spell them correctly. If a competitor thinks that the word they have been asked to spell is a homophone, he or she should ask for the definition to clarify which word has to be spelled. Homophones will be included in both the semi-finals and finals.
11. Words of Indian origin that are used in English will be included throughout.
12. The word lists for the semi-finals and finals will be taken from **Collins COBUILD Learner's Illustrated Dictionary (3rd edition)**, supplemented by words that are suitable from **Collins English Dictionary**. Only spelling and spelling variants given in **Collins English Dictionary** will be accepted in the competition. (This includes any American spellings included in the dictionaries.)
13. The word list for the competition will not be made available in advance. This competition is a test of spelling skills so words chosen will test contestants' understanding of spelling rules, spelling conventions and knowledge of English vocabulary.
14. Competitors who make a mistake are eliminated at the end of that round (with the exception of rounds 1 and 2 in the Grand Finale).
15. In the event that all remaining competitors spell a word incorrectly in the same round, a further round or rounds will be run until a clear winner emerges.
16. Competitors will get 30 seconds to begin spelling the word after the host announces the word twice. Participants can finish after the end of 30 seconds but must begin before the timer ends.
17. Competitors are encouraged to say the word (repeat it after the host announces the word twice), spell the word and then say the word again. ('Say it; spell it; say it.') While it isn't mandatory, it helps the judges know when the competitor begins and ends spelling the word.
18. If a competitor isn't sure what word they have been asked to spell, they may ask for the word to be repeated. This must be done within 30 seconds and before the contestant begins spelling the word.
19. Competitors may hesitate or pause while they are spelling but they should not stop in the middle and go back to the beginning to start again. If a competitor pauses, they should be careful not to repeat a letter. Repeating a letter that is only included once in the word would count as a mistake.
20. Competitors will not be allowed to 'pass' on a word if they don't know how to spell it. Competitors must attempt every word.
21. Competitors can ask for the part of speech of a word, its meaning, and which language it comes from. Competitors may ask one of these questions, two of these questions, or all of these questions, in any order. These questions – if they are to be asked at all – must be asked before the competitor begins spelling the word.
22. Etymologies – where words come from – will be taken from **Collins English Dictionary**.

23. Competitors may challenge decisions – for example if they believe that they have spelled a word correctly – but such challenges must be lodged immediately at the end of the round, so that the adjudicator can take a decision promptly and efficiently. Challenges lodged at the end of the competition may be difficult to address and thus may not be resolved.
24. The official adjudicator for the competition will organize any tie-breaks, deal with any challenges, and handle any changes to the rules needed during the competition. The adjudicators' decision will be final.
25. The semi-finals will be run online. Competitors should use headphones and should turn their microphones to mute when it is not their turn to spell. Cameras must be on at all times. To help ensure fair play competitors should, when it gets to their turn to spell a word:
 - a. Make sure their microphone is on;
 - b. Sit in front of their computer screens with their hands in namaste;
 - c. Maintain eye contact with the camera on their laptops at all times while they are spelling and not look away (including when they pause or hesitate, and when they are asking questions);
 - d. Ensure that any family or friends who are in the same room are sitting at least one metre away from the computer that the competitor is using.
26. The Grand Finale will be a live event. All other rules (with the exception of rule 25) will remain the same.

Collins Grand Finale Preparation Webinar

Collins will host a one-hour webinar (online) for the 12 finalists, their parents and teachers, to help finalists prepare for the Grand Finale. This webinar – which will be held online on TBC – will offer guidance on when to ask for definitions, parts of speech and etymologies (where words come from) and some tips on spelling. We will also go over the rules for the Grand Finale.

Word List for the Competition

All words for the competition will be taken from the *Collins COBUILD Learner's Illustrated Dictionary 3rd edition* with additional words from *Collins English Dictionary*. *Collins English Dictionary* is the authority for the competition.

Sample Words for Each Band

Please note: the **band** identifies the level of spelling difficulty. Bands do not correspond to rounds in the competition.

