

welcome to your spelling bee adventure!

Have you ever dreamed of standing on stage, spelling a super tricky word, and hearing the crowd cheer when you get it right? Maybe you even imagine making it all the way to the Scripps National Spelling Bee! If that sounds like you, then guess what? You're already on your way to becoming part of something truly special—an awesome spelling tradition that's been buzzing since 1925!

This guide, *Words of the Champions*, is your ultimate ticket to Bee success. It's the official study tool for the Scripps National Spelling Bee, and it's packed with 4,000 amazing words to help you prepare for district, county, regional, and even state-level spelling bees during the 2025-2026 season.

Every word in this guide comes straight from the experts at the Bee and is chosen from our trusted dictionary, Merriam-Webster Unabridged. And guess what? This year, we've added over 550 brand-new words just for you!





YOUR KEY TO THE BEE

Official Dictionary

of the

Scripps National

Spelling Bee

merriam-webster.com

To make studying easier (and more fun!), the guide is split into three levels:

- one bee A great place to start! These words mostly sound like they're spelled and follow common patterns.
- **two bee** Getting trickier! These words have more syllables, more patterns to learn and more complex meanings.
- three bee The challenge zone! These are the toughest words: rule-breakers, oddballs and words you might not see every day.

And here's a Bee secret: while spelling bees often start with words from this guide, they usually end with words you've never seen before! That's why it's important to understand how words work, not just memorize them.

To help you out, we've added:

- · Word stories that bring tough words to life
- Fun games and themed word lists
- A brand-new section on language patterns and root words to help you decipher unfamiliar words like a pro

One awesome speller who uses this guide will go on to become the next Scripps National Spelling Bee Champion. But every student who studies these words is helping keep this amazing American tradition alive and buzzing, one word at a time.

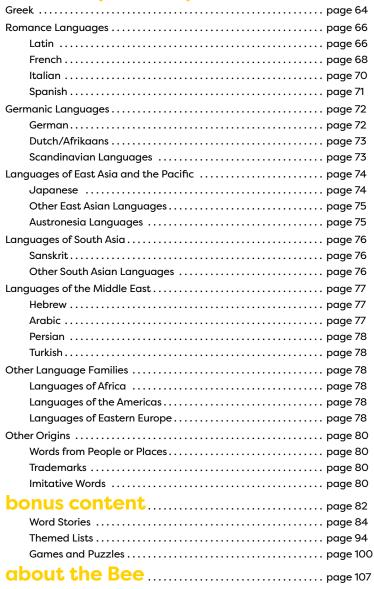
So, grab your pencil, flex your brain and get ready to spell your heart out. Because if you're using this guide, working hard and having fun, you're already a champion in our book!

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language patterns and roots: a new way to study







a note about this year's word lists

You might notice something different in this edition of *Words of the Champions*—the 2026 School Spelling Bee Study List isn't included here. Don't worry! That 450-word list is still available to all schools that enroll in the 2025–2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee program. It's specially designed for students getting ready for classroom and school-level spelling bees.

Words of the Champions is your go-to guide for the next level—perfect for preparing for county, district, regional and state bees, plus the early rounds of the National Competition. It's where champions take their training to the next level!

pro tip:

You can access both the 450-word School Spelling Bee Study List and the full 4,000-word Words of the Champions list in the free Word Club app, available on iOS and Android. Inside the app, you can:

- Hear every word pronounced by the Bee's head pronouncer Dr. Jacques Bailly
- Practice vocabulary with quizzes and flashcards
- Master all 4,450 words with tools designed to help you succeed!





So, whether you're just starting out or training for the championship stage, we've got everything you need to *bee* your best!



difficulty level:

one bee



Welcome to the starting line of your spelling adventure! These words are a great place to begin—they usually sound like they're spelled and follow familiar patterns. Organized alphabetically, this section is perfect for building confidence, spotting patterns and getting into the spelling bee spirit. Every champion starts here!

Words with a single asterisk (*) indicate a primarily British spelling. A double asterisk (**) indicates the spelling that is more widely used. A complete list of the words that were newly added to this year's study list can be found on page 56.

a

abaft abashed abject

> sunk to or existing in a low state or condition.

abolish aboriginal absurdity acceptance acclaim accolade

> praise or honor for something one did.

accomplice acquit acrostic adage addendum addition addle adhesion adjacent

having a common border.

adiudicate admonition adnate

adsum advection adversaria affront aforesaid afroth agility agitation airborne algae alienate alms aloof alpaca altercation amass

> in a friendly, sociable, and congenial manner.

Amish amnesty amputate amulet amusement ancho anime anklet anniversary annotate

amiably

anoint ante anthropology antiseptic apology apparel apparently appealing applicable appraisal apprehensive arithmetic Arthurian assertion astonish astounding astronaut aswoon atomic atonement

atrophy

attempt

attendee

attitude

auction

auditorium

decline.

to undergo a wasting

away or progressive

grandeur: marked by stateliness or magnificence. avalanche avatar avenue aviation awry azure b backgammon badger bailiff baleful marked by a deadly or pernicious influence or effect : evil. ballad banquet baptisma barbie bask become begirdle

august

of majestic dignity or

Bengal bespoke custom-made: made to order - used especially of wearing apparel.

bewitched bias bigotry birdie blandish blarney bleary bleat blingy

characterized by flashy jewelry that is worn especially as an indication of wealth or status: extravagantly flashy or showy.

blink blooper blurb boarders boggle bonanza boogie-woogie bootless botany bowie breakthrough breathtaking brick brigand one who lives by plunder

usually as a member of a band: bandit. brochure

caterpillar cathedral

broil buffoonery bumblebee bungee burial buzzworthy bystander

cabbage cadence

vocal rhythm.

calendar camcorder canary candid canoe cantor capacity capitalist captivated capture caramel carnation carnival carriage casserole casualty

catchall



spelling around the globe

Did you know the Scripps National Spelling Bee isn't just for the U.S.? While most spellers come from the United States, spellers from all over the world join in the fun too!

You'll find amazing spellers from territories, countries, and places like Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria, Kuwait, and even Department of Defense Schools in **Europe**. That means the Bee is truly a global spelling celebration!

No matter where you're from, if you love words, the Bee welcomes you!

catnap celebratory celestial

relating to the sky.

cello census centipede charitable chastise cheddar chief chortle

> Read the story behind the word on page 85!

chowder churlish cidery cinderella citation clarinet classified clearance cleave cliché

> a trite or stereotyped phrase or expression.

clickbait clinician closure clowder coach coalition coastal cockles collaboration collar collie

collision combustible

commandeer

to seize possession of.

commercial comparison compass compatriots compelling complementary complex composite concrete condiments conference confirmation considerable consideration constraints contemporary contested cont.ext. contraction

cookie-cutter cooperate copperhead corgi corkscrew cornily cranium creed

conundrum

convention

convocation

convoy

criteria criticized OR criticised* crocodile crucial crux

> a pivotal point that requires a resolution.

curator curfew curtail cyclone cymbals

d

daft daisy dawdle

> to take more time doing something than is needed: to loiter.

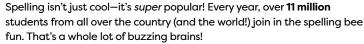
in good company

contradictory

repentant, apologetic.

contrite

contusion



If you make it to the Scripps National Spelling Bee's National Competition, you're not just good, you're incredible! You'll be one of the top .00002% of spellers on the planet. That's like being one in a million... literally!

So spell on, superstar-you're in amazing company!

debris debunk

Read the story behind the word on page 86!

decor definitely delta demand demonetize demothball deployment derby descent. detail detestable dialect dicey

risky, unpredictable.

digression dillydally disaster dispatch** OR despatch disposition distinctive distinguish districts diva diverge

> to branch off from a common point.

diversion diversity divisive docket domino donatee doneness doomed downcast dramatization dreadlocks dribbles

drivel

to babble thoughtlessly.

dualism Dudley duress dynamite

e

eagerly earmark earnestly eclectic

> composed of or including elements drawn from various sources.

eclipse editorial eerily effortless eighth Einstein elaborative elasticity elegant element elicitation eligibility elixir ellipse elocution

elusive

hard to catch.

emancipatory embassy embezzlement emblazoned emerald empire endearing endure enervate

to weaken.

engagement engender engineer entreat entrée entrepreneur enviable ероху erode eruption escalator escapade essential establishment evaluate

ewe

a female sheep, especially when mature.

exaggerate exceedingly excursion exercise existence expansion expedition explode extensive extinct extinguish extracurricular extradition extraordinaire exude

to diffuse: to give off.



facade

the front of a building.

factorial fadeaway fallacy

fanatic fanfic feeble fellowship felonious ferret fervently

in a manner marked by often deep intensity of feeling or expression.

fiction fidelity fie fiendishly fife filar filbert financier fission flabbergast

> to overwhelm with shock or wonder (as by unexpected news).

flashback flavor OR flavour* fleeciness fleetness flexitarian flight flipperling

floridly flounder flourish

to thrive.

flout fluctuation fluid flummery foible folate folklore

fomentation foosball foozle foppery forecast forensics forfeit forgeable formalize OR formalise* fortification

fractions frailty fraying freakishly freegan freight

cargo.

fribble frisket frock frontier fundamental funnel

g

futility

gab gaffer gaggle

a flock of geese.

gallant galley gardenesque gargle garniture gateway gaucho

> a cowboy on the plains east of the Andes in South America.

gawkers gazette generalization OR generalisation* genteel

polite, courteous.

ghastly giggle gist gizzard glacier glint glossary anarled

gnome

twisted, bent or warped as if with knots.

Godspeed goober googly gospel gossip gotcha gradation graham grandeur grapple gratifying gridiron griefful groom grotto grout gruel

a thin porridge.

h

habitual haggle handle

handyman hangar

> a covered and usually enclosed area or a large shed for housing and repairing aircraft.

haphazard hapless hardtack harrowing hatchet haunted

hazardous headlong heavenly hecklers hectic

heightened heiress heist heraldic hermitage Highlands

hijab

the traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women.

hoagies hoarse hoax hobble hollywoodize homesteader horrid

horseradish

hospice hostile howler humdrum

> having a routine or commonplace character : lacking interest, excitement, or sparkle.

hurled husk hutch hydra hydrant

iceberg Icelandic illustrator implementation imposing

> commanding attention due to magnificence, stature, size, or scope.

inclusion income individual infiltrate infirm influential inglorious

> not bringing honor or accompanied with fame.

injunction insight

insomnia installation intellectual intermission

> a planned interruption in a program.

intertidal intricate invasive iris irrigation

> the artificial watering of land (such as by pipes) to supply moisture for plant growth.

isms isolation

jammer iankers

> confinement, work duty, or drill imposed as punishment on someone in the armed forces used in Britain.

jersey iitterbug joinery

kazoo kennel

kenning



the first Bee

Way back in 1925, the very first National Spelling Bee kicked off-organized by the Louisville Courier-Journal. It was a small but mighty contest, with just nine spellers competing.

The champion? A spelling superstar named Frank Neuhauser, who took home the crown by nailing the word "gladiolus"-a fancy flower name!

10

folly

kernel

a central or necessary part.

kilt kindred

kingfisher

kiwi

knee-jerk

reacting in a readily predictable way.

knight knoll kodak kudos

I

labradoodle lactose

languish

to lose strength or vividness: fade.

lateral latter lay-ups league

leaven

legitimately leisure leotard

lexicon

the words used in a language or by a particular person or group of people.

liege ligament likelier limelight linguistics literally liturgy

very angry: enraged.

lobbyist locket logical luau

livid

a feast with Hawaiian food and usually Hawaiian entertainment.

lumbar lupine lyricist

m

macaw maddening madrigal magician mahogany maidenhair

maize mambo manacle

a shackle for the hand or wrist: handcuff.

manifests mantra manure manuscript marathon maritime

> of or relating to navigation or commerce on the sea.

marooned martial Martian maternity matrimony mauve maximum mayhem meaninaful

medallion melody

melted membership

memorandum

mentor menu

memes

merchandise

mercury Merlin meteor metrical

Michigander migratory

> marked by periodic movement from one region or climate to another.

millionaire
mince
ministry
minutia
miraculous
mischief
missile
missive

a written and often formal or official letter.

mockery
modality
modem
modify
modular
molasses
monastery
mongoose
monopolize
OR monopolise*
montage
moped

morose

marked by or expressive of gloom.

muddle mummified munchkin musings mythical

n

naysayers neaten necessity nerfing nervily newbie nirvana

> a place or state of rest, harmony, or pleasure.

nocturnal nominee nonconformist nosh notable notorious

novelties nozzles nuggets

0

oatmeal obliterate oblong

> having a shape that is elongated beyond a square or circle.

oboe obscure octopus olympiad omega omission

the act of failing to include or name.

onion optician opulent oracle orchestra oregano organelle ouster

an ejection from a position or place : an expulsion.

outing overtures overweening owed ozone

p

packet pageantry

splendid or colorful display.

paginate
paisley
palatial
pallor
panelist
parkour
parley
parlor
OR parlour*
partridge
passage

pastime

patches

pathogen

patience

pauper

a person who is very poor.

100 years of spelling magic

Can you believe it? In 2025, the Scripps National Spelling Bee turned **100 years old!** That's a whole century of spelling, studying and standing ovations.

The Bee is the **nation's largest and longest-running educational program**, and it's been inspiring super spellers like *you* for generations!

