

Linda Berrey
Contest Director



Spelling is
~~difficult~~
~~challenging~~
hard.

**BECOMING A
SPELLEBRITY:**
Strategies That Lead
to Success in UIL
Spelling and
Vocabulary



- Man is separated from all other animals by the ability to communicate across space and time.
- This ability is made possible by written language.
- Communication in writing is made possible by man's agreement on the symbols he uses.



- The agreed sequence of those written symbols is called
Spelling.

The Importance of Correct Spelling



When our spelling is perfect, it's invisible. But when it's flawed, it prompts strong negative associations.

--Marilyn vos Savant

Take care that you never spell a word wrong. Always, before you write a word, consider how it is spelled, and, if you do not remember, turn to a dictionary. It produces great praise to a lady to spell well.

--Thomas Jefferson in a letter to his daughter Martha



Spelling counts. Spelling is not merely a tedious exercise in a fourth-grade classroom. Spelling is one of the outward and visible marks of a disciplined mind.

--James J. Kilpatrick

Journalist and grammarian

Why so much vocabulary??



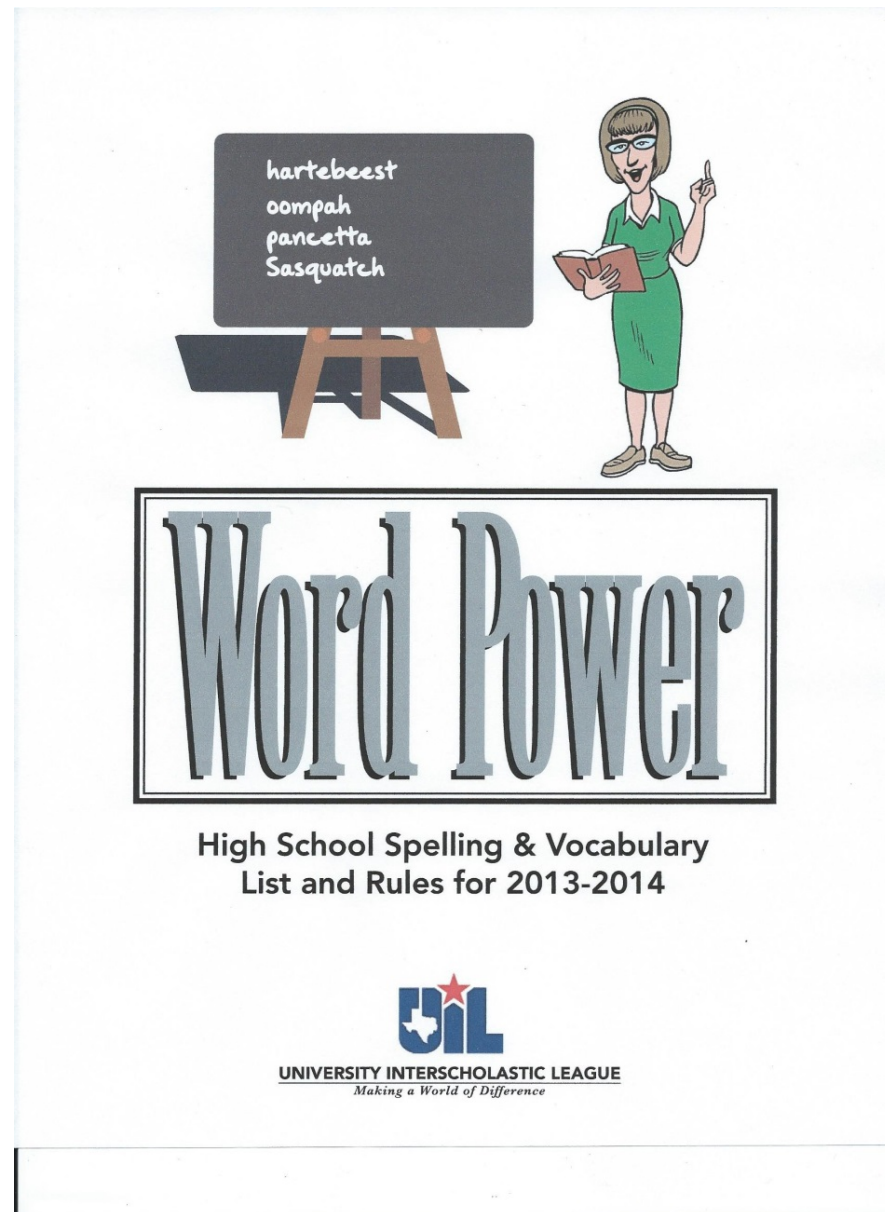
Vocabulary is the best single indicator of intellectual ability and an accurate predictor of success in school.