Headword	Alternative form	Homophone	Band	Part of Speech	Definition	Etymology
abide		no	1	verb	If you can't abide someone or something, you dislike them very much.	Old English
aboard		no	1	preposition	If you are aboard a ship or plane, you are on it or in it.	Old English
about		no	1	preposition	You use about to introduce who or what something relates to or concerns.	Old English
yogi		no	1	noun	A yogi is a person who has spent many years teaching yoga.	Hindi
hurtle		no	2	verb	If someone or something hurtles somewhere, they move there very quickly, often in a rough or violent way.	Middle English

murderous		no	2	adjective	Someone who is murderous is likely to kill someone and may already have killed someone.	murder is from Old English; ous is from Latin
embossed		no	3	adjective	If a surface such as paper or wood is embossed with a design, the design stands up slightly from the surface.	Old French
emotional		no	3	adjective	Emotional means concerned with emotions and feelings.	Latin
emotive		no	3	adjective	An emotive situation or issue is likely to make people have strong feelings.	Latin
empathize	empathise	no	3	verb	If you empathize with someone, you understand their situation, problems, and feelings, because you have been in a similar situation.	Greek
mystique		no	4	noun	If there is a mystique about someone or something, they are thought to be special and people do not know much about them.	French
narrator		no	4	noun	The narrator is a person or character in a book, film, or play who tells the story.	Latin
nationalize	nationalise	no	4	verb	If a government nationalizes a private company or industry, that company or industry becomes owned by the state and controlled by the government.	Latin
naturalized	naturalised	no	4	adjective	A naturalized citizen of a particular country is someone who has legally become a citizen of that country, although they were not born there.	Latin
negotiable		no	5	adjective	Something that is negotiable can be changed or agreed when people discuss it.	Latin
nepotism		no	5	noun	Nepotism is the unfair use of power in order to get jobs or other benefits for your family or friends.	Italian
niche		no	5	noun	A niche in the market is a specific area of marketing which has its own particular requirements, customers, and products.	Old French
nominative		no	5	noun	In the grammar of some languages, the nominative or the nominative case is the case used for a noun when it is the subject of a verb.	Latin
joule		yes	6	noun	In physics, a joule is a unit of energy or work.	after J. P. Joule, English physicist
kookaburra		no	6	noun	A kookaburra is a tree-dwelling kingfisher.	native Australian language
laborious		no	6	adjective	If you describe a task or job as laborious, you mean that it takes a lot of time and effort.	Latin
laird		yes	6	noun	A laird is someone who owns a large area of land in Scotland.	Scots

apocryphal		no	7	adjective	An apocryphal story is one which is probably not true or did not happen, but which may give a true picture of someone or something.	Latin
apothecary		no	7	noun	An apothecary was a person who prepared medicines for people.	Late Latin
apropos		no	7	preposition	Something which is apropos, or apropos of, a subject or event, is connected with it or relevant to it.	French
arraign		no	7	verb	If someone is arraigned on a particular charge, they are brought before a court of law to answer that charge.	Old French
sovereignty		no	8	noun	Sovereignty is the power that a country has to govern itself or another country or state.	Old French
supercilious		no	8	adjective	If you say that someone is supercilious, you disapprove of them because they behave in a way that shows they think they are better than other people.	Latin
surveillance		no	8	noun	Surveillance is the careful watching of someone, especially by an organization such as the police or the army.	French
isthmus		no	9	noun	An isthmus is a narrow piece of land connecting two very large areas of land.	Greek
jejunum		no	9	noun	Jejunum is the part of the small intestine between the duodenum and the ileum.	Latin
jurisprudence		no	9	noun	Jurisprudence is the study of law and the principles on which laws are based.	Latin

Tips to Prepare Students for this Competition

1. Revise and practise the basic rules of English spelling.
2. Encourage competitors to read as much and as widely as possible. Reading is one of the best ways to build vocabulary, to encounter new words, and to absorb how words are spelled.
3. Revise and practise homophones. The competitions will include some common and easy-to-spell homophones in rounds 3 and 4. These are a legitimate test of spelling skills and competitors will be eliminated if they spell the wrong word. For example, if a competitor is asked to spell /sɪ:/ he or she must ask for a definition or part of speech before starting to spell because /sɪ:/ can be spelled both see and sea. If the competitor is asked to spell see and spells sea, this will be marked as a mistake and the competitor will be eliminated.
4. Revise and practise the use of prefixes, suffixes and combining forms.
5. Revise and practise suffixes that have two spelling variants, for example:
 - a. -able & -ible
 - b. -ance & -ence
 - c. -ant & -ent

If you listen carefully you will hear that there is no difference to how these pairs of suffixes are pronounced even though the spelling is different. The vowel sounds in these suffixes are all unstressed. Unstressed vowels cause lots of spelling problems.

6. Encourage competitors to think about where words come from and how this can help spelling, for example:

- a. The symbol /ʃ/ is the International Phonetic Alphabet symbol for the sound at the beginning of the word shout, and in the middle of word nation.