Want to take a piece of Bee history home? Check out our official book:

Beeloved: Celebrating 100 Years of the Scripps National Spelling Bee

Buzz over to **bee100book.com** to get your copy!







peat peddle pedigree pending penguin peninsular peony performance peruse

> to read something in a manner that is leisurely or attentive.

pervasive photogenic physical physicists pitiful placards placate platinum pliant

flexible: workable: lithe.

plover plummet poised polarized policy portal portrait portrayal praise preacher preclude predator predicament premonition

> unconscious, intuitive anticipation of an event.

previous primitive primrose principality prism

privy procedure procrastinate profiteer prone proposal propulsion

prosperous protein proxy puckish pulpit pummel OR pommel punctuation punily puniness pupil purification puritan

> in an advanced state of decomposition: rotten.

pyramid

putrid

q

quantify quart quickstep quirky

full of peculiarities.

quota

rabid radius raffle ragwort railroad rambling

> straying from subject to subject.

ramen ravenous rebound rebuff recanted reckless

> marked by a lack of caution: heedless: rash.

recollections reconsider recovery redemption refinery reflect regiment regional registrar reign reiterate rejuvenate remain remnants remorseful renewable renovating resemble residue

an interval of rest or relief.

restive retorts retriever revelation revulsive riddance riffraff

respite

a group of people perceived to be disreputable or common.

righteous rigorous OR rigourous* riviera

rocket rotary row rubric rugby rumor

OR rumour*

S

sacrifice salivate sallow satchel scalp scammed scandal scanty

> meager or barely sufficient.

scenario scent scholarship sci-fi sconce scooter scornfully scrape scrapple screeno scripture

> the sacred writing of a religion.

scrooge scrounge scrutiny sculpture seclusion seize selfie seller semester sensory sepal September sequel serenade

> to perform music for or in honor of someone.

service servitude sewage shaggy shamrock sheaves shindia

> Read the story behind the word on page 93!

shipping shore shrapnel simmer sister situation skimmed skirmish skydiving slab slender

slurry snitch snobbery snowy sodden

solicit

heavy with water: soaked.

solidity solitude solstice solvency sorbet spangled spatula specificity spectral

ghostly.

spiteful splurge spreadsheet sprite spry

vigorously active: nimble.

squabble squeamish squelch squirm stagestruck stamina stampede stance standee steampunk



cruising the airwaves

sloop

Guess what? The very first time the National Spelling Bee was broadcast, it wasn't on TV-it was on the radio! Yep, back in the day, people listened to the action instead of watching it.

It wasn't until **1946** that the Bee made its big debut on television screens. From sound waves to screen time, the Bee has been making waves for decades!



stencil stereotypical sterling sternum stewardship stodgy devoid of excitement or

interest: dull, prosaic.

stomach storm stowaway strenuous strong struggle stubble stupefy subdued substance substitute suffix suitable sunflower sunseeker supercargo surly

oppressively hot.

sword sympathy

sustain

swannery

sweepstakes

sweltering



talent tango tariff tase tawny

> of a brownish orange to light brown hue.

teamwork tearjerker teenagers tendency terminator terrier testament thawed thespian

an actor.

thicket thorn thrift throughout tickled timber toastmaster toilsome touted

> proclaimed boldly: overly publicized.

transference traverse travesty treasury treatise trendy trespass trifle trinkets

> things of little value: trifles.

troll troop trounce trove truffle truly truncate

> to make something shorter by or as if by cutting.

trustee tubers tunnel tutorial

u

unabridged unbeknownst uncle undercroft undertake

underwhelmed

failed to impress or stimulate.

unfazed unfurl unheeded universal university uppercut urgency

> the condition of needing immediate attention: insistence.

useful usher



varnish varsity vascular vault veered vendetta

> a prolonged feud marked by bitter hostility.

vendors venue versatile version

vindictive vinegar vineyard violate

virtually visibility

vlogging volcano

votive

performed or done to fulfill a vow or pledge.

W

waggery waiver wamble wand wanderlust warning wasp wattage weald wealthy

weaponry

weighty welding

> uniting parts by heating the surfaces to be joined and then allowing the metals to flow together.

welterweight wept western wharf wheedle

> to get or get away with something by using flattery.

whelp whereas whey whimsical whirlybird whisk wield wimple wince windbaggery wordmonger

wring

to compress by squeezing or twisting especially so as to make dry or to extract moisture or liquid.



yammer yawl yeanling

yippee yonder

> being at a distance within sight, or at a location or in a direction known or pointed out.

yoo-hoo yore



zither

an instrument that has a shallow horizontal soundboard topped with 30 to 40 strings that are typically plucked by a performer.





Great Words, Great Works reading list

Get ready to supercharge your spelling powers! Every year, the Scripps National Spelling Bee puts together an awesome list of words to help you get ready for your classroom and school spelling bees. Where do these words come from? Amazing books, handpicked by the Bee's editorial team just for you! That list is called Great Words, Great Works, and it's packed with stories full of fantastic, fun and challenging words.

Want to check out this year's full book list? Zoom over to spellingbee.com/book-list and start your reading adventure!

difficulty level:

two bee





You've mastered the basics—now it's time to dive into trickier territory! These words have more syllables, new patterns and more complex meanings to explore. Alphabetically organized to help you along the way, this section is all about expanding your word power and pushing your skills to the next level. Keep buzzing-you're doing great!

Words with a single asterisk (*) indicate a primarily British spelling. A double asterisk (**) indicates the spelling that is more widely used. A complete list of the words that were added to this year's study list can be found on page 56.

a

abdicate

aberration

ablation ablaut

abnegation

abominable

horrible or loathsome.

abrogate

abscess

abscond

absolution

abstemious

Acadians

accentuate

accrual

acerbity

achromatic

acoustic

acquiesce

acquisition acral

acuity

acumen

keenness of perception or discernment: shrewdness in practical matters.

acupuncture

adiaphorism

Adirondack

adjag

adjugate

adjure

adolescence

adulation

advertisement.**

OR advertizement

advocatory aerobics

affable

easy to get along with.

affeer

affiliate affluent

affogato

afghan

aficionado ** OR afficionado

an enthusiastic

devotee or fan.

agalma

agarita agate

agave

agelicism

aggrandizement

agio

aglossal

agnail

agonistic

agoraphobia

aguaji

aikido aioli

garlic mayonnaise.

albeit

alchemy

alembroth

Alexandria

algorithm

alimentation

allergenic

alliteration

allocable

allonym

allusions

alluvial

made up of sand and gravel that is deposited by moving water.

alma mater alpestrine althorn

alveoli

Alzheimer amalgam ambiguous

ambrosial

extremely delicious or fragrant.

ammonite amygdala anabolic

anachronism

anacreontic anaglyphy

analects analepsis

analgesia anastomosis

anatomical anchorage

ancillary

anemic** OR anaemic

anent.

anglophile anhinga

anicca

anionic

anise anito

Anjou

ankh anneal annuity annulment anodyne

> having a pain-relieving or calming effect.

anole** OR anoli anonymity anorak anserine antacid antagonistic

anthropomorphic antipathy antiquarian antithesis anxiety aperture

apiary

beehives kept for honey production.

aporia apostrophe apothecary apotheosis apotropaic apparatus approbatory aqueous

> made from, by using, or with water.

aquiclude

arbitrary arboretum arbutus archetype

arduous

demanding, difficult.

argot arietta armaments armature armistice arpeggio arraign arrearage arrieros arsenal art brut artesian

artifice

a crafty practice or trick meant to deceive.

asado ascension ascertain ascetic Asgard Asiago aspish assailant assiduous

assumption



archaic or obsolete? not here!

Here's a secret: the Bee doesn't use super old words that nobody really says anymore. That means no obsolete or archaic words show up in the competition—or even in 2026 Words of the Champions!

Why? Because obsolete words stopped being part of regular English way back in 1755—and archaic words only pop up in special places like poems or prayers.

Why 1755? That's when Samuel Johnson published the first big, fancy English dictionary in London.

assure asthmatic astigmatism astral

of or relating to the stars.

astringent astrobleme

Astur
asylum
atavistic
ataxia
Aten
atlatl
atman
atrabilious

attaché attributive

atresia

attrition aubergine auburn

aughts augment

augury

divination by the interpretation of omens, portents, or chance phenomena.

auklet aureole auricular aurora auspices austere

simple and without decoration.

autobahn avarice avifauna avuncular

b

babka
babouche
bacteriolytic
Bactrian
ballyhooed
balsamic
bandicoot
bandolerismo
bango

bannock
Barnevelder
baronetcy
basilica
bastide
Bavarian cream
beatific

appearing blissfully happy.

beguile Belgravia belladonna Bellatrix benign benison bequeath

Berber

bereavement

beret bermudas

beseech

besieged

to implore.

besmirch bethesda bezique bibliopegist bicameral bifurcate

to separate into two parts.

bilaterian
bilbo
billabong
billet
billingsgate
biltong
binomial
biomimicry
birria

birria bittern blastema blastogenesis blatant

shamelessly obvious.

blintzes

the mystery of silent letters!

Why do words have sneaky silent letters that don't make a sound? Take the word "debt" for example—it comes from the Latin word debitum, which means "debt." When French borrowed the word, they dropped the "b" to make it simpler. But when English borrowed it back a few hundred years later, we put the "b" right back in!

Why? Probably to make the word look fancy and *classical*—but it definitely makes spelling trickier! Silent letters are like little secrets from the past hiding inside words. Cool, right?

bloviate
bodega
bodkin
boffin
boiserie
boisterous
bolivar
bona fide

genuine or legitimate.

bonobo boomslang boondoggle

Read the story behind the word on page 84!

boreal
borosilicate
borough
bottega
bouffant
bowsprit
bragozzo
braille
Bramantesque

bravado breviloquence Brigadoon Broccolini brockage brogue

brockage brogue bromide brontophobia

bruja bruxism

clenching or grinding the teeth.

bubonic buffa bulgogi bulgur** OR bulghur bulwark

significant protection or defense against danger.

Bundt bungalow buoyancy bureau burglarious burgoo busby

C

cabaret cabildo cacao cacophonous

marked by harsh or discordant sound.

cadge
caduceus
caducity
caftan
OR kaftan
calcaneus
calcify
calendula
callow

young and inexperienced.

calumet calypso cambio cameist campanology cancion

a popular song of Spain or Spanish America.

candelabrum
cannoli
Canopus
cantankerous
capillary
capnometer
capricious
capstan
capsule

carcass
OR carcase*
cardoon
caret
caribou
caricature
carnage
carnassial
carnitas
carnitine
Cartesian
cartilage
Cassandra
cassock
castellated

castigate

carbohydrates

to reprove for error or criticize with drastic severity.

Castilian
castor
catadromous
catalepsy
catalina
catalyst
cathect
cathode

cathect
cathode
cattalo
OR catalo
caucho
caudex
causal
caustic

characterized by incisive wit.

cauterize cavalcade cayenne cellophane Celsius cenotaph centaur

shhh

cerberus
cerebellum
Ceres
cereza
cetology
Ceylon
chaebol
chamberlain
chamomile**
OR camomile
Chamorro
chamotte
chancellor

the meat dishes and cold cuts sold in a delicatessen.

chaperonage

charcuterie

charismatic
charlatan
château
chemise
Cheshire cat
chevalier
Chiapas
chide
Chihuahua
chimera
OR chimaera*

chinook

chintzy

cheap and showy.

cholera
cholesterol
chrysalis
chrysolite
chupacabra
churchianity
cicada
cilantro
Cincinnati

circadian

circuitous

winding or meandering.

commodious circumflex commove circumstantial compendium civet con forza cladistics concision cladogram conclave clairvoyance concordance clandestine condign clarion conduit clavichord Conestoga clemency confabulation confetti

compassion in judgment and punishment.

cloture coalescence coaxation cochin cochlear codswallop coercive coeval cogently cogitation cognizant OR cognisant* cohesive cohosh coiffure colic colleague collectanea collegiality collimate collude

to connive with another: conspire, plot.

colocate
cologne
columbarium
comminatory

mutual agreeableness.

congeniality

commiserative

commissioner

conglutinant coniferous connivery consecrate consecutive consequent constabulary consternation constituent consul conticent contiguous continuous continuum contraband contractually contrariwise contrivance contumelious copra Coptic coqui

coracidium

cordillera

corduroy

coriander

Corinthian
corm
cornea
cornel
cornucopia
corollary
coroner
corroborate

to provide evidence of the truth of: to confirm.

corrosive
corsage
cortex
cotyledon
cozen
credence
credulity
Cree
creel
crepuscular

active in the evening.

crescive
Cretaceous
cribbage
cribble
cribo
crinoline
crith
cruciferous
cryogenic
cryptic

enigmatic: mysterious.

cudgel cum laude cumbersome cummerbund
cumulus
cupidity
curare
curie
curmudgeon
cutis
cyanosis
cybernetics
cyqnet

a juvenile swan.

cynicism



da capo
dace
dactylic
Dalmatian
damascened
dambos
dandle
danseur
danta
darnel

dashiki

an often brightly colored unfitted tunic originating in Africa.

daubster davenport deathin debacle debilitate debutante deceased deceitful
deceleron
decennial
deciduous
decimation
declamatory
declension
declination
decurion
defiant
deglaciation
déjà vu**
OR déjà vue

delectable

deleterious

deliauesce

delirium

deltoidal

dementia

demerits

demersal

Demeter

the Greek goddess of agriculture.

demographics demonstrative demulcent dendrite denigration denominator depose depreciate depredation deprivation derelict

abandoned, dilapidated.



there's a first time for everything

Meet **Hugh Tosteson**, the spelling bee trailblazer! In **1975**, he became the first champion from outside the 50 U.S. states. He hailed from **Puerto Rico**!

derisive derivative deserter

desertification desolate

desuetude detritus

deus ex machina

diabolical diacritic diadem

an ornate headband worn as a royal crown.

dialysis
Dianthus
diaspora
diathermy
diatonic
diatribe

a bitter, abusive and usually lengthy speech or piece of writing.

diaulos
dietetic
dihedral
dilapidated
diligence
diluent
dimorphism
diocese

diphthong

diptych

a picture or series of pictures painted on two tablets connected by hinges.

dirigible discernment discombobulate

Read the story behind the word on page 87!

discountenance
discreetly
discretionary
disembogue
disjunct
Disneyfication
disparate
disproportionate
dissemble
dissolution

dissolution dissonance distraught dodecahedron

dogana doldrums

a spell of listlessness or despondency: the blues.

dolma dolmen domesticity domiciled domineering dopamine

Doppler Dorking

doula dowager dowdy

not modern in style : old-fashioned.