--*W.B. Elley, education professor emeritus and literacy researcher*



To put it simply, spelling and vocabulary are important! Correctly spelled words, coupled with precise and compelling diction, are two of the most important aspects of effective communication.

This is the Official Word list for this Contest. It also contains the rules and procedures for the contest as well as a sample test. The UIL Constitution is the source for all the rules.



UIL Spelling and Vocabulary Contest



**PART I. PROOFREADING AND
VOCABULARY**

**PART II. SPELLING FROM
DICTATION**

PART III. TIE-BREAKER

Part I

Proofreading



Part I Proofreading



15 points - requires that contestants given 15 sets of five-word lists recognize the words which are misspelled in each list and write them spelled correctly.

Most of the words from this section of the test are from Word Power.

Up to twenty percent (20%) of the words on this part of the test may be from other sources.

Questions 1-15 of Part I are comprised of 15 Proofreading sets. Each question is worth one point each.

Part I

Vocabulary



Part I Vocabulary



15 points - multiple choice test of word origins and meanings.

The **350 words** designated for this part of the test are **marked** in the Word Power list with a • DOT.

The Vocabulary section has **NO** misspelled words, but contestants are still responsible for the correct spelling of these words.

Questions 16-30 are comprised of vocabulary entries and are worth one point each.

Part II. Spelling from Dictation



70 points - 70 words,
pronounced at a rate of 4
words per minute - one every
fifteen seconds. A definition
will be given for every word.

Part III. Tie-breaker



20 words, pronounced at 4 words per minute with definitions given for all words.

With the exception of the State Meet, this part is scored **ONLY** in case of ties and then only those involved in the tie are scored.

Sources of Words



A minimum of **80%** of the test words for questions 1-15 of Part I and Parts II and III come from the Word Power list.

Up to **20%** come from...

- Common Usage,
- Words from school course materials, such as textbook glossaries,
- News and Current Events - Words and Proper names
- Vocabulary Builders - roots and affixes which appear in the list as other parts of speech,
- and other words of interest.

How to prepare for those dreaded outside words...



- Study roots and affixes.
- Read widely and to PAY ATTENTION to words that are new to them.
- Go to the Internet and find lists of SAT or college vocabulary. For instance, quizlet.com has a list called “College Board Top 100 SAT/ACT Vocabulary Words.” Majortests.com also has helpful word lists. A great list of 5,000 (yes, 5,000!) words can be found at freevocabulary.com
- Take vocabulary tests on Facebook
- Sign up for “Word of the Day” with dictionary.com

The Official Dictionary



The **ONLY** official dictionary of this contest is
***The American Heritage Dictionary
of the English Language, Fifth
Edition, Fiftieth Anniversary
Printing (2018 edition).***

All the contest words are in **this dictionary**.

NOTE: Neither the paperback nor online dictionaries are acceptable resources.

In Case of Error in the Word Power List



- If the Word Power list has an error in spelling, the correction is announced in the Official Notices of the *Leaguer*, the UIL's newspaper, which is now found online at the UIL website, as well as on the Spelling page on the UIL website.

Using Language Skills to Build Strength in Spelling



**Phonics, Pronunciation,
and
Spelling**

“Sounding out Words”



“Pure Vowels”

“Diphthongs – Vowel pairs”

“Rules for long and short vowels”

“Pure consonants and blends”

“Sound=Symbol correspondence”

“Sound Color”

Tips for Spelling



Q: How do you spell a really long word?

A: Sound it out!

SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS



SUPER CALI FRAGIL ISTIC EXPI ALI DO CIOUS

Pronunciation



- Spelling is a very recent language skill.
- Before there was a written form of language, there were words.
- The invention of the printing press in 1468 made it necessary to come to agreement on how to present words in writing.