The majority of words in English that start with the sound /ʃ/ use the spelling 'sh' for this sound, for example shout, shy and she. However, there are a group of words that start with the sound /ʃ/ and that use the spelling 'ch' for this sound, for example champagne, chef and chandelier. The trick here – when a child hears a word starting with the sound /ʃ/ and which might be unfamiliar – is to ask where the word comes from. All words that start with the sound /ʃ/ and that have that sound spelled with 'ch' instead of 'sh' are from French or Old French. Knowing the French origin tells the speller that word starts with the spelling 'ch' and not the more common spelling 'sh'.

We find the same in some words with the sound /ʃ/ in the middle of a word, although this is less common. For example, niche has the sound /ʃ/ spelled with 'ch' and it too is from Old French.

- b. The letter 'f' is the most common way of spelling the sound /f/ in English at the beginning and in the middle of words, for example fish, feet and puffin. However, a number of words have this sound spelled differently:

- Some words have the sound /f/ spelled with the digraph 'ph', for example, photograph, telephone and physics. Words that include the sound /f/, and that have this sound spelled with 'ph' instead of 'f', are all from Greek.
- Some words which start with the sound /f/, and that have this sound spelled using the letter 'f', for example filial and feral, are from Latin.
- NB Common words with the sound /f/ are from a range of different languages, for example:
 - o First, fist, foot and fish are all from Old English
 - o Final is from Latin
 - o Frisk is from Old French

So, if a competitor is asked to spell an unusual word starting with or containing the sound /f/, asking where the word comes from can help. If the answer is 'Greek' the spelling is probably 'ph'; if the answer is Latin the spelling is probably 'f'; if the answer is 'Old English' the spelling is 'f'

- c. The letter 'f' is the most common way of spelling the sound /f/ in English at the end of words, for example ruff and puff. However, there are a number of common words that have the sound /f/ at the end of the word spelled by the digraph 'gh', for example rough, cough and trough. Words that have the sound /f/ at the end and in which this sound is spelled 'gh' are all from Old English.
- d. The sound /k/ – as in the words can, carnival and collaborate is commonly spelled with the letter 'c'. It can also be spelled with the letter 'k' as in cake (where 'c' and 'k' both represent this sound). It can also be spelled with the common digraph 'ck'; this spelling always occurs at the end of words, for example duck, sick and check. Nearly every word that ends with the sound /k/ will have the 'ck' spelling, but students need to learn about the exceptions, including picnic, mimic and cheque. Students need to learn all of these as parts of phonics and spelling lessons. NB there is also a spelling rule about words that end with 'c' having a 'k' added in inflected forms, for example picnic > picnicked.

However, there are some words that include the sound /k/ where knowing which language the word comes from can help with spelling. For example:

- Some words have the sound /k/ spelled using the letters 'ch', for example chrysalis, chrysanthemum, and charisma. These words are from Greek.
- Some words have the sound /k/ spelled using the letters 'ch', for example choir and chorus. These words are from Greek but taken into English through Latin, so the competitor will be told 'Latin' in a competition.

- Some words have the sound /k/ spelled using the letters 'ch', for example chrysalis, chrysanthemum, and charisma. These words are from Greek.
- Some words have the sound /k/ spelled using the letters 'ch', for example choir and chorus. These words are from Greek but taken into English through Latin, so the competitor will be told 'Latin' in a competition.
- Some words that have the sound /k/ spelled with a 'k' are from Japanese, for example karate and kimono.
- NB The spelling 'qu' usually stands for the sound /kw/, for example quick, queen and quixotic. In some cases the spelling 'qu' can also be used for the sound /k/, for example quiche, quay and queue. These words are often from French. (NB Cheque is derived from check.)

So, if a competitor is asked to spell an unfamiliar word with the sound /k/, the first thing to do is to ask where the word comes from because:

- The answer 'Greek' = spell the sound with 'ch'.
- The answer 'Latin' = probably spell the sound with 'ch'.
- The answer 'Japanese' = spell the sound with 'k'.
- The answer 'French' = think about spelling the sound with 'qu'.

7. Revise and practise words with silent letters.
8. Encourage competitors to listen carefully during any spelling practice in class. In previous competitions, at least one contestant has been eliminated because they just didn't listen carefully enough to the word they were asked to spell.
9. Practise the 'say it, spell it, say it' approach.

Resources

1. Collins COBUILD Learner's Illustrated Dictionary 3rd ed ISBN 978-93-9016-379-3 [Link to purchase the Dictionary](#) – [Click here to buy](#)
2. Collins English Dictionary ISBN 978-0-00-828437-4
3. You might find Collins Spell Like a Champion ISBN 978-0-00824197-1 a useful resource to help your students prepare for the competition.
4. [Collins English Dictionary](#)

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