Dramamine dromic

druid

drumlin drupiferous

dryad du jour

dungarees duplicitous

durango dysgraphia dyspeptic

dystopia

a dismal imaginary place.



ebenaceous ebullience

exuberance.



one dictionary to rule them all

Want to know where the Bee gets all its words? It's from one super-powerful dictionary: **Merriam-Webster Unabridged!**

You can explore this amazing dictionary online at **unabridged.merriam-webster.com**. Use their **advanced search** to find groups of words by their language of origin, definition or part of speech. It's like a treasure map for word lovers!



eburnean
echidna
ectoplasm
Ecuador
edelweiss
educand
Edwardian
efface
effervescent

animated, bubbly.

efflux
effraction
effusive
eggcorn
egress
elodea
embolus
emeritus
eminent
emissary
Emmy
empanada

a pastry turnover stuffed especially with a savory meat filling.

emulsify
en masse
encomium
ensconced
ensorcell
OR ensorcel
ensued
entente
entrails
environs
epaxial
epenthesis
epidermis

the outer layer of the skin.

epidural epiphany episcopal
epistaxis
epithet
epoch
equinox
equivalent
equivocate
eradicate

to fully destroy.

ergo
ermine
errata
erroneous
erstwhile
erubescent
eructation
escarpment
eschew
espousal
étude

a piece of music intended for study or exercise.

etymological eucalyptus eucrasia euphonious Eurocentric europium eustress Evactor evacuees evanescent

short-lived.

evo-devo
evzone
ex libris
exaugural
excelsior
excision
excoriate
execrable

exeunt exiguous existential exodus exogenous exorbitant

excessive.

expatiate
expectorant
expediency
exposé
exposition
expostulate
expugnable
expunge
extant
extemporaneous

composed, performed, or uttered on the spur of the moment.

extenuating extravasate extrorse



facetious facile

easily achieved or accomplished.

faconne factitious facundity Fahrenheit fajitas famulus fanchonette fanega fang shih farcical fardel farkleberry

Farsi

the modern language of Iran and western Afghanistan: Persian.

farthingale fastuous fatuously

fealty feckless fecund

faun

notable for productivity of thought and invention.

feign

fenestrated

fenster feria

fervorous

festooned

feudalism

fiat fibula fictile

fiduciary

finial fipple

firkin fjeld

flagon flambé

(of a food) served covered with flaming liquor.

flaneur

flauta flavedo

flèche flittern

Florentine

floribunda floruit

floruit

fluoride

focaccia

an.

very loud, as a direction in music.

follicle

fonting

forbivorous

fortissimo

fractur
Franciscan
frappé
frass
fratority
fraudulent
fravashi

frazil Freudian frison fritillary frittata

> an omelet that is unfolded and often made with vegetables or meats.

froward
fructiferous
frugivore
fucoid
fugue
fulmar
fulminate
funambulist
fungible
furcula
fusiform
fussbudget

gait

gaiters
galapago
gallbladder
Gallic
gambeson
gambit

a calculated move, maneuver, or device.

ganache garret gaseous gasiform

gastronome gaudery

gaur gelatinous Gemara

Gemini genealogical geniture

genome geocaching geriatric

relating to elderly people or the process of aging.

germane gibbous gingivitis gladiatorial glazier glial

glial glissando glossolalia gluttonous

gnathic gnocchi Gnostic

gnotobiotic goji berry golem

> an artificial, humanlike figure in some Jewish traditions that is endowed with life.

Goliath
gossamer
Gothamite
grande dame
grandiloquent
grandrelle
graticule
gravimetry

gravitas grazioso greaves

> armor for the legs below the knee.

Gregorian gressorial grissino groats grobian grotesqueness

grouse

sustained grumbling.

to complain typically with

gubernatorial gudgeon guillotine gules gullibility gumption gyro



habeas corpus habiliments hackneyed

trite: commonplace.

hadith hagiographer halal Halifax hallucinate halocline haplography harangue harbinger

something that foreshadows or predicts what is to come.

harrier
Hathor
hauberk
hauteur
Hawaiian
hawok
hearse
hedonism
hegemony
Heian

heleoplankton heliacal hennery heptad hermeneutics hermetically

in a manner that prevents entry or change.

heterochromia heterophony hetman heuristic hibernaculum hierurgical hinoki hipsterism Hiroshima histrionics Hitchcockian hoity-toity

acting in such a way as to suggest superiority or arrogance: pompous.

holmium
Holocaust
hologram
holotype
Holstein
homeostasis
homester
homiletics
Honolulu
humectant

a substance that promotes retention of moisture.

humidistat hummock Hungary hydriotaphia hydrocortisone hydrophobia hyperbole hypochondria hypogeous

humerus



all about the schwa: the sneaky sound!

Be like the **schwa**—the chillest sound in English—never stressed! But if you're spelling, the schwa can actually *stress* you out, because it can sound like any vowel: a, e, i, o, u, or y!

That's why words with a schwa can be tricky to spell. Here's a pro tip: ask for the word's language of origin. If it's from Greek, try guessing an "o" for that sneaky schwa sound—like in the word bacteriolytic.

Master the schwa, and you'll be one step closer to spelling victory!

hypotenuse hyrax

ibex ibuprofen Icarian

idiosyncratic

illative illicitly

illustrious

notably or brilliantly outstanding.

imago immolate immortality impasse impasto impecunious impediment imperious impetus

> an impelling or driving force.

implacable implicative imponderabilia impoverish imprecatory

impresario

impromptu incessant incinerate incisiform incitive inclement incompetent inconceivable inconnu

incubate

indemnity

to sit upon eggs so as to hatch them by the warmth of the body.

indicia indict indigent indistinguishable indolent inducement ineffable ineluctable ineptitude inerrancy ingenuous ingratiate inimical inoculate

insignia

instigate

to provoke or incite.

insufflator insurgents intermittent interred interrogative intersperse inveterate

inviolable

iridescent

showing colors like those of the rainbow especially in shifting patterns that vary with a change or light or point of view.

Iroquois irrevocable Isle Royale

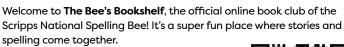


iacamar jackal jackanapes jacquerie jactance iadeite ialapeño iambalava

> rice cooked with ham, sausage, chicken, shrimp or oysters and usually tomato and seasoned with herbs.

jarl

The Bee's Bookshelf



cool words, and share awesome ideas. Want in on the fun? Sign up for our monthly emails to find out which book we're reading next!

Head over to spellingbee.com/book-club and ioin the adventure!

jaundiced ieepney

Read the story behind the word on page 88!

jejune jeon iettison jicama jiggery-pokery iimberjawed jingoism jitney jocularity joie de vivre

> keen or buoyant enjoyment of life.

judicious iulienne juliet Jurassic juvenilia juvia juxtapose

iornada

to place side by side to create some sort of effect.



kaiser kanban kanji karaoke

> Read the story behind the word on page 89!

karst katharobic katsu kerchief Kildare

kinesiology

the study of physical mechanics and anatomy as they relate to human movement.

kiskadee klippe koto Krakatoa krausen krypton kufi kugel kung pao

labroid labyrinthine laconic

> spoken or written briefly or tersely: pithy.

lacustrine ladana laity lambently lambkin Lancasterian

languorous lanolated lantana larceny

> the unlawful taking of personal property without the consent of its legal owner.

larnax lassitude latifondo latigo laudatory lavender leery

largesses

legalese legato

legerity **lemniscus**

lerot leviathan

liaise lidocaine

limned

outlined in clear sharp detail.

limpa limpet limpid limpkin lingua franca linnet linstock literatim

lithium lithophone litmus

lobectomy lobotomy locavore

> a person who eats foods grown nearby whenever possible.

loch logographic longitude

lorikeet lossy

lousicide

loutrophoros lovage luculent ludicrous lumen luthier

> a maker of stringed musical instruments.



Every month, we dive into a new book, explore

lutrine luxuriate

m

macadam macadamia machicolation machination

> a scheme or subtle maneuver intended to accomplish some end.

macle
maclura
macular
madder
maladaptive
malady
malapropism

a blundering, often ludicrous, or absurd use of the wrong word.

malevolent
malfeasance
malinger
Mancunian
mano a mano
manumit
mare
marginalia
marimba
marring
marsupial
martyrdom
mastodon

matriculation

admission and enrollment in a college, university, or other institution.

matsutake mawkish mea culpa mecca mediocrity medusa megalomaniac melamine mélange melee

> a confused fight or struggle between individuals.

melismatic mendacious mendicity meningitis Mennonites mephitic

displeasing to the sense of smell : noxious.

merganser meridian merino mesial Mesopotamian metaphorically metaplasia metastasize metatarsal Michaelmas MIDI millennial millet millisecond milonga milguetoast

a timid, meek, or apologetic person.

minacious
minestra
minette
minuscule
OR miniscule
Miranda
misnomer
mitigative

moano mochi moissanite mollify

monitory

to soothe in temper or attitude: soften.

monochrome
monoclonal
monture
moratorium
mordant
morphological
mortician
Motrin
movimento
mozzarella
muchacha
mulligan
multivoltine

multivoltine
Munich
municipal
muskeg
musketeers
muumuu
Mylar
myocarditis
myoglobin
myopic

lacking in foresight or keenness of insight.

mythopoeic



nabobs

people of unusual prominence in a particular field.

Namibian narcoleptic nauplius nautilus

Neapolitan

related to the city or people of Naples, Italy.

nectarine
neonatology
neoterism
nepotism
netiquette

neuropathy neuroticism

Newfoundland

nicad nitrate nocive noctambulist no-goodnik nomancy

nomenclature nomophobia nongge

nonage nonchalance

a display or air of jaunty unconcern or indifference.

nonvolatile
Norovirus
Nostradamus
notoriety
novemdecillion
noxious
Nubia
nubuck

nubuck nuciform nucleated numerology nutation

nutria

a South American aquatic rodent now naturalized on the U.S. Gulf Coast and Pacific Northwest.

nuzzer



obie oblast oblique

having a slanting direction or position.

obloquy obnebulate obsecration obsolete obstetrician obstinacy

> firm and usually unreasonable adherence to an opinion, purpose, or system.

obstreperous occultation Oceanian octogenarian octonocular octuplicate odist odometer Odysseus oecist officinal

Oglala

okapi oleo olfactory

relating to or connected with the sense of smell.

olingo
omnilegent
omniscient
onus
oompah
opacity
opaleye
operose
ophthalmologist
opprobrious

oppugn

to challenge the accuracy, properness, or other quality of.

Orion
orthogonal
orthros
oscitation
osculatory
Osloite
osmium
osprey
ossicle
ossuary
ostensibly

to all outward appearances.

osteopath ottoman oxalis

older than sliced bread

The first national bee was held in 1925. That makes us older



than sliced bread, bubble gum and even trampolines.

p pabulum

writing that is sentimental or basic.

pagoda
Paleozoic
paletot
palmate
palpebral
palpitant
Panama
panary
pancetta
panchreston
pancreas
panopticon
pantomime
papyrus

a writing material used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

par excellence parabola parameters paraplegic parasol

> a lightweight umbrella used as a sunshade.

parazonium parbuckle Parcheesi parfleche pariah

an outcast.

parlay
Parmesan
parochial
parodic
parr
parsec

a unit of measure for interstellar space equal to 3.26 light-years or to 19.2 trillion miles.

parsimony
partiality
particulate
parturient
parvo
pashmina
passé**
OR passée
pasteurize
OR pasteurise*
pastrami
patella
pathos
patronymic
paucity

smallness of number.

peacenik peculate pecuniary pedantry pelagial

pelerine pelf

Peloponnesian pendentive pendragon pendulous penitentiary

penultimate pepita

> the edible seed of a pumpkin or squash often dried or toasted.

per se
peradventure
perceptible
periaktos**
OR periactus
perigynous
periodontist
peripheral
periwinkle
permutation
pernicious
perpetrator
perquisite
perseverance
perspicacious

persuasible

pertinacity

piecing it together: the power of roots!

Did you know words are like puzzles made of little parts called **roots**? Sometimes a root is a whole word by itself—like the Greek **para**, which means "alongside." Other times, it's the core part of a bigger word, teamed up with prefixes or suffixes to make something new!