Sound-Symbol Correspondence



- In languages like Latin and Spanish, there is a direct correspondence between sound and symbol: each sound is represented by a specific symbol.
- In other languages, including English, a speech sound may be represented by several symbols and a symbol may represent several sounds, depending on the letters around it.

Problems in Pronunciation



PRONOUNCE

ghoti

Problems in Pronunciation



“Non-correspondence” exceptions:

- **ghoti is pronounced “fish”**
- **How?**
- **cough** **women** **nation**

This is English!!



Let's take a look at the word

MERCEDES

What do you notice about the vowels?



They are the same single letter but with three different pronunciations!

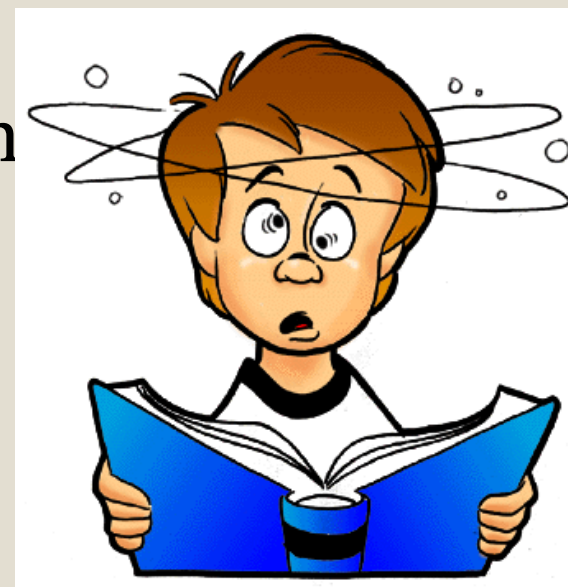
“Mer” = mûr

“ced” = sād

“es” = ēs



- And here's a nice one on English spelling – attributed to Oscar Wilde:
- If GH can stand for P as in Hiccough
If OUGH stands for O as in Dough
If PHTH stands for T as in Phthisis
If EIGH stands for A as in Neighbor
If TTE stands for T as in Gazette
If EAU stands for O as in Plateau
- The right way to spell POTATO should be:
GHOUGHPTHTEIGHTTEEAU!



The troublesome SCHWA (ə)



- The most common sound in the English language is represented in the dictionary by the upside-down “e”.
- The schwa falls only on unstressed syllables.
- Any vowel can make the sound, and so can “y”.
- Sometimes the schwa can even show up where vowels fear to tread, as in “rhythm”.

The SCHWA



- And only in the English language can a single sound be so versatile!
- It's why there are no spelling contests in other languages.
- In Romance languages, like French and Spanish, vowels are predictable. Take, for example, the word “banana.” In Spanish the three “a” sounds are identical, but in English, because the stress falls on the middle syllable, the first and third “a” sounds become schwas.



And because English absorbs words from every language, words with obvious spellings in their native tongues can become mysterious.

Problems in Pronunciation



“Schwa” = ə

SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS

and

SUP ə RCAL ə FRAG ə LISTICEXPIAL ə DOC ə

S

ə

ə

ə

ə

ə

Watch and Listen for ...



acolyte (ăk' ə-līt')

adenoma (ăd' ən-o' mə)

babushka (bə-boosh' kə)

cacophonous (kə-kăf' ə-nəs)

distensible (dī-stĭn' sə-bəl)

indecipherable (ĭn' dī-sī' fər-ə-bəl)

pachydermatous (păk' ĭ-dŭr' mətəs)

(These words are not from this year's list)

Problems in Pronunciation



Consonant Blends

Consonant pairs (*bl-,br-, ch, etc.*) have blended sounds that are different from that of the letters when pronounced separately.

Diphthongs (Vowel pairs) such as *-ae, -ai, -au, -ea, etc.* are the same issue.

Separating these pairs into their component sounds, exaggerating each sound, facilitates spelling.

One solution



Sound Color = exaggerated “Pure” letter-sound

Consonant/vowel blends can be more troublesome; they may sound the same but look different:

Precious > preshus

Contentious > contenshus

○ **precious > preCEEus**

○ **contentious > contenTEEus**

Speak the Spelling!

