

Section 960: HIGH SCHOOL SPELLING AND VOCABULARY

- (a) **NATURE OF THE CONTEST.** The UIL Spelling and Vocabulary Contest promotes vocabulary development and precise and effective use of words. The three-part contest consists of multiple choice questions of proofreading and vocabulary and words that are written from dictation. Part I is a 15-minute period for written vocabulary. Parts II and III are words pronounced for the contestants.
- (b) **REPRESENTATION.**
 - (1) *Individual Competition.* Each participant high school may enter as many as four individuals in the district meet, all of whom may place. In districts with more than eight schools, district executive committees may elect to limit entries to three.
 - (2) *Team Competition.* The individuals entered at district constitute the team. A team shall have a minimum of three contestants compete in order to participate in the team competition. All four members of the winning team will advance to the next higher level of competition.
- (c) **ELIGIBILITY.** Each student entered shall be eligible under Subchapter M.
- (d) **THE SPELLING AND VOCABULARY LIST.** The publication referred to in these rules is the UIL “Word Power.”
- (e) **TEST WORD SOURCES.** At least 80 percent of the test will come from UIL “Word Power.” Outside words may include:
 - (1) Words of common usage (e.g., gosling, hemorrhage);
 - (2) Words and proper names currently in the news;
 - (3) Words which by their formation or origins build vocabulary and promote the study of English. These include words with affixes, roots and suffixes which appear in words on the printed list by being different parts of speech, and other words of interest for the general lessons which they teach about language.
- (f) **TEST.** The League office shall furnish a three part test for grades 9-12. Contestants are required to take all three parts of the test or be disqualified. Part I will be a written vocabulary and proofreading section and a total of 15 minutes will be allotted. Parts II and III will consist of words pronounced for the contestants. Only Parts I and II will be graded. In the event of a tie in Parts I and II, Part III of only those involved shall be graded and used to break the tie. If the tie breaker does not break the tie, then a tie exists. In any case where there is a tie, those contestants who are tied shall be awarded a place before going on to another contestant or place.
 - (1) *Test Delivery.* All test lists, enclosed in sealed envelopes, shall be delivered to the contest director by the meet director at least 72 hours before the contest.
 - (2) *Unsealing List.* The seal of the pronouncer’s envelope shall be broken at least 48 hours before the contest. Pronouncers shall familiarize themselves with the words, using the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, either the third (1992), fourth (2000) or fifth (when available) edition, by Houghton Mifflin Company, and verify the pronunciation and spelling of all words on Parts II and III of the test. Pronouncers shall be responsible for keeping the tests confidential.
 - (3) *Pronunciation.* If a word has two or more acceptable pronunciations, at least two of the pronunciations shall be given by the pronouncer. Each pronunciation may be given only twice. No one may interrupt the pronouncer. If a word seems to offer unusual difficulties to the contestants, it should be briefly defined or used in an illustrative sentence. (For homonyms, see subsection (5) below.)
 - (4) *Rate.* Words should be pronounced at a rate of approximately five words per minute.
 - (5) *Homonyms.* The pronouncer should be careful to distinguish between words which sound

alike but have different meanings. When pronouncing the word “bass,” be careful to say “bass drum,” or “bass voice,” to distinguish it from “base,” meaning “low or mean.”

- (6) *Time Limit.* Fifteen minutes shall be allotted for Part I.
- (g) **SUPPLIES.** The contest director shall provide each contestant with one blank sheet of regular-sized paper to be used for scratch work. All answers are to be written on the spaces provided within the test. Words may be written in pen or pencil.
- (h) **IDENTIFICATION.** The contest director shall keep a list of all contestants, including the school and conference in which each is competing, and shall number the entries consecutively, assigning contestants their appropriate numbers, which the contestants shall be instructed to write on the upper right-hand corner of their contest papers.
- (i) **DUTIES OF THE CONTEST PERSONNEL.**
 - (1) *Contest Director.* The contest director is responsible for administering Part I of the test and securing a pronouncer, at least two verifiers, at least one monitor, and at least three graders. With the exception of the pronouncer, all of these personnel may be coaches of contestants entered in the contest.
 - (2) *Pronouncer.* It is the responsibility of the pronouncer to check all spellings, pronunciations and definitions of words on the tests. The authority for all words is the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition, 1992, by Houghton Mifflin Company. The Fourth or Fifth Editions are also acceptable. The pronouncer shall pronounce any words questioned by the verifiers. The pronouncer may not be a coach of any of the contestants entered in the contest.
 - (3) *Verifiers.* At least two verifiers shall be appointed to verify that the pronouncer has correctly and clearly pronounced the words and has given definitions of the words, as necessary. The verifiers should be given a copy of the test and should mark any word for which they question the pronunciation or definition. After the test, when all words have been pronounced, the pronouncer shall meet with the verifiers outside the contest room to verify and clarify any words in question. Those words shall then be repronounced by the pronouncer. Each contestant is allowed to request three words repronounced or clarified with a definition or sentence. The contest is then closed and the papers are collected. Verifiers may be coaches of students entered in the contest.
 - (4) *Monitors.* At least one monitor shall be appointed to see that the contest is conducted fairly. Contestants should be separated from each other as far as space in the room permits, and any attempt on the part of a contestant to copy from another should be noted by the monitor. Infractions should be reported to the director, who may disqualify the contestant. A monitor may be a coach of students entered in the contest.
 - (5) *Graders.* The papers shall be collected immediately after the close of the contest and delivered to the contest director or designee. The director will appoint at least three judges to grade the spelling papers. At the discretion of the contest director, coaches of contestants entered in the contest may serve as graders.
 - (A) *Answer Key Errors.* In the case of an error on the answer key of an objectively-scored contest, graders should notify the UIL State Office of the nature of the error and/or contact the respective state contest director to seek clarification. Mistakes in the answer key should be corrected, and papers should be judged on correctness rather than on an incorrect answer given in the key.
 - (B) *Determining Scores.* The contestant’s score shall be determined by awarding the designated points for correct answers in each section of the test.
 - (i) *Individual Competition.* The contestant making the highest score shall be given first place; the one making the next highest score, second place; and the one with the next highest score shall be given third place.