Take **Dev Shah's** winning word in 2023: **psammophile**. The first part, **psamm-**, comes from Greek and means "sand." The second part, **-phil**, comes from **philos**, meaning "beloved" or "loving."

Put them together and... can you guess what **psammophile** means? Someone who *loves sand*!

pertussal pervenche pestilence petroleum phantasmagoria

phenotype

a continually shifting, complex series of things observed or imagined (such as in a dream).

philosophize philtrum phishing phlebotomy phoenix phonetician phosphorescent phraseology phycology phylum phyteral pickerel Pierre pilaster pileus pilferer

a thief who steals items of small value.

pilosity

pilotage
pinnacle
pinnate
pious
Pisces
pituitary
placoderm
plagiarism
plaintiff
planetesimal
plangency
planisphere
planogram
plantain

plantigrade

plaudits
plenitude
plentiful
plumbago
Plumeria
plutonomy
poblano
pochard**
OR poachard
pococurante
podsnappery
Podunk

a town that is isolated, small and not important.

pointelle
pointillage
politick
pollutant
polonaise
polonium
polyester
polygenous
polypeptide
polysemy
polysyllabic
pomato
pomegranate
Pomeranian
pomology

pomposity

pongee

pontiff

poinsettia

a head religious figure or a high priest.

populace porcelain porosity portico posada posse possessive posterity

posthumous

occurring after or following someone's death.

postural
potassium
potentate
potoroo
poultice
prehensile
prelapsarian
preponderance
preposterous
preprandial
prerequisite
prerogative

a special right or privilege belonging to a person, group or class of individuals.

presentient prespinous prevalence prevenient prima donna primeval** OR primaeval primogeniture princeps priory privatim privet probative procrustean procurement prodigious

enormous or immense.

proem profligacy profundity proletarian proliferate prolix

prolusory promontory proprietary proprioceptive prorogue prosody protean

readily assuming different shapes or forms.

protectorate protuberant provenance proviant provincial proviso puchero pueblo pugilist pugnacious pulchritude pulka purga purvev pyrite pyrope

q

quadriceps quadrilateral quadrillion qualms

pyrotechnics

a fireworks display.

sudden misgivings or faintheartedness.

quarrelsome querent quesadilla questionnaire** OR questionaire

quid pro quo

quiddity

the ultimate form or the essential nature of something.

quinary quince quirt quittance quixotic

idealistic and utterly impractical.

quotidian OWERTY

r

rabato
rabbinic
ramark
rambla
rambunctious
ramson
rankles
rapscallion
raptatorial
rapturous
rariora
rasorial
raucous

noisily unrestrained and rowdy: disorderly.

ravioli
reagent
realgar
realm
Realtor
rebab
rebarbative
reboation
recalcitrant

obstinately defiant of authority or restraint: stubbornly disobedient.

reciprocity
reconcilable
reconnoiter**
OR reconnoitre
recreant
recrementitious
recriminatory
recrudescent
recumbent
recusancy
redolent
refrigerant
refugium
regalia
regatta

an organized series of rowing, speedboat, or sailing races.

reggae
regnal
regurgitate
reimbursable
reminiscent
remonstrance
remuda
remuneration

compensation for a loss, service or expense.

renegotiate
renitency
renunciant
reparations
repentant
repercussion
replevin
replicate
repository
reprieve
reprisal
Requiem

a grand song of praise or joy made to honor the dead. requisition
reredos
resilience
restitutory
résumé
resurrected
resuscitate
reticent

inclined to keep silent or uncommunicative.

retina
retinol
retinoscopy
retrocedence
retrodict
retrograde
revenant
reverberant
rhapsody
rhizome
ricochet
rictus
rigatoni
ritziness
rollicking

rostrum a pulpit or platform

or public speaker.

occupied by an orator

rote rotogravure

Romano

romeite

rosin

rotulet roustabout Rubicon rudiments rugose ruminate

to carefully think about something for a while or periodically.

rustication

OR sourcrout
OR sourkrout
Scamozzi
scarab
scarlatina
scenographer
scherzo
schism

sauerkraut**

a split or division of a group into two disagreeing groups.

S

sabbatical sabermetrics sacrament sacrosanct

inviolable.

sailage salat salience saltatory saltern saltire sapphire sardonic

indicative of or marked by mockery, ridicule or scorn.

sarmentum sartorial sashay satrap

saturnine

schnell schooner sclerosis scribblative scrivener scrumptiously scudded

scudded scumble scuppers scythe secant secession sedentary

requiring or characterized by sitting or limited activity.

sedge sedum seethe selenite Seminole senecio

seneschal

find the Bee on social media

Want to join the spelling fun all year long? If you're 13 or older, you can follow the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and TikTok!

Share your spelling wins, get cool tips, and see what other spellers are buzzing about. Don't forget to use **#spellingbee** to join the conversation and connect with friends around the world!

senna
sensei
septennial
septum
sepulchral
seraphic
serendipitous
serrated
sesame
settee
severance
shallot
shaman

a priest-doctor who uses magic to cure the sick, to divine the hidden, and to control events.

shamir shanachie shawarma shazam shebang sheldrake Shenandoah shenanigans Shetland shirk shoji

a paper screen used as a divider or sliding door.

sieve

sijo
simpatico
simultaneity
singultus
sirenian
Sirius
sirocco
sisal
siskin
Sitona
sittine
slalom

soterial

Sothic

Spaniel

spatha

spathe

speciation

spinosity

spiracle

spirulina

splenetic

sponsalia

sprue

staid

spurious

stalwart

statistician

statuesque

statusy

steeve

stegosaur

OR steenkirk

steinkirk

stellular

stagflation

spontaneity

sprightliness

characterized by

spiteful anger.

spectrometer

sousaphone

skiing in a curvy course between obstacles.

slumgullion smellfungus smithereens snell sobersides solon somatotype somniloquy soothsayer sophomoric

being unaware of limitations and lack of maturity: superficial.

soppiness sortileger sory stentorian

extremely loud: capable of powerful utterance or sound.

steppe
stevia
stimuli
stipulate
stratification
stratocracy
stratosphere
striation
stricture
stridency
Styrofoam
subjugate
subliminal

designed to affect the mind on an unconscious level.

subluxated
submersible
subrident
subsequent
subsistence
substrate
subterfuge
subterranean
subtlety
subversive
successive
succumb

to yield to a stronger force.

suet
suffrage
Sumatran
summoned
sumptuous
superficiality
superstitious
supine

supplemental supplicate

> to request modestly and earnestly of someone or something.

supremacy surcease surety surmountable surrealist surveillance swale sycophant syllabus sylph

an imaginary being that lives in the air.

symmetrical symposium syndactylism syndicate syntonize syntrophism syringe



tabia

takin

tabernacle

a building used principally for religious services.

tableau
tablinum
tabulate
taciturn
tae kwon do
tagua
tai chi
taiga

talisman

talmouse

tambourine

an object thought to work as a charm to ward off evil and bring good fortune.

tamworth tangerine tantrum tapioca tappet tarlatan** OR tarleton Tasmanian taverna taxidermy taxonomic tectonic teemed Tejano telepathic telmatology temblor

relating to or being like a turbulent, violent storm.

tempura tenaciously tenement tensile tentacled tenue tenurial tepidity

tempestuous

lukewarmness.

tercentenary terminus terra-cotta Terran terrarium tertiary

why is it so hard to spell English words?

Ever wonder why spelling in English can be so confusing? Here's the scoop: English didn't just grow on its own—it *borrowed* words from tons of other languages! That means it's a big mix (or hodgepodge!) of words, sounds, and spellings that don't always match up.

There are **26 letters** in the alphabet but around **44 different** sounds—so things can get a little wild! Take the letter 'x'—it sounds different in "extra," "mix," and "example." And what about the vowel sounds in "weigh" and "way?" They *sound* the same but look totally different!

So, if spelling feels tricky sometimes, you're not alone. That's what makes spelling bees so exciting!



tetrapteran Thailand theologian

a specialist in the rational interpretation of religious faith, practice, and experience.

theomachy theorem theosophy theriatrics thoroughbred thrasonical Thuban

Thuban

thwartwise

thyme tiffany

Tinseltown

tiffin

the American film industry : Hollywood.

titian
titration
tomfoolery
tomium
tommyrot
tomography
tonneau
toorie
topgallant

topiary

toploftical

toponymic torsion

torsk tosh

sheer nonsense : foolish talk or actions.

toties quoties toxicosis tractability traiteur tramontana transcend transducer transhumance transience

> the characteristic or state of lasting only a short time.

transmissibility
transmontane
transpiration
transposable
trapezoid
traumatropism
travails
treadle
trefoil

trellis

a frame made of crossing pieces of wood that is used as a screen or to hold up climbing plants.

trepanation
trepidation
triage
tributary
trice
tricenary
triceratops
triforium
trigeminal
triglycerides
trillium
triste
trituration
trophic
troubadour **

a strolling minstrel; also : anyone who in music, verse, or rhetorical prose promotes some cause.

OR troubador

Truckee

trygon tsk-tsked tubular tumpline tungsten turbidity turbinado turducken

turgor turken turophile turpentine tussock tutelage tutti-frutti twain

a couple or pair.

twang tympanum typhlology

u

ubiquity
ufology
Ukrainian
ulna
ultradian
umbelliferous
umbilical
umbrage

displeasure.

una corda unchristened unctuous ungulate unilaterally

one-sidedly.

unilocular univocal unmoored unravel unremitting unsurpassed untenable upbraid

to reprimand severely.

upsilon ursine usurper utilitarian uveal uvula

V

vaccination vagabonds

individuals who wander about from place to place.

vague
vainglorious
valerian
valiant
vallecula
valuator
vandalize

vanguard

the forefront of thought, taste, or opinion in a field, s chool, or movement.

vanquish
vaporetto
varactor
varicose
variegated
varsha
Vatican
vaudeville
veganism
vegetarian
vehemence

the quality of being marked by intense hostility.

vehicular
vellication
velours
vendage
veneer
vengeance
venial
venomous
ventail
ventifact

ventricle ventriloquy veracity

truthfulness.

verbena verboten verism veritable vermicide vernal vespertine vestibule vetiver vetoed vicarage vicarious vice versa vicenary viceroy victimology

> a religious service on the morning of the day before a holy day.

vincible virga virtuoso virulence

vigil

beyond the letters

Spelling is awesome—but knowing what words mean? That's next-level cool! That's why the Scripps National Spelling Bee added **vocabulary questions** to the mix!

They first showed up on the written test in 2013, and in 2021, they became part of the oral rounds at the National Competition.



39

Why do we love vocabulary so much? Because spelling isn't just about putting letters in the right order—it's about really **understanding** the words you're learning. The more you know about a word, the better you'll remember it—and the more fun you'll have using it!

Who knows? You might discover a word that leads to your next favorite hobby, subject or even future career!

vis-à-vis viscidity vitriolic vituline volary OR volery volatile volition

> the action of deciding, choosing, or willing.

volumetric Vulcan

wainwright

a maker and repairer

wallaby Walter Mitty wasabi wedel Weimaraner weiack

werf

wherry Wiccan widdershins wilco Winnebago

wisteria** OR wistaria withernam wobbulator woebegone

> displaying misery, distress, suffering, or sadness.

wolfsbane wootz

yabbies yacata yardang yawmeter

> an instrument for measuring the angular motion about the normal axis of an airplane.

Yorkshire Yoruba



zeitgeist

the general cultural, ethical, and intellectual spirit of an era.

zeppelin zirconium zoetic zoolatry zoopraxiscope zootomy zooty zori zowie zurna

zygote

a cell formed by the union of two gametes: a fertilized egg.



a big-time spellebrity

If you've watched the Bee before, you've probably seen his face. You've definitely heard his voice. We're talking about the head pronouncer of the Bee, Dr. Jacques Bailly. Dr. Bailly isn't just the head pronouncer—he's also a former champ! He won the Bee back in 1980 and became our head pronouncer in 2003.

But wait-there's more! When he's not dazzling spellers with pronunciations, Dr. Bailly is a professor of Classics at the University of **Vermont**, where he teaches ancient languages and literature.

spelling meets sports

Did you know some of the Scripps National Spelling Bee's biggest fans are major sports teams and organizations? From the Tennessee Titans (the very first major league partner) to the Dallas Sports Commission—which has cheered on champs and finalists like three Octochamps in 2019 and 2025's champion Faizan Zaki-our regional partners bring the excitement of the game to spelling!



Other star players include Maryland Sports, the Carolina Panthers (who proudly represent six spellers across North Carolina and South Carolina), the Omaha Sports Commission, Diamond City Sports, the Columbus Blue Jackets, and the Richmond Raceway.

Together, these sports teams and commissions help create a winning spirit across the country-proof that spelling and sports make an unstoppable team!

difficulty level:

three bee







You've come a long way, and now you're ready for the toughest words of all-rule-breakers, oddballs and brain-benders you might not run into every day. Organized alphabetically, this final section is your chance to stretch your spelling skills to the max and show just how far you've come. You're not just spelling now, you're mastering!