Troublesome Spelling Items



- Compound words
- Words with non-alphabetical marks
- Words with alternate spellings
- Capitalized words
- Words with optional capitalization
- Words where definition determines capitalization
- Capitalization within a word
- Both capitalization and lower-case entries

Examples from this year's Word Power list



Two- and three-word test items

- mercury vapor lamp
- do-it-yourselfer
- martial law
- brave new world
- anaphylactic shock

Non-alphabetic elements

- Alzheimer's disease
- Champs Élysées
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Creüsa
- quinceañera
- billet-doux

Examples from this year's Word Power List



Alternate Spellings

- **muraled or muralled**
- **peripeteia or peripetia**
- **jackbooted or jack-booted**
- **hippogriff or hippogryph**
- **yashmak or yashmac**
- **mustache or moustache**

Capitalization

Capitalization Required

- Sagittarius
- Laotian
- Gettysburg
- Baghdad

Capitalization Optional

- Oedipal, oedipal
- Medicaid, medicaid

Capitalization depends on the definition given

- composite = made up of distinct parts
- Composite= an architectural style
- echeveria=a tropical American plant
- Echeveria=the plant genus

More capitalization issues



Capitalization within a word

- McCarthyism
- Pooh-Bah

Words with both upper and lower cases

- Jacob's ladder
- rose of Jericho

Words Pronounced Differently Depending on Part of Speech or Definition

- decrypt (dē-krĭpt') *v.*
(dē'krĭpt') *n.*
- indurate (ĭn'də-rāt', -dyə-)
v. (ĭn' də-rĭt, -dyə-) *adj.*

WHEN TO USE FOREIGN ACCENT MARKS



- The **aigu accent** points to the right and upward. Only appearing above the letter *e*, it changes the letter's pronunciation to *ay*—for example, *marché* (*mar-shay*, meaning *market*).
- The **grave accent** points to the left and upward. Only three French vowels can take the grave accent: à, è, and ù. The purpose of the accent depends on the letter in question. Two words on this year's list which include the grave are *cortège* (or *cortege*) and *folie à deux*.

TILDE AND UMLAUT (aka DIAERESIS)



- A Spanish accent mark is called a **tilde**. It is placed over the *n* in some Spanish words, like *España*, where it makes the *ny* sound.
- The **umlauts** are a group of sounds in German. They are written ä, ö, ü (or ae, oe, ue).
- Without the diaeresis, or umlaut, those three letters are said [a], [o], and [u], but when the diaeresis is present, their pronunciations change.

CIRCUMFLEX



- The circumflex (^) may appear on the vowels a, e, i, o, and u.
- It affects the pronunciation of *a*, *e*, and *o*. Although it is used over the *i* and *u* as well, it does not affect their pronunciation.

CEDILLA



- The little hook added under the letter *c* in French is a diacritical mark known as a cedilla. The sole purpose of the cedilla is to change a hard *c*, pronounced “k”, to a soft *c*, pronounced “s”, as in one of this year’s words, *façadism* (also written *facadism*).

Root Words, Language History, and Spelling



Words can be put together from source words and root words to form words that never existed before:

Tele = distance

-metrics = measurement

-phony = sound

-graphy = writing

-vision = viewing

New Needs = New words from old
parts



Television
Telephone
Telemetry
Telegraph

Root Words and Affixes



- **a- : without**
- **angio- : pain**
- **arterio- : artery**
- **arthro- : joints**
- **cardio- : heart**
- **chrono- : time**
- **cranio- : skull**
- **dys - : unhealthy**
- **-ectomy : cutting out**
- **eu- : healthy**

- **-graphy: recording, writing**
- **hemo- : blood**
- **-itis: inflammation**
- **laryngo- :throat**
- **lipo- : fat**
- **litho- : stone**
- **mal- : bad**
- **meter : measure**
- **myelo- : muscle**

Root Words and Affixes



- **neuro-** : nerve
- **-ology**: study
- **oto-** : ear
- **-otomy** : cutting into
- **-ous** : full of
- **patho-** : illness
- **-pathy** : disease
- **peri-** : around
- **-pnea** : breathing
- **rhino-** : nose

- **syn-** : same
- **thoraco-** : chest
- **thrombo-** : clot
- **trauma-** : damage or injury

There are many more that you can find as they are used in the *WordPower list*.

