

## Tips for Parents and Contestants of Spelling Bees

### How to Prepare and Win!

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#### **P-H-E-N-O-M-E-N-O-N**

**Pronunciation:** fī-nŏm'ə- nŏn'

**Definition:** An unusual, significant, or unaccountable fact or occurrence; a marvel.

**Origin:** Late Latin phaenomenon, from Greek phaenomenon

**Sentence:** The interest in spelling bees has grown so much it is a phenomenon!

Congratulations on being a part of the spelling phenomenon! Spelling competitions have been around for almost 150 years. However, the last few years have seen an increase in the attention given to spelling contests, and the 2006 live television coverage of the bee was shown during primetime for the first time ever!

Spelling is a complicated matter for anyone trying to learn the English language. While our everyday vocabulary continues to grow, English word origins include almost every language in existence -- and some are no longer regularly spoken! Many identical sounds are spelled differently in different words and 84 of the 90 basic English spelling patterns have exceptions. It's no wonder that spelling can be a competitive event!

The educational value of spelling is getting an enormous lift from media buzz and the motion picture industry. Spelling is cool! That is why the NJSFWC Bee Competition Series has been using the theme, "Spelling Rocks!" We are committed to making spelling bees all over the Garden State a valuable component of elementary education that is fun, rewarding, competitive and most of all—a compelling experience that will keep students preparing for more. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade contestants who practice for our bees do so with purpose and with a single goal—to do their absolute best towards winning the championship!

The Scripps Bee is the country's largest and longest running spelling bee -- its purpose is to "help students improve spelling, increase vocabularies, learn concepts and develop correct English usage that will help them all of their lives."

Although the NJSFWC Spelling Bee Series is not associated with the Scripps National Spelling Bee, we can provide you with information on how to get involved with this larger, much more competitive series. The Scripps runs its bees through local newspaper sponsors. As a speller wins, he or she moves on to the next larger contest, usually a district or county bee, and finally to a regional bee, which decides the contestants for the national bee in Washington.

The regional bees are highly competitive in that only one winner from each of the regional bees is allowed to continue to the national Bee. Our NJSFWC series allows the top three winners to advance from club to district to state level competitions. Our environment is a great starting point for any aspiring national champion!

To help prepare for a bee, there are a number of techniques beyond reviewing words that should be considered. Spelling bees may not appear to be complex, but there is a strategy that champion bee-ers use. Start by watching a bee any way you can.

A great way to become comfortable with the process is to attend a spelling bee or watch a movie about them. *Akeelah and the Bee* or the documentary *Spellbound*, which follows several spellers participating in the National Bee, is very informative as well as entertaining.