Words with a single asterisk (*) indicate a primarily British spelling. A double asterisk (**) indicates the spelling that is more widely used. A complete list of the words that were added to this year's study list can be found on page 56.

a

à fond

à la grecque

ab aeterno

abaculus abomasum

abraum acacia

accordatura

the tuning scheme of a stringed musical

aceituna

acerola

acetaminophen

acetone

acharya

Achernar

acicula

acidophilus

acoel

acrogeria

acropachy

ad nauseam

adieu

adscititious

Aegilops aegrotat gerocele

aerophilatelic

aes rude

Aesculapius

a person skilled in the art of healing: one duly authorized to treat disease : a physician.

Aesir

aethalium

affiche

agitprop

Aglaia

agrypnia

ahimsa

the concept that humans should not hurt or kill anyone or anything.

ahuatle

Ahuehuete

Ahura Mazda ailanthus

aileron

ailette

aistopod

Aitutakian

ajimez akkum

alate

alcarraza

Alfvén

alisier

alleluiatic

allochroous

altering color.

almuerzo

alouatte

alpargata

altazimuth

amaryllis

amertoy

amour propre

self-love: self-respect, self-esteem.

amphistylar

amuse-gueule

anabathmoi

anaphylaxis

anathema

ancien régime

andouille

anemone

angiitis

aniseikonia

Anno Hegirae

anomaliped

anosognosia

antenatus

Antiqua

Apabhramsa

ape-ape

aperçu

a brief impression; especially: an intuitive insight.

aphasia

Apistogramma

apocryphal

apophyge

Apostolici Appaloosa

appetitost

après

Aramaic

Ardhamagadhi

Ardipithecus

ardoise

arenaceous

aretalogy

as nas

ascites

aspidistra

astaxanthin

astilbe

Asura

asylee

attacca

au bleu au courant

well-informed.

au jus auwai

avgolemono

azotea azulejo

b

baboen baccate bagwyn bahr

jurisdiction.

balata

bailiwick

balbriggan

baleen banh mi

Barnumesque

Bartókian

Barylambda

bas-relief

a sculptural technique in which the image projects slightly from the

background plane.

batamote

battue

Baucis

bauxite

bavardage

Beauceron

beaumontage Beaux arts

a unit of radioactivity the equivalent of one disintegration per second.

ben trovato

beccafico

becquerel

Bêche-de-Mer

Beowulf

berceuse bergère

Bernoulli effect

Bessemer

bêtise

betony

Bewusstseinslage

Bezier curve

bhangra

a fusion of Western pop music and traditional Punjabi music.

bhikshuni

bibelot

bibimbap

bisbigliando bismillah

> – used as a Muslim invocation.

> > 43

blatherskite

blottesque

bobolink **Bohairic**

Boise Bolognese boniface



on a global scale

At only 12 years old, Jody-Anne Maxwell from Kingston, Jamaica made history as the very first international

She showed the whole world that amazing spellers come from everywhere. Could you be next?



bordereaux
Bosc
botryoidal
bouclé
boudin
bouillon
boulevardier
bouleversement

an overturning : a reversal.

boutade
bozzetto
Braeburn
brouhaha
brume
bruschetta
buccal
buñuelo

a flat semisweet deepfried cake usually served with sugar and cinnamon or cane syrup.

Bunyanesque burelage burgee Burkinabe

C

cabochon cabotage ca'canny
cacaxte
cachexia
cacoëthes
Caerphilly
caesious
cahiers
caique
cairn

a heap of stones, often in a rounded or pyramidal shape, made as a monument or as a landmark.

caisson
calabash
calamondin
calenture
caliche
caló
calusar
calvities
camarilla
Camembert

a soft French cheese.

canaille canions cantatrice caprifig Caracas carcajou carnifices carrageenan**
OR carrageenin
OR carragheenin
Carrickmacross
cartouches

caryatid

Castalia

Casimir effect

a carved female figure that acts as a support in place of a column.

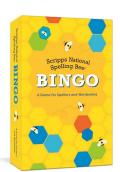
catachresis
cataphora
catarrh
catjang
cavalletti
caveola
cecidium
cephalopod
Cereus
cermet
certiorari
chalaza
chalumeau
chalybeate

Chamonix

Charon

champignon

in Greek mythology, a son of Erebus who ferries the souls of dead people over the Styx.



bee ready to bingo!

Scripps National Spelling Bee Bingo is a fun, fast-paced twist on bingo for ages seven and up! Spell, define, and use words to fill your beehive-shaped board and win. With easy and hard

words chosen by the Bee's editorial team, plus 12 exciting game variations, it's perfect for family game night or spelling parties.

Order yours today at Amazon, Walmart, Target, Barnes & Noble, and independent bookstores near you!



charybdis chastushka chasuble chauve-souris cheongsam

> a fitted Chinese dress with a slit skirt and a stand-up collar.

chèvre
chevrotain
chopine
chorten
choucroute
ciénaga
ciliopathy
cioppino

a dish of seasoned fish and shellfish cooked in tomato sauce.

cire perdue
cirri
clerihew
cobalamin
coccygeal
cochineal
colcannon
colloque

colloque colluctation colporteur**

OR colporter colubrine concatenate

to join or link together.

concours
connoisseur
consanguine
consigliere
conteur
contrapposto
contretemps

mishap, predicament.

copernicium corrigenda corybantic coryphée coterie

a clique or tight-knit group.

cotoneaster
coulibiac
coulisse
coulrophobia
coup de grace
courgette
couverture
creances
crokinole
croquembouche
croquignole
croustade
cryptozoa

microscopic animals that live unseen in forest debris.

cushag cynghanedd cynocephali

d

daguerreotype Darjeeling darmstadtium de riqueur

required by etiquette or custom.

decastich degauss Deimos demitasse démodé demurrage Déné dentifrice derring-do

bold, courageous, or fearless action: bravery.

Deseret desiccate Devanagari dghaisa

dhole dhurrie diapason diaphanous

delicate and transparent.

Djibouti domnei doxycycline dragée drahthaar Dubhe Dubuque duello

duxelles

a sauce made of mushrooms and tomato puree.

dvandva Dvorak dysphasia



ecchymosis echelon

a level of responsibility in an organization.

echinoderm edamame effete effleurage Egeria eisteddfod élan

spirit and flair.

eleemosynary
eluate
embouchure
emollient
emolument
emphysema
en arrière
Enoch Arden

enoki

a small edible mushroom.

epideictic
epinicion
epistemology
epixylous
Equatoguinean
Erewhonian
ergatogyne
Eris
erythroblast
Esau
escarole

a casual shoe with a fabric upper and a rope sole.

espalier espial estancia estovers estrepe ethylene étouffée

escheator

esclandre

espadrille

a shellfish stew of Cajun influence served over rice.

eudiometer Euroclydon exchequer



faipule farfalle

farouche

pasta that is shaped like a butterfly.

farrago
Fatimid
fatshedera
fauchard
fauxbourdon
Feldenkrais
fellahin
OR fellaheen

peasants or agricultural laborers in Egypt, Syria, and other Arabicspeaking countries.

ferruginous fête champêtre fetticus fibromyalgia fin de siècle

of or relating to the end of a century.

Firbolg flehmen force majeure Formica frabjous fracas

a loud brawl or fight.

funori furan Furneaux furuncle **g** gabarit gabbro

gabbro gaffe OR gaff

> an action or mistake that causes social or political embarrassment.

Gaia
gaillardia
Galahad
galatea
galena
gallivat
gambol

to jump or skip around playfully.

Gaspesian gasthaus gattine gayatri Geatish gegenschein Gehenna

gelilah

gendarme

a place or state of misery.

genet
genizah
gesellschaft
giallolino
ginglymus
Giorgionesque
Gippsland
glabella
glacis
glengarry
gliriform

glyceraldehyde

Gondwana goondie graywacke griot

> any of a class of West African musicianentertainers or storytellers whose performances include tribal genealogies and histories.

Groenendael Grundriss Gruyère guan guapena Guarnerius

guayabera

a usually short-sleeved lightweight sport shirt designed to be worn untucked.

guerite guichet Guidonian Gurmukhi gyascutus gyokuro gypsophila

h

haikai halala** OR halalah halcyon

> pleasingly calm or peaceful in its natural simplicity: serene.

Hamtramck
hangul
hapalonychia
haupia

hebdomadal heiau hei-tiki hellebore hemorrhage

a rapid, uncontrollable loss or flowing out.

hennin
henotheism
hepatectomy
Herodotean
Hessian
hexenbesen
hieracosphinx
Hippolyta
hirsute

hairy, shaggy.

hoi polloi holobenthic hominin homoscedasticity hordeolum houppelande Hsia





the first-ever Champion Showdown!

To celebrate the Bee's 100th birthday in 2025, we brought together **eight legendary champions** for the very first **Champion Showdown!** Imagine a spelling bee mixed with *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *Family Feud*—that's how these spelling stars showed off their skills.

Our all-star lineup included champs from across the decades: 1973's Barrie Trinkle, 1980's Dr. Jacques Bailly, 2000's George Thampy, 2004's David Tidmarsh, 2008's Sameer Mishra, 2015 co-champ Vanya Shivashankar, and two of the famed 2019 Octochamps, Shruthika Padhy and Saketh Sundar.

After an epic battle of brains and spelling, Saketh Sundar took home the crown!

Huallaga huerta

> a plot of highly cultivated land in Spain, such as for an orchard.

Humboldt hutia**

OR jutia

OR utia

hypaethral

hyssop

hysteresis

hysteron proteron

i

Iceni

ichthyology

the study of fishes.

icosahedron

ikebana

immie

in medias res

in nuce

in silico

incunabula

inglenook

insouciance

an attitude of not worrying about what others think of one's work or behavior.

integument internecine interregnum

Inugsuk

Inuk isagoge Ishihara test

ivermectin

j

jacqueminot Jahiliya

the pre-Islamic period in Arabia.

jai alai janthina iasmone

ie ne sais quoi

jerboa jocote

joropo Jumada

Jungian

k

kakapo kaleidoscope

kalimba

kalopanax

kangri Kannada

kapparah

katakana

katana

a single-edged sword that is the longer of a pair worn by the Japanese samurai. kathakali

keeshond

kentledge

Keplerian

kerril

kichel

kipuka Kitksan

kiva

Kjeldahl

koh-i-noor

something felt to be the best of its kind, such as a valuable diamond.

Koine

koji

konditorei

korrigan krewe

> a private organization staging festivities such as parades and balls during Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

kriegspiel

Kuiper Belt

Kutani

kwashiorkor

kyphoplasty

I

La Tène laccolith

lanceolate

shaped like the head of a spear.

it's all Greek to me

Ever wonder why some English words sound like they came from another language? That's because most English words were **borrowed** from other languages—like Greek, Latin, French, and more!

We took those words, made them part of our everyday language, and now they're *officially* English. Cool, right? So when you spell tricky words, you're actually traveling around the world!

langrage

Latinxua

lebensraum

leberwurst

lebkuchen

lecithin

lefse

lierre

ligas

lilliputian

excessively small.

limaçon

Llullaillaco

lobscouse

loggia

logodaedaly

Read the story behind the word on page 90!

logothete

lokelani

loquitur

louche

loupe

a tool used by jewelers and watchmakers for magnification.

luftmensch

lunulae

Lupercalia

m

macchiato

macigno

mackinaw macushla

mademoiselle

maerl

maillot

majuscule

Makgadikaadi Pans

malaise

an indefinite feeling of general lack of health.

Mandelbrot set

mandorla

mandragora

mange-tout mangonel

Manu

Marathi marcel

marcescent

withering without falling off — used of a plant part.

maringouin

martinoe

mascarpone mässig

mediobrome

medulla .

megrims meiosis

mele

Menaia

. . .

Merak meringue

> a mixture of beaten egg whites and powdered sugar baked at low temperature and used as a topping.

Metonic cycle

micellar microfiche

mille-feuille

millegrain miombo

Mirach miscible

mittimus moiety

moline

mondegreen

Read the story behind the word on page 91!

моос

moraine

morion mortadella

motherumbung

mozo

muesli mufti

a jurist whose job is to interpret Islamic religious law.

muktuk

muliebrity

Muzak myeloma

n

Nabal nacelle

nahcolite

naricorn

Naugahyde

naumachia

neem

neophyte a beginner.

Ner Tamid nescience

Nethinim Nicoise nidicolous

nest-dwelling, often in another animal's nest.

nimiety

niminy-piminy

nisi

nisus
nival
ni-Vanuatu
niveau
nodosity
notturno
noumenon
nouveau
Novanglian
nyctinasty

0

Oaxaca obeisant Oenone oeuvre ogival olecranon onomatopoeia

formation of words in imitation of natural sounds.

onychorrhexis
oolite
oopuhue
Oort cloud
oppidan
Orinoco
ormolu

the process of forming mountains.

orphéon oryx ostium Ouagadougou oud

outré

orogeny

bizarre, extravagant.

oviparous oxyacetylene paella pahoehoe Palaihnihan palaver palooka pampootie panacea

a cure-all.

Panathenaea
Panchen Lama
panettone
panjandrum

Read the story behind the word on page 92!

pannose
pappardelle
parallax
pareidolia
Parmentier
parquet
parterre
parti pris
pas seul
pasilla
pastitsio
patois

a dialect other than the literary or standard dialect.