- (ii) *Team Competition.* The sum of the three highest scores on Parts I and II from each school will determine the team score for that school. The team with the highest total will be declared the team winner and all four members of the team will advance to the next higher level of competition. The team with the second highest total score will be declared the alternate team.
- (C) *Ties.*
- (i) *Individuals.* In case of a tie for first through sixth place, the score on Part III of the test shall be used to break the tie and determine the winner. If a tie still exists after Part III has been graded, this tie shall not be broken. Should there be a tie for first place, there is no second place. Should there be a tie for second place, there is no third place. Should there be a tie for third place, there is no fourth place, and both third place winners advance to the next higher meet.
 - (ii) *Teams.* Should there be a tie in the total team scores on Parts I and II, the scores on Part III shall be determined for all team members involved in the tie. If there is still a tie when the scores of Parts I, II and III are totaled for each team, all teams tied for first place shall advance to the next higher level and there is no alternate team. Team members also qualify to compete for individual awards.
- (D) *Wild Card.* Each region's highest-scoring second place team may advance to the regional academic meet. In case two or more teams tie for the wild card berth, the highest overall Part III score of the fourth place member of the team will be used to break the tie. Should two or more contestants who are the fourth place member of the team have the same overall net score, then a tie will be declared, and all involved in the tie shall advance. A team that does not contain a fourth member forfeits the right to participate in the tie breaker. If neither team has a fourth member, neither shall advance. In order to be eligible as a wild card representative, district results shall be certified online no later than 5 p.m. on the Monday following the final district academic week. Failure to meet the deadline or to submit correct scores disqualifies the district from advancing teams as wild card representatives. The highest-scoring second place team from the regional meets may advance to the Academic State Meet.
- (E) *Grading Criteria for Graders and Contestants.*
- (i) *Legibility.* The correct spelling of a word consists of writing legibly the letters which compose it in their proper order. Printing the word is acceptable. Legibility and not handwriting style, is to be emphasized. To determine whether a given letter is legible, place a blank piece of paper on either side of it, thus separating it from its context, and then see whether the character can be identified. Any letter, even though it may not be perfectly written, is considered correct if it can still be identified when separated from the remainder of the word. If two of three judges rule that a letter is legible, it should be considered correct.
 - (ii) *Dictionary.* The final authority is either the third edition (1992), fourth edition (2000) or fifth edition (when available) of the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, by Houghton Mifflin Company.
 - (iii) *Misspelling.* In case any word is misspelled in UIL "Word Power," that word is not to be considered in grading the spelling papers, unless a correction has been given in the "Official Notices" section of the *Leaguer*.
 - (iv) *Correction.* If a word is misspelled only on the test provided for the meet, that

- word is to be corrected and given to contestants for spelling.
- (v) *Punctuation; Capitalization.* The misuse of an accent, hyphen or other non-alphabetic component of a word, or a mistake in capitalization is considered a miss.
 - (vi) *Pronunciation.* Words are to be pronounced in the order given on the test furnished by the League, and any word omitted by the contestant is a miss. If all contestants omit the same word the pronouncer is presumed to have failed to give the word, so the omission by contestants is not considered a miss.
 - (vii) *Contractions and Possessive Forms.* Contractions and possessive forms may be written with all letters connected or may be written separately. Either way is correct.
- (j) **VERIFICATION PERIOD.** Contestants and coaches shall be allowed a time not to exceed 15 minutes to examine test papers and recorded scores before the results are made official. Contestants and coaches are not allowed to bring pencils or pens into the verification room. Papers are to be kept in the room. Except at State Meet, the names, contestant numbers, and scores of the contestants who appear to have placed first through sixth should be announced and/or written on the board as unofficial results. If errors are found either in the grading or recording of scores these should be reported to the contest director at that time. The contest director will make a decision, and, if necessary, make a change in the unofficial rankings. Once the verification period has expired, the contest director should announce results as official. Official results will be final. Contestants and coaches who are not present at the verification period forfeit their opportunity to raise questions.
 - (k) **QUALIFICATION; SUBSTITUTES; ALTERNATES.** The first, second and third place winners and the winning team from each district shall qualify for the regional meet and the three individual winners and the winning team from each region shall qualify for the State Meet, as described in Section 903. If an individual qualifier cannot compete at the next higher meet, the alternate shall be notified and allowed to compete. If a member of a school's team is unable to compete at the next higher level of competition, only one substitution may be made. The substitute shall give the contest director a letter certifying eligibility signed by a school administrator. (See Section 903 [b] [4].)
 - (l) **RETURNING PAPERS.** If results are final and all test questions resolved, entries may be returned no sooner than the end of the contest on the Saturday of the respective district week. See the *Spring Meet Handbook* for procedures for returning district meet test papers to schools. Provided there are no unresolved questions concerning any of the papers and provided the regional test is held on a Saturday, the regional directors may return the respective papers to the contestants the day of the meet following the verification period and announcement of official results.
 - (m) **CERTIFICATE FOR 100% PAPERS.** It is the duty of the contest director to mail the requests for 100 percent spelling certificates to the League office within 10 days after the district and regional meets. Words misspelled on Part III do not disqualify a student from a 100 percent certificate. Certificates are not awarded for invitational meets.
 - (n) **POINTS.** Points are awarded through sixth place and to first and second place teams according to Section 902.