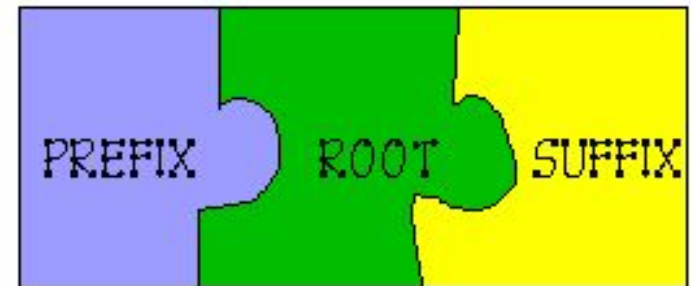
Google *Root Words* for much more on this topic.

Root Words and Affixes



- Oto- = ear
- -rhino- = nose
- -laryng- = throat
- -ologist = One who studies

WORD PARTS ARE
LIKE PARTS OF A PUZZLE!



Ear, Nose and Throat doctor =

Otorhinolaryngologist

Root Words and Affixes



As you study the Word Power list, especially for Vocabulary Words, make lists of the Root Words, prefixes, and suffixes you identify.

That way you **learn the pieces once** and have them every time you need them, such as when you take the SAT.

Basic Spelling Rules



- Words Ending in a Silent *e*

Before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel or *y* to a word ending in a silent *e*, drop the *e* (with some exceptions).

amaze + ing = amazing

nerve + ous = nervous

Exceptions: Words ending in a soft “g” sound, such as *change* + *able* = *changeable*; *courage* + *ous* = *courageous*

Words Ending in a Consonant



In words of more than one syllable, double the final consonant when the word ends with one consonant preceded by one vowel AND when the word is accented on the last syllable.

be GIN + ing = beginning

per MIT + ing = permitting

re FER + ing = referring

Note that in the new words formed with suffixes, the stress remains on the SAME syllable.



In the following examples the accent does **NOT** remain on the same syllable; thus, the final consonant is **NOT** doubled.

RE fer + ence = reference

CON fer +ence = conference

PRE fer + ence = preference

Prefixes and Suffixes in Spelling



- When adding a prefix to a word, do not change the spelling of the base word. When a prefix creates a double letter, keep both letters.

ir + regular = irregular

il + logical = illogical

mis + spell = misspell

- When adding *-ness* to a word ending in *n*, keep both *n*'s.

sudden + ness = suddenness

thin + ness = thinness

i before e?!?



i before e...
except when you
run a feisty heist on
a weird beige foreign
neighbour

Created by:
[@mrsimontaylor](#)

Shared by:
[Grammarly.com](#)
[facebook.com/grammarly](#)

i before e???



- Remember this rule learned in elementary school: *i* before *e* except after *c* or sounded long *a*.

i before *e*: thief, relieve, grieve, niece, field

except after *c*: conceit, perceive, ceiling, receipt

sounded long *a*: skein, vein, feint

Exceptions: either, weird, seize, leisure

Rule for using -ible or -able



- If the root is **not** a complete word, add –ible. For example, visible, horrible, terrible, possible, edible.
- If the root **is** a complete word, add –able. For example, fashionable, laughable, suitable, comfortable.
- If the root is a complete word ending in –e, drop the final –e and add –able. For example, advisable, desirable, valuable, debatable.
- Once again, however, exceptions exist: contemptible, digestible, flexible, responsible, irritable, inevitable.

When to use -sede, -ceed, or -cede



Only one English word ends in **-sede**: supersede (often seen on UIL tests!)

Three words end in **-ceed**: exceed, proceed, and succeed. All other verbs ending in the “seed” sound are spelled with **-cede**, as in concede, precede, recede, and secede.

Organize for Learning



All of these features of words in the WordPower list can be used to organize the words to help you learn them.

Put words with similar features together in Word Families.

Word Families



- Words with common or similar characteristics
- Word forms
- Words with non-alphabetic elements
- Alternate spellings
- Capitalization (Required, Optional, for Definition)
- Root words and Affixes
- Contexts

Contexts and Word Families



- Trademarks
- Medical terms
- Legal terms
- Food terms
- Political terms
- Musical terms
- Words from the same language
- Words with non-alphabetic elements

Ways to Study and Prepare



How to begin?