Patripassianism pejorate pekoe perciatelli perianth perruche petechia Philistine

unaware of aesthetics : insensitive.

philopatry

phloem phlox Phobos photovoltaic piatti piccata

pierrot

piloncillo

pinniped

pistou

thin slices of meat (such as veal) that are sautéed and served in a sauce of butter and lemon.

pitanga
Plantagenet
pneumatocyst
pochoir
podagra
podotheca
point d'appui
polyandry
portugais
porwigle
pot-au-feu
pothos

potpourri

a mixture of flower petals and spices kept in a jar and used for perfume or scent.

pou sto
poudre B
prajna
pralltriller
pratique
presidio
prêt-à-porter
prion
prodissoconch
Promethean
promyshlennik
pruritus

psalmody

the act or practice of singing religious songs in worship.

pschent psoriasis ptyxis pudibund pulvillus

pylorus

the opening from the stomach into the intestine.

Pythagorean Pyxis

q

qiyas Quaoar quasar

quattrocento

the 15th-century period in Italian art and literature.

Quito quoc-ngu quokka quonk Quonset raclette rafflesia

railleur

one given to goodnatured ridicule.

rajpramukh rapparee rapprochement Rastafarian

Rayleigh wave realpolitik

recamier redingote rembrandt

rennet renvoi rescissible

reveille

a signal (as by a bugle) sounded to call military personnel (as sailors) to begin the day.

rhododendron

rhyton rickettsial rinceau risorgimento

risposta

rissole Robigalia rocaille roi fainéant rond de jambe rondeau rooseveltite

rondeau rooseveltite rosemaling roseola rouille rubaiyat

poetic units of four lines.

rubefacient
ruelle
runcible spoon
rupicolous
ruscus
rutabaga

a large, edible turnip with a yellowish root.

ryas Ryeland Ryukyu



saccharide saeta

adjectives vs. nouns: the /us/ sound showdown!

"Wait... my word ends in an /us/ sound! Is it -us or -ous?!"

Don't panic—there's a smart trick to help you decide!

Just ask for the part of speech!

If it's a **noun** (a person, place or thing), **-us** is usually the way to go.

But if it's an **adjective** (a describing word), then **-ous** is probably your best bet.

So remember: before you spell, check if it's a **thing** or a **thing-describer**—and you'll be one step closer to spelling victory!

Sagittarius sakura salmagundi** OR salmagundy samsara Sangamon

sangfroid

extraordinary usually callous composure or steadiness under strain.

sanglier sannyasi sansculotte Saoshyant Sapporo savoir faire Sawan Sbrinz scaberulous scagliola Schedar schefflera schnecken schwegel sciatica sciolistic sclaff scobiform

scrofula

seine

selah semaphore seraya serin serval sesquipedalian

characterized by or tending to use lengthy words.

sessile
seton
Sfax
sforzando
Shawwal
Shiba Inu
silique
Sir Roger de Coverley

siscowet
skaamoogs
Skeltonic
skerrick
smriti
sobornost
soirée

a party that happens in the evening.

sororal sorrel sostenuto sous vide spiedini spindle spodumene sprechstimme sravaka

stevedore

someone whose job is to load and unload a ship.

Strelitzia stretto Strigolniki stroganoff struthious stupa sturnine stygian styptic

stygian styptic succès fou succorance OR succourance*

Sufi supercilious surreptitious

secret.

svarabhakti Svengali swainsona sybaritic

ioin the Word Club!

Looking for a cool new way to study? Check out the **Word Club** app—it's totally **free** on the App Store and Google Play!

With Word Club, mastering the 2026 Words of the Champions is super fun! Choose from quizzes and study games for both spelling

and vocabulary. Plus, you get expert audio pronunciations straight from the Bee's very own head pronouncer, **Dr. Jacques Bailly.**

Get ready to level up your spelling skills anytime, anywhere!



synanthrope syncope



taal tachycardia tachyon

taedium vitae

tamari

a type of aged soy sauce often without added wheat and that is of high quality.

tambour tam-o'-shanter

tanager tandoori tannined

taoiseach

the prime minister of Ireland.

tapetum
tarpaulin
taurine
Tchefuncte
Tegucigalpa
telamon
teledu
telegnosis
temalacatl
tempeh

a food originating in Asia made of fermented soybeans.

teneramente teocalli terai teraphim teratism

terra nullius Terre Haute tessitura Teutonic thalassic

relating to the ocean or the sea.

theca
Theravada
thesmothete
thimerosal
Thomism

tic douloureux

tikka

thuluth

an Indian dish of marinated meat cooked on a skewer.

tikkun Tillamook tilleul tinamou

tinnient tintinnabulary

tiramisu tmesis toccata toey

toggenburg toile Tok Pisin tomahawk

a Native North American ax used as a weapon.

tomalley tonsillitis topazolite toque toreutics torii

> a Japanese gateway commonly built at the approach to a Shinto shrine.

toril tourelle tournedos towhee

trichinosis triduum trillado

market coffee made by sun-drying the beans.

triskelion tristeza trochee trompe l'oeil trotteur trous-de-loup

trouvaille tryptophan tsukupin tullibee tusche Typhoean



ubi sunt ubiquinone ullage ululate

to cry out a typically long and rhythmical noise.

unakite unguiculate uraeus urushiol Ushuaia

usufruct

the right to use or enjoy something.



V

valvata varicella velouté

verisimilitude

vermeil

vexillologist

a specialist in the study of flags.

viaticum vicissitudes

vigneron

vignette

vilipend villanelle

villi

vinaceous

vitiate

vituperative

marked by or consisting of wordy disparagement.

vizierial

W

wabeno Waf wahine

a surfer who is female.

Wampanoag wapiti

waringin weka

weltschmerz

mental listlessness or depression brought about by comparing how the world is to how it ideally should be.

Wensleydale wentletrap whippoorwill whydah**

OR whidah wigan

witch of Agnesi

wongshy wushu

martial arts originating in China.

X

xerogel xiphophyllous xyloglyphy

Y

yakitori

small pieces of chicken, seafood or beef that have been marinated and are then grilled on skewers made of bamboo.

yertchuk yosenabe Yponomeuta yttriferous

consonants 101: double trouble?

Not sure if a word has one consonant or two? Here's a handy tip: check if the word has a **suffix** (like a verb that's been changed to show tense).

Often-but not always-words double the consonant right before the suffix! For example:

- The speckled frog hopped off the log.
- The horse **plodded** down the lane.
- The train chugged down the tracks.

Notice how the vowel right before the doubled consonant is a **short sound**?

Can you find other words where the vowel is short and the consonant doubles? What about words with a long vowel sound where the consonant stays single?

Give it a try and become a consonant detective!

yuga

one of the four ages of a Hindu world cycle.

yuloh

Z

zacate zaibatsu Zamboni

a machine that resurfaces ice.

Zanni

zapateado

Zdarsky tent

zemi

zimocca

zortzico

zugzwang

the need to make a move in chess when it is not to one's advantage.

Zyzomys

buzz through bee history!

Celebrate 100 years of spelling greatness at our brand-new history microsite: history.spellingbee.com!

Launched in honor of the Bee's **centennial in 2025**, this site is your all-access pass to the Bee's past. Explore every year of the Bee's history, meet all former champions, discover every winning word, and learn about the officials and directors who've shaped the competition.

Plus, you'll find fun facts, surprising stories, and **audio interviews** with dozens of past champs. Whether you're a spelling superfan or just curious, there's something for everyone.



words that are new this year!

Every year, Words of the Champions gets a fresh update to keep your spelling journey exciting! We retire some words that have been around for a while to make room for brand-new challenges. These new words are here to stretch your skills, spark your curiosity and give you even more to explore.

Check out the list below to see all the new additions for this year-your next favorite word might be waiting! Words with a single asterisk (*) indicate a primarily British spelling. A double asterisk (**) indicates the spelling that is more widely used.

Please note: These words are included in the full list in the previous pages. We've compiled them here for ease of studying.

a abdicate absurdity acquisition adiaphorism adjacent adjag **Aesculapius** agarita agio aguaji airborne alchemy alisier alliteration allusions alveoli Alzheimer amputate anacreontic anastomosis anito antiseptic apostrophe apotropaic

appealing

arbutus

arsenal

assertion

aswoon

atavistic

atman augury august autobahn auwai azure

b babka baboen babouche **Bactrian** baleful bandolerismo Barnevelder bastide begirdle belladonna benign bequeath bewitched

bolivar

boreal

borosilicate

bottega bouleversement bragozzo **Bramantesque** breakthrough bungalow bystander C cabildo calcaneus caliche canary canions Canopus caret caribou Cartesian catchall caucho Bewusstseinslage centaur cerberus bezique billet Ceres blingy Cereus blintzes cereza boggle Ceylon **Bohairic** chaebol

botryoidal

chalumeau

chalybeate

chamomile** OR camomile Chamonix Chamorro chamotte charlatan charybdis cheddar Chiapas cilantro circumstantial cliché clinician colleague cologne columbarium complex confetti confirmation coniferous constraints contraband contractually copra coracidium coryphée Cree creed criticized OR criticised* cryptic

d da capo dace dambos debacle deceased delirium demand demersal Demeter demonetize demothball dendrite denigration deployment detestable deus ex machina diabolical diphthong discernment dispatch** OR despatch dissolution districts divisive domnei doneness

curare

cynghanedd

e ebenaceous edelweiss elixir elodea **Emmy** empanada engagement engender ensorcell OR ensorcel entrails epaxial epiphany epistaxis etymological Eurocentric exceedingly excoriate expediency extenuating faconne **Fahrenheit**

famulus

fanchonette

dryad

dualism

dungarees



cummerbund

cupidity

did you know?

doula

Dramamine

Did you know the Scripps National Spelling Bee has crowned co-champions several times-in 1950, 1957, 1962, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2019?

And guess what? In 2019, there were EIGHT winners, famously called the Octochamps! That's spelling teamwork at its finest.

One of those Octochamps, Saketh Sundar, is currently studying neuroscience and linguistics at Harvard and contributed to the language tips found at the end of this book.

fanega fanfic fang shih faun fauxbourdon feria

fidelity fife

fin de siècle

flavor

OR flavour* folklore

forecast fractur frappé

fravashi fraying freakishly

fulmar

g gaiters

gallbladder gambeson garret gaseous gawkers gayatri

Gehenna Gemara genizah

Giorgionesque glial

Gnostic gnotobiotic gospel gradation gratifying

Grundriss quillotine

gyro

h

haikai halal halocline hapalonychia hapless haunted hearse hecklers hectic hedonism Heian

heiau heightened hexenbesen hieracosphinx Hiroshima

hollywoodize

horrid hospice humectant hurled hutch hyperbole

imago implementation inconceivable inconnu

insurgents intermission

intermittent

jacamar jackanapes jacqueminot jacquerie jejune jeon jornada juliet

k

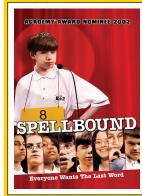
juvia

karaoke katharobic

katsu

Bee in the spotlight

Did you know the Scripps National Spelling Bee was the star of a super cool documentary called Spellbound? It was nominated for an Academy Award in 2002!



keeshond kingfisher knee-jerk konditorei Krakatoa

ladang Lancasterian latifondo lay-ups leery lerot lobbyist locket

loquitur

loutrophoros

m macadamia macle maclura maddening madder maerl maladaptive Mancunian

mare Martian martyrdom matsutake meaningful mediocrity

mélange Mennonites menu metaphorically

mille-feuille milonga milguetoast moano

mongoose

monoclonal mozzarella muddle multivoltine muumuu mythopoeic

n

nabobs nauplius nicad notorious novelties Nubia

0

obie oboe obstinacy octogenarian odist oecist Oenone Oglala oleo opacity opaleye orthros osmium outing

p

owed

Palaihnihan paletot panelist panopticon parazonium parbuckle

Parcheesi parfleche

parlay parlor OR parlour*

Parmesan passé** OR passée pasteurize

OR pasteurise* Peloponnesian periaktos**

OR periactus perigynous perruche pertussal pervenche phantasmagoria

phyteral pickerel pochard**

OR poachard pococurante poinsettia pointillage poised polonaise portrayal poultice preacher preclude prerequisite prevalence

priory prodissoconch proem protean protein pueblo pulka pummel OR pommel

primrose

pupil purga pyrope

q quarrelsome querent quesadilla quickstep quoc-ngu

salat sallow saltire sansculotte satrap scammed Scamozzi scenario

r raffle ramark rambling ramen rapturous rariora ravenous

ravioli rebab recalcitrant recollections sijo sirocco recrementitious refinery sisal regatta siskin renovating renunciant Sitona replevin sittine replicate reredos resurrected reticent sory rickettsial

romeite

rotogravure

rote

60

S

scribblative scudded selenite Seminole sepal

serendipitous shallot shamir shanachie shawarma siscowet snobbery sobornost sortileger soterial Sothic

spatha

squelch

stodgy strenuous struggle subterfuge sumptuous supercargo supplemental surveillance sweepstakes

t

tabia tablinum tagua taiga takin talmouse tearjerker tenue tenurial teocalli terminator Terran testament tetrapteran theologian Thuban

tomium

tonneau

travesty

tramontana

traumatropism

torsk

troubadour** OR troubador trustee trygon turbidity

u

velours ventifact verboten vicarage virtuoso

vellication

underwhelmed ungulate unheeded unilocular unravel unsurpassed

vallecula

varactor

varsha

wainwright wanderlust waringin wasabi wedel weighty Weimaraner wejack wept

wherry

waggery

yacata yertchuk **Yponomeuta**

Wiccan

Winnebago

OR wistaria

withernam

wongshy

wisteria**

Z

zoopraxiscope zootomy zooty zori

Scripps National Spelling Bee®



our namesake

The first National Spelling Bee buzzed to life in 1925, but it wasn't until 1941 that Scripps-Howard Newspapers (now called The E.W. Scripps Company) took charge of the whole show.

