Linda Berrey
Contest Director

Becoming Word Nerds
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 sets of five-word lists recognize the word which is misspelled in each list and write it 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 and no outside 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 you.
- 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 of this contest is *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third, Fourth, or Fifth edition. This contest is based **only** on the definitions, pronunciations, and usages in **this dictionary**. All the contest words are in **this dictionary**.

NOTE: Neither the paperback nor online dictionaries are acceptable resources.
In mid-October, Houghton-Mifflin will release a new(ish) dictionary called The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition; Fiftieth Anniversary Printing. For all intents and purposes, this is an unofficial 6th edition, since there will be 150 additional words as well as thousands of revisions. This will be the last hard-copy dictionary Houghton-Mifflin will publish. Starting with the 2019-20 school year, we will tentatively move solely to this edition as our word source. Stay tuned!
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.
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 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
Can you pronounce GHOUGHGHGOUGHTHEIGHTTEEAAU?
• 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: GHOUGHGPHHTHEIGHTTTEEAU!
Problems in Pronunciation

“Schwa” = ə

SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS

and

SUP ə RCAL ə FRAG ə LISTICEXPIAL ə DOC ə

S ə ə ə ə ə

ə
Watch and Listen for ...

a·co·lyte (ə-kˈəl·ītˈ)
ad·e·no·ma (ədˈən-oˈmə)
babu·shka (bə-booshˈkə)
caco·phon·ous (ə-käfˈə-nəs)
di·stens·i·ble (dĭ-stĭnsˈə-bal)
in·de·ci·pher·a·ble (ĭnˈdĭ-sĭˈfər-ə-bal)
pachy·der·ma·to·ous (păkˈĭ-dûrˈmə-təs)
(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
  o precious > preCEEUs
  o 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two- and three-word test items</th>
<th>Non-alphabetic elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gentian violet</td>
<td>wool-sorter’s disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chest of drawers</td>
<td>aperçu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>martial law</td>
<td>cloisonné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughters-in-law</td>
<td>caïque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primrose path</td>
<td>malageña</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples from this year’s Word Power List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Spellings</th>
<th>Catch-22 or catch-22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>audiovisual or audio-visual</td>
<td>krummhorn or crumhorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veld or veldt</td>
<td>leukoderma or leucoderma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whiz-bang or whizz-bang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Capitalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capitalization Required</th>
<th>Capitalization depends on the definition given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rotarian</td>
<td>mimosa = any of various tropical trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hibernia</td>
<td>Mimosa = the genus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vespucci</td>
<td>behemoth = something enormous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descartes</td>
<td>Behemoth = A huge animal, possibly a hippopotamus, described in the Bible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capitalization Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gulag, Gulag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psalter, Psalter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More capitalization issues

Capitalization within a word

• O’Keeffe
• McGuffey

Words with both upper and lower cases

• Pandora’s box
• Roche limit
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
- **cranio-**: skull
- **dys-**: unhealthy
- **-ectomy**: cutting out
- **eu-**: healthy
- **-graphy**: recording, writing
- **hemo-**: blood
- **-itis**: inflammation
- **laryngeo-**: throat
- **lipe-**: fat
- **litho-**: stone
- **meter**: measure
- **myelo-**: muscle
Root Words and Affixes

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

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

And 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

Ear, Nose and Throat doctor = Otorhinolaryngologist
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
Except when your foreign neighbor Keith receives eight beige sleighs from feisty caffeinated weightlifters!

WEIRD!!!
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.
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
Non-Alphabetic Written Symbols

- Words which have come into English from other languages may have non-alphabetic features which designate pronunciation, such as
  - the tilde ~
  - the circumflex ^ and caron ˇ
  - the cedilla ,
  - the dieresis ¨ or umlaut
  - and the acute ´ and grave ` accents

These are Pronunciation features and must be used correctly in spelling the word correctly.
Ways to Study and Prepare
How to begin?

- Have fun with your teammates! If you are bored or uninterested, you can be sure that they will be, too! To be a success in UIL Spelling, you MUST be excited about words. If you are, you will convey your love of words to your team members.

- Remember the team aspect of UIL and encourage teammates to support each other and to help each other learn words...more about this later!

- 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.
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.
Want to hear words??

To hear words pronounced, try www.mydictionary.com
SCHOOL HACKS

Peppermint stimulates the brain and helps with concentration

facebook.com/nyknow
SCHOOL HACKS

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

Facebook: /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.

facebook/n/know
SCHOOL HACKS

Eating chocolate while studying will help the brain retain information easily
SCHOOL HACKS

Writing something out is equivalent to reading it 7 times.

facebook.com/nyknow
SCHOOL HACKS

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

facebook/nyknow
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!
**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 WORD NERD PRACTICE TEST
Part I-- PROOFREADING

1. chagrined
2. heist
3. Parcheesi
4. bubonic plague
5. Catch-22, catch-22
Part I--VOCABULARY

6. B vivify
7. E quadruplicate
8. D juvenescent
9. C synchronous
10 D monographer
11. scrutable
12. partiality
13. Teflon
14. circumlocution
15. rappel
Part III--TIEBREAKER

TB₁. Capsicum
TB2. deducible
TB3. schlemiel or shlemiel
TB4. spavined
TB5. videophile
“-ible” or “-able”
9. immiscible
10 judicable