- Have fun! If you don't love words and competition, this contest may not be for you! To be an effective UIL Speller, you **MUST** be excited about words.
- Understand the team aspect of UIL; encourage your teammates to support one another. Winning as a team is much easier than winning as an individual.
- Expect to devote a good deal of time to preparing for this contest. It takes work to produce winners!

Create Study Materials



- Word Cards and Practices sets
 - Look up each word;
 - On a 3 x 5 card:
 - ✦ Write the definition;
 - ✦ Write the derivation (root or origin)
 - ✦ Write the pronunciation given and the pronunciation that reflects the “sound color” of the vowels in unaccented syllables.

Establish a Context



- When you have written the word, its definition, derivation, and pronunciation on the card, write a sentence that uses the word in its appropriate context.
- Pronounce the word and listen to the way it sounds; repeat it several times if it is a hard word.
- Say the word. Spell the word. Say the word.
- Say the word. Write the word. Say the word.

Ways to Study and Prepare



Word Cards

- **Practice Sets**

- **Word Families**
- **Word Contexts**
- **Word Structure**
- **Words with Capitals**
- **Words with Non-Alphabetic Symbols**

Study Buddies

- **Practice Rate: 1 word every 15 seconds**
- **Study Games – Scrabble, et cetera**

Ways to Study and Prepare



- **Look up new words in your reading**
- **Audiotape(purchased or teacher-made)**
- **To hear words pronounced, try www.mydictionary.com**

HOW TO STUDY



SCHOOL HACKS

Peppermint
stimulates the brain
and helps with
concentration



 /nyknow



SCHOOL HACKS

While studying for a certain subject, pretend that you will have to teach the material. It helps you pay more attention.



 /nyknow



SCHOOL HACKS

Studying hard for 30 to 50 minutes at a time with 10 minute breaks in between is the most effective way to study.



 /nyknow



SCHOOL HACKS

Eating chocolate while studying will help the brain retain information easily



 /nyknow



SCHOOL HACKS

Writing something out is equivalent to reading it 7 times.



 /nyknow



SCHOOL HACKS

You're more likely
to remember
something that you
wrote in blue ink
than in black ink.



 /nyknow

Word Wars??



- Lydia: You are such a tatterdemalion! Go rusticate!
- Kendall: I hope you get the screaming meemies, you varlet!
- Lydia: You wisenheimer! You think you're a whiz-bang wonk but vox populi says you're really just a boondoggling Walter Mitty!
- Kendall: You are gauche and lack erudition! Go fall off a cuesta and catch kyphosis!
- Lydia: Your floruit is over! I hope you become an old feme covert making feijoada and falafel!

Cautions for Practice



- Speakers may omit sounds or add sounds in such words as **different, leverage, surprise, temperament, recognize, history.**
- Speakers may transpose (switch) letters in pronouncing such words as **irrelevant, tragedy, hundred, realtor.**
- **Make sure you are hearing the word as it is to be written**
- **Use Competition Rate** of pronunciation
 - four words a minute = 15 seconds per word

Practice writing legibly



If graders can't tell what a letter is, they isolate it from the rest of the word by placing their thumbs or cards on either side of it.

If it is unrecognizable, it is incorrect. Two of the three graders must agree that the letter is correct or it is a missed word.

Use standard handwriting or print.

Make a **clear distinction** between upper- and lower-case letters – DO NOT USE ALL CAPITALS!

Winners Double-check Results



- At contests, always use the fifteen minute **Verification Period** between the scoring of the papers and the announcement of Final Results to check the computation of your score.

Winners Prepare



Practice, Practice, Practice
If you prepare,
you will be a winner!





**ANSWERS TO
SPELLLEBRITY
PRACTICE TEST**

PROOFREADING



1. permissibility



2. misspelled*



3. chancellor



4. obtuseness



5. recoup

VOCABULARY



1. D. *circumspect*



2. *B. coadunata*



3. E. misogynist



4. B. somnambulatus



5. A. polyglot

PART II SPELLING FROM DICTATION



1. echeveria



2. unnameable,
unnamable



3. Pablum



4. anemometry



5. bafflement

PART III TIEBREAKER



1. blitzkrieg



2. voidable



3. Tilapia



4. ethnomusicology



5. gyral