Scripps is based in **Cincinnati**, **Ohio**, a city nicknamed the Queen City. But here on the Bee Team, we like to call it, "The Queen Bee City!"

ready for the big stage.

study buddy since 1950

Words of the Champions was first published all the way back in 1950! For generations, spellers have used

it to learn new words, build their confidence and get

language patterns and root word study



As you progress through your spelling bee journey, you'll study *Words* of the Champions to prepare for your county, district, regional and state spelling bees. But what happens when you're given a word that isn't on the list, maybe one you've never seen before?

That's where knowing language patterns can become your secret weapon and make studying for the spelling bee more fun. Champion spellers over the years have discovered that understanding where words come from doesn't just help them spell better, but it turns studying for the bee into an exciting game where unfamiliar words become puzzles you can solve. You start to notice patterns, decode roots and learn surprising stories behind words of the English language.

English, after all, is a language built from many others. Centuries of migration, conquest and trade have shaped it. Much of its structure and vocabulary comes from the Indo-European language family, consisting of Romance languages (descended from Latin), Germanic languages (descended from early German), some South Asian languages (descended from Sanskrit) and others like Persian and Gaelic. Though English is a Germanic language, it exhibits strong Latin, Greek and French influences in both vocabulary and spelling, and most of the words we use in everyday speech come from one of those four languages.

Non-Indo-European languages from East Asia, the Middle East, South India, Africa and the Americas have had a less direct impact on commonly used vocabulary, but many words reflecting cultural topics have entered English through trade and colonialism. In this section, we'll explore how languages across the globe influenced English and how recognizing their patterns, meanings and histories can help you become a stronger speller and more knowledgeable of different cultures around the world.

Greek

Greek is the oldest surviving language of the Indo-European family. The ancient Greeks were pioneers in science, math and medicine, so it's no surprise that many Greek-derived words in the spelling bee come from those fields. Even though Greek is part of the Indo-European language family with the Romance languages and Germanic languages, it is considered a language isolate within that family. This means it's not closely related to any other language.

Some important patterns to know about Greek are: the /f/ sound is pretty much always spelled with ph, and words with a short /i/ sound (like "pig") are typically spelled with a y. You can see both these patterns at play in words like physical and tryptophan.

But the challenge in words of Greek origin is that they often have consonant sounds that can be spelled in different ways. For example, the /k/ sound might appear as ch in allochroous, c in cataphora or k in kyphoplasty. And the /z/ sound can be spelled with an x, as in xyloglyphy or a z in cryptozoa.

One of the best tools for navigating Greek-derived words is knowing roots. Roots are the building blocks of words that help you figure out both how a word is spelled and what it means. Let's look at some examples together:

- Allochroous contains the root allo, meaning "other," and chroa, meaning "color." The word describes something that changes color.
- Cataphora includes the root cata, meaning "down," and phor meaning "to carry." It
 refers to a grammatical structure where a word carries down a reference to another
 word or phrase later in the sentence.
- Xyloglyphy includes the root xylon, meaning "wood," and glyphe meaning "to carve." Aptly, it means "artistic wood carving."
- Cryptozoa includes the root crypt meaning "hidden," and zoa, meaning "animal." It refers to small animals that live hidden on the forest floor.

From just those four examples, you can see how useful roots can be in learning the spelling and meaning of words. **Something important to know about Greek roots is that they are most often linked by the letter o within a word**, which is different from Latin roots as you will see later.

Next is a table of common roots you will see in words of Greek origin with their definitions and a few examples from *Words* of the Champions. Note that this list is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to give you a broad introduction to some important roots.

Greek Roots

Greek Roc	, to s		
Root	Meaning	Examples from Words of the Champions	
acr	height, tip	acral, acrogeria, acropachy, acrostic	
aer	air	aerobics, aerocele, aerophilatelic	
allo	other	parallax, allochroous, allonym	
ana	up, back	anabathmoi, anabolic, anachronism, anaglyphy, analects, analepsis, analgesia, anaphylaxis	
аро	away from, off, separate	apocryphal, apology, apophyge, Apostolici, apostrophe, apothecary, apotheosis, apotropaic	
cata	down, against	catachresis, catadromous, catalepsy, catalyst, cataphora	
chrom	color	monochrome, achromatic, heterochromia	
derm	skin	epidermis, echinoderm, placoderm, taxidermy	
dia/di	through, across, apart	diacritic, diadem, dialect, dialysis, Dianthus, diapason, diaphanous, diaspora, diathermy, diatonic, diatribe	
di	two	diaulos, dihedral, dimorphism	
dys	bad, abnormal	dysgraphia, dyspeptic, dysphasia, dystopia	
ері	upon, on, over	epideictic, epidermis, epidural, epinicion, epiphany, episcopal, epistaxis, epistemology, epithet, epixylous	
eu	good	eucalyptus, eucrasia, eudiometer, euphonious, euroclydon	
glyph	carve	anaglyphy, xyloglyphy	
gnos	knowledge	telegnosis, anosognosia, agnostic	
graph	write	demographics, dysgraphia, hagiographer, haplography, logographic, scenography, tomography	
gyn	woman	ergatogyne, perigynous	
holo	whole	holobenthic, holocaust, hologram, holotype	
hydro	water	hydrant, hydriotaphia, hydrocortisone, hydrophobia	
hypo	under, beneath, less	hypochondria, hypogeous, hypotenuse, hypaethral	
logo	word, reason	logical, logodaedaly, logographic, logothete	
meta	beyond, change	metaplasia, metastasize, metatarsal	
mono	one, single	monochrome, monoclonal, monopolize	
neo	new	neonatology, neophyte, neoterism	
pan	all	panacea, Panathenaea, panchreston, panopticon	
para	beside	parabola, parallax, parameters, paraplegic, parazonium	
path	feeling, disease	antipathy, ciliopathy, neuropathy, osteopath, pathogen	
peri	around	periaktos, perianth, perigynous, periodontist, peripheral	
phon	sound	heterophony, phonetician, euphonious, sousaphone, cacophonous	
phor	bearing	adiaphorism, cataphora, semaphore, loutrophoros	
photo	light	photogenic, photovoltaic	
pod	foot	podagra, podotheca	
poly	many	polyandry, polyester, polygenous, polypeptide, polysemy, polysyllabic	
pyr	fire	pyrite, pyrope, pyrotechnics	
scop	look, view	zoopraxiscope, retinoscopy, kaleidoscope	
syn	together, with	synanthrope, syncope, syndactylism, syndicate, syntonize, syntrophism	
tachy	fast	tachycardia, tachyon	
tele	distant, far	telepathy, telegnosis	
theo	god	theologian, Theomachy, theosophy	
troph	nourishment, growth	trophic, atrophy, syntrophism	
Z00	animal	zoolatry, zoopraxiscope, zootomy	

Romance Languages

Latin

Perhaps no language has had a greater influence on our everyday English than Latin, whether directly or through its daughter languages: French, Spanish and Italian. Latin first entered English as the language of the Roman Empire, which spanned from modern-day Turkey to Britain and was influential especially in fields like science, religion and law. French contributed thousands of words after the Norman Conquest of 1066, especially in the fields of government, fashion and literature. Italian words arrived during the Renaissance through art, food and music, while Spanish terms came into English primarily through contact between English and Spanish speakers in the Americas.

Because Spanish, French and Italian all share a common origin, many words from these languages passed through Latin. You can see this in the French word *sangfroid* which originates from Latin *sanguis* meaning "blood" and *frigidus* meaning "cold." And even directly into English, Latin has left a major mark. Almost a third of commonly used English words come straight from Latin, making their spellings feel very familiar. So, if you're given a Latin word in a spelling bee and you're unsure how to spell it, go with your first instinct from all the words you use in your daily life because it's often right.

That said, Latin does have some patterns worth remembering. For example, **the** /k/ sound in Latin is typically spelled with a c. The letters k, z and w are very rare in Latin, so beware of using them. Also, Latin plurals are spelled with an ae at the end if they end in /ee/ (lunulae) or with an i if they end in /ahy/ (stimuli, apostolici). The /oo/ sound and the /yoo/ sound are spelled with a u as seen in elocution and cumulus. The /ah/ sound can sometimes be spelled with au as seen in plaudits or fraudulent.

Like Greek, Latin is a heavily root-based language. But where Greek roots are typically connected with an o, Latin usually uses an i to link roots. Again, the provided list of roots is not comprehensive but is a good jumping off point to begin your studies.

Latin Roots

Lutili Roots					
Root	Meaning	Examples from Words of the Champions			
ante	before	ante, antenatus			
anti	against, opposite	antipathy, antiquarian, antithesis			
com/con/co	with, together	collimate, comminatory, conglutinant			
-col-/-colous	s living in	nidicolous, rupicolous			
cumb	to lie down	recumbent, succumb			
contra	against	contrapposto, contradictory			
dis	apart, not	discombobulate, discountenance, discreetly, disembogue, dissonance, disjunct, disparate			
duc	to lead	inducement, transducer			
flor	flower, bloom	floribunda, floruit			
-ferous	bearing, carrying	cruciferous, drupiferous, fructiferous, umbelliferous			
loq	to speak	grandiloquence, somniloquy, loquitur			
man	hand	manacle, manuscript			
mater/matr	mother	maternity, alma mater			
noct	night	nocturnal, noctambulist			
non	not	nonchalance, nonvolatile			
omni	all	omnilegent, omniscient			
ped	foot	pinniped, anomaliped			
pinn	feather	pinniped, pinnate			
pater/patr	father	patronymic, patripassianism			
punct	point	acupuncture, punctuation			
rogat	to ask	prerogative, interrogative			
trans	across/beyond	transmontane, transference			
quadr	four	quadriceps, quadrilat eral, quadrillion			
uni	one	unilaterally, unilocular, univocal			
vor	to eat	forbivorous, frugivore, locavore			

French

Although words from French can look confusing, they are more phonetically constructed than you may think! The French language uses specific vowels, vowel combinations and consonants to represent specific sounds.

French is the origin of a true word of the champion, Faizan Zaki, who spelled *éclaircissement* to become the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee champion. This word can be broken down fairly simply, if you know the French phonetic patterns!

First, the /ay/ sound at the beginning is spelled as \acute{e} because this character carries that pronunciation, while a plain a is often pronounced in French as a schwa or as a short /a/. Second, clair is straightforward due to the fact that this part comes directly from French clair meaning clear, which is mentioned in the definition! The cisse part is obvious once you learn that a c is what makes the /s/ sound before an i. Then, you know that the s has to be doubled to make a soft /s/, as a singular s is often pronounced as a /z/. We know that this part of the word ends with an e because this vowel makes the previous i long (/ee/) the same way a "silent e" makes vowels long in English words, like "bake" or "hive." It is also used to connect the suffix, ment, to the rest of the word. Finally, ment is a common ending to many French-derived words that are the noun form of verbs that are processes. (Examples: embezzlement, engagement, advertisement, aggrandizement, annulment.)

Next you will see groups of words that came from French that share common phonetics. Use the column on the right to identify the letters that make the vowel sound in the words we've used as examples. We've filled in the first one for you.



Common sound	Examples from Words of the Champions	What letters make this sound in these French-derived words?
/00/	rouille, sous vide, velouté, louche, loupe, farouche, embouchure, croustade	ou
/azh/	burelage, cabotage, effleurage, corsage	
/eek/	silique, pratique	
/sh/	chemise, chevalier, chamotte, chaperonage, château	
/ay/	étude, exposé, flambé, frappé, mélange, passé, bouclé, coryphée, démodé, velouté	
/ay/	je ne sais quoi, traiteur, ailette, malaise, liaise, polonaise, questionnaire	
/ahd/	façade, boutade, croustade	
/ny/	vignette, vigneron	
/oh/	mauve, château, tableau, tonneau, au bleu, au courant, au jus	
/et/	ailette, courgette, raclette, vignette, fanchonette, minette	
/ahy/	trouvaille, canaille	

More tips for French-derived words:

• The double *II* in French-derived words can be pronounced either as an *I*, similarly to a *y* (like in Spanish) or it can be nearly omitted, only relaying a slight sound in the word.

Examples: par excellence, pointelle, pointillage, shallot, vaudeville, andouille, bouillon, canaille, espadrille, railleur, mille-feuille, tilleul, guillotine, gaillardia

 French is notorious for its silent letters! Here are some words that have maintained a more authentic French pronunciation; look out for words like these when you study.

Examples: grande dame, joie de vivre, lerot, paletot, ricochet, vis-à-vis, au jus, au courant, Beaux arts, cahiers, canaille, fauxbourdon, genet, guichet, maringouin, je ne sais quoi, pas seul, point d'appui, rapprochement, roi fainéant, rouille, trous-de-loup

Words derived from French have consistent pronuncations of the letter s. When it is by
itself and situated between vowels, it is very likely pronounced as a /z/, but when it is
doubled, it becomes soft as /s/. (This characteristic is shared with the German-derived
words, too!)

Examples:

- · /s/: impasse, casserole, lassitude, passé, coulisse, soirée, corsage, danseur
- /z/: chastise, chemise, exposé, résumé, vis-à-vis, alisier, ardoise, berceuse

Italian

Words from Italian have some distinguishing characteristics to look out for! To begin, the letter(s) *c, cc* and *ch* make some unique sounds.

The c makes a different sound depending upon the vowel that comes after it. In the word cantatrice, the last c makes a /ch/ sound: [kahn-tuh-TREE-chay]. It functions the same in quattrocento, macigno, cello and cioppino.

The c or cc followed by an i or e results in a /ch/ sound. If there is a pair of vowels that follow the c or cc, then the second vowel is the one that gets pronounced, as in *perciatelli* [pur-chuh-TEL-lee].

Before a, o and u, the c or cc remains a hard /k/ sound, as in focaccia, accordatura and piccata.

Another way to make a /k/ sound is with the letters *ch*. The words *macchiato*, *scherzo*, *gnocchi* and *bruschetta* show this. However, as words become anglicized, the *sch* can become a /sh/, as in *bruschetta*, for which the /sk/ is heard in the secondary pronunciation ([broo-SHET-uh] vs. [broo-SKET-uh]).

The g and gg can also be tricky. **The Italian language does not use the letter j**, so the g in combination with the i is used to make that sound. The words loggia, agio, giallolino and Giorgionesque demonstrate this. The i is used to soften the g while the second vowel is the one that gets pronounced.

In Italian, the letter combination *gn* is pronounced similarly to a /ny/ sound, as in *gnocchi, Bolognese* and *witch of Agnesi*. When anglicized, these /ny/ sounds tend to become a plain /n/, but the /ny/ sound may be part of the secondary pronunciation, so don't forget to ask for any alternate pronunciations! In this case, *gnocchi* is first pronounced [NAH-kee] and an alternate is [NYAH-kee].

The gl letter combination tends to make a plain /l/ sound. Consider the words scagliola, bisbigliando and consigliere.

Even though there are plenty of helpful hints in these words, Italian is notorious for its double letters. In Italian, the doubling of the consonants is distinguishable and can carry different meanings for words. The syllable is elongated. For example, the Italian words "fato" vs. "fatto" ("fate" vs. "done") only sound slightly different from one another. However, these distinctions are often lost when words are anglicized, making them hard to spell. There are words like perciatelli whose pronunciation tries to convey the double / at the end, but many Italian-derived words do not. This makes it important to get into the dictionary and study!

Finally, words from Italian do not normally contain the letter y since the letter is not a part of their alphabet. Instead, if you hear that sound, it is likely formed using the vowel combination io, as in scagliola, arpeggio and grazioso. There are plenty of vowel patterns in Italian, so dive into the dictionary and see what you notice! Use the space below to record any Italian-derived words you find while paging through Words of the Champions.

Spanish

The Spanish language follows a very phonetic system where each sound has corresponding letter(s) that represent it. However, when these words enter English, their pronunciation can change, especially when it comes to vowels.

Let's see what we can learn from the words coqui and zacate.

If you hear a long /e/ sound (as in bee) at the end of the word, consider the stress. If the stress is on the last syllable, the word most likely ends with an *i* (which would be given a tilde [i] in Spanish). But if the stress is on the penultimate syllable, the word most likely ends with an *e*.

Coqui (naturally, coqui) is pronounced [koh-KEE]. Zacate is pronounced [zuh-KAH-tee]. Here, we can see that understanding the pronunciation can tell us how the sound will be represented in writing.

In Spanish the sounds /koo/, /kah/ and /koh/ are always spelled as *cu*, *ca* and *co* respectively. The sounds /kee/ and /kay/ are always spelled as *qui* and *que*. **The letter k does not exist as part of that alphabet**. (Examples: *curare*, *zacate*, *simpatico*, *coqui*, *quesadilla*.)

The letters c, s and z can all represent the /s/s sound. It's important to ask for all pronunciations of a word to make the best attempt at spelling it.

Before i and e, a c makes an /s/ sound. (E.g. cilantro and cereza.)

Before a, o and u, the /s/ sound can be either an s or a z.

Looking again at zacate, the primary pronunciation is with a /z/ and the secondary pronunciation is with a /s/. With this information, you can best guess that the first letter is a z. But what if your word is almuerzo, whose only pronunciation is with an /s/ sound? There is no information here that gives us a hint, so this is an instance that shows how important it is to get into the dictionary and study! (The same is true for the word mozo.)

The y and the II in Spanish often make the same sound (/y/), but anglicization often changes authentic sounds, at times turning the II /y/ sound into a straightforward /I/. The word Ilama demonstrates this exception [LAH-muh], although its secondary pronunciation does hold true phonetically [YAH-muh]. Still, there are words like Llullaillaco, quesadilla, pasilla, trillado and piloncillo that maintain the /y/. There are also words like cordillera that try to convey the sound (with [kor-dil-YER-uh]) but still fail to do so completely. This use of II is most prevalent in words ending with [EE-yoh] and [EE-yuh] sounds.

So, how do you know when to spell with *ll* or *i* to make the /y/ sound? When the word is a place name, it tends to end with *ia* as in *taqueria*. But if the word is an object noun (instead of a place noun) or an adjective, it is much more likely to end with *illa*, as in *quesadilla* and *camarilla*. There is a difference here, though, in the primary pronunciations! *Quesadilla* is pronounced primarily with the /EE-yuh/ sound, but *camarilla* is pronounced [kam-uh-RIL-uh] primarily and as [kam-uh-REE-yuh] secondarily, so don't forget to ask for all the information! Use the space below to record any Spanish-derived words you find while paging through *Words of the Champions*.

Germanic Languages

The Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family includes German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian and, of course, English. These languages all evolved from a shared ancestor spoken in northern Europe thousands of years ago. Germanic languages are known for their strong consonantal sounds, flexible word order and ability to form compound words. While English has absorbed many words from Latin, Greek and French, its core vocabulary and structure are still deeply rooted in its Germanic origins.

German

Despite its closeness to English, words of German origin can look and sound super scary and foreign. Fortunately, they usually follow reliable patterns for spelling. Although they're often long and have strange letter combinations, once you know what to listen for, you can often spell them just by sound.

Let's see what patterns we can learn from this sentence:

"Einstein chased a Weimaraner into a konditorei, where he tripped over a box of sauerkraut and knocked over some schnecken and a hexenbesen."

If you hear an /ahy/ sound in a German word, it's most likely spelled ei. Einstein is pronounced [AHYN-stahyn]. Weimaraner (a gray hunting dog) also begins with that same /ahy/ sound spelled ei [vahy-muh-RAH-nur]. If you see those two vowels in the opposite order such as in kriegspiel, it's usually spelling the long /e/ sound, [KREEGZ-peel].

Weimaraner also shows us that **if you hear a /v/ sound in German**, **it's usually spelled with a w**. The same thing happens in *weltschmerz*.

If you hear an /au/ sound (like the ow sound in "cow"), it's almost always spelled au. Sauerkraut (fermented cabbage) is a great example: [SAU-ur-kraut]. Both parts use au to spell /au/.

Now let's look at the /k/ sound in *sauerkraut*. German usually spells it with a k or ck, but rarely just a c by itself. *Konditorei* (a pastry shop) also starts with a /k/ sound, and it's spelled with a k, as expected (and an ei for the /ahy/!). But sometimes, in the middle of a word, the /k/ sound is spelled ck. *Schnecken* (coiled pastries) shows this: [SHNEK-un].

Speaking of *schnecken*, the /sh/ sound in German is almost always spelled *sch*. Words like *gesellschaft*, *weltschmerz*, *luftmensch* and *schnell* all follow this pattern. But there are exceptions, like in an alternate pronunciation of *kriegspiel*.

Now, let's take a closer look at hexenbesen (a shrub), pronounced [HEK-sun-bay-zun]. First, it shows that **the /z/ sound in German is often spelled with an s**, just like in *kriegspiel* and *gesellschaft*. When studying German, you will notice that words with more authentic pronunciations will pronounce a z as a /ts/ sound, as in *zeitgeist*, *weltschmerz*, *zugzwang* and *Alzheimer*.

Second, it also shows **the /ay/ sound is typically spelled with e**. That long /ay/ appears in the *be* of *besen*. You'll also see this in *weltschmerz*, *edelweiss* [AY-dul-vahys] and *gegenschein* [GAY-gun-shahyn]. You can also see here that there are two *Ss* in the word *edelweiss*, making it a soft /s/ instead of a /z/ sound.

Dutch/Afrikaans

Dutch is a Germanic language spoken primarily in the Netherlands and parts of Belgium, while Afrikaans arose in southern Africa in the 17th century when Dutch settlers colonized it. Over time, their Dutch began to evolve due to isolation from Europe and contact with other languages spoken in the region, which led to a distinct language of Afrikaans developing. Even though Afrikaans is distinct from Dutch, words in English of those origins share many of the same spelling patterns. Here are some unique quirks of Dutch and Afrikaans spelling worth knowing.

The /oo/ sound is usually spelled oe, as in baboen. The /ay/ sound is often spelled ee, like in keeshond. The /oh/ sound is sometimes spelled oo, such as in skaamoog or Oort cloud. The /ah/ sound is frequently spelled a such as in ladang and catjang.

Scandinavian Languages

Slightly north of Germany is the region of Scandinavia, where languages like Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic and Danish are spoken. Finnish, spoken in Finland, is interestingly a non-European language with closer ties to Hungarian. These languages have not influenced English in significant ways as they are spoken by relatively small populations, and each of them they have contributed a few dozen or less words to English. With the Germanic link, many consonants are spelled similarly to how they are in languages like German and Dutch. For the vowels, **the /ah/ sound is usually spelled with an a** as seen in *slalom* but the schwa can really be spelled with anything: an a in *fulmar*, an o in *anorak*, an e in *lefse*, and a u in *litmus*.

Languages of East Asia and the Pacific

The languages of East Asia are distinctly different from those of the Indo-European language family. In fact, the most commonly spoken languages of East Asia, such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, are not even linguistically related to each other! They each belong to separate language families, and they developed independently over thousands of years, shaped by different histories, although they have interacted via trade and conquest.

Japanese

Japanese has contributed many words to English—especially ones that show up in spelling bees—largely due to globalization in the 20th and 21st centuries. Many of these words describe uniquely Japanese concepts or practices that don't translate neatly into English. As a result, each borrowed word often carries a fascinating story along with it, from food like *tempura* to practices like *aikido* (a martial art) and *ikebana* (flower arranging) making them both interesting to learn about and fun to spell. There are several recurring patterns to know in words originating from Japanese.

The long /ay/ sound in Japanese words is typically spelled ei, as in *Heian* or *sensei*. It can also be spelled e, usually at the end of a word, as in *edamame*, *anime* and *yosenabe*.

The long /e/ sound is usually spelled i, like in torii, enoki and funori. In some cases, it may appear as e, such as in matsutake. A word like karaoke might seem to end in a long /e/ sound, but if you ask for alternate pronunciations, you'll hear one with a long /a/, which is actually closer to the original Japanese.

Read the story behind the word karaoke on page 89!

The /ahy/ sound is usually spelled *ai*, like in *zaibatsu* or *haikai*. **The long /oo/ sound tends to be spelled with u**, as in *tempura* or *urushiol*. The /ah/ sound is frequently represented by *a*, though sometimes *o* appears, too. Examples include *kanji*, *ikebana* or *kanban*. One reliable pattern in Japanese that you may have observed is that **the /k/ sound is almost always spelled with a** *k***, not a** *c***.**

Other East Asian Languages

Compared to Japanese, other East Asian languages like Chinese and Korean show less consistency. Chinese-origin words especially can vary widely in spelling due to anglicization, which is the process of making words from other languages appear more like English words. For example, the /ee/ sound appears in very different spellings: pongee, fang shih, wongshy, tai chi. This is because unlike Japanese, Chinese words entered English through a much less standardized process. Pongee came from the Chinese "benji," and wongshy came from "huang-chih." However, English has borrowed fewer words from Chinese and Korean than from Japanese, so you're less likely to see them. But if you do get one you haven't seen before, the best strategy is to keep things simple and trust your ear.

Austronesian Languages

The Austronesian language family, spoken across a vast region from Southeast Asia to the Pacific Islands, has contributed several words to English. In Southeast Asia, key sources include Tagalog and Malay. These languages generally feature phonetic spelling (spelled how it sounds), though colonial histories have influenced their words as they reached to English. Tagalog shows traces of Spanish spelling, while Malay includes Dutch-influenced forms

Further east, Pacific Island languages such as Samoan, Hawaiian and Maori have also introduced new words to English vocabulary, often through contact with American and New Zealander English speakers. These languages are also highly phonetic, but something unique to them is that individual vowels are clearly pronounced and you will rarely see combinations of vowels making one single sound. This can actually make words easier to spell! For example, in Hawaiian, oopuhue (a type of jellyfish) is pronounced [oh-oh-puh-HOO-ee], with each vowel distinctly enunciated. Similarly, the Hawaiian word pahoehoe illustrates how o and e correspond to the /oh/ and /ee/ sounds. A recurring pattern is the use of e to represent the /ay/ sound at the end of words, as in wahine, a word shared by both Hawaiian and Maori.

One of the trickier sounds in these languages is the /ee/ sound, which can be spelled with either e, as in ape-ape, or i, as in lokelani. While there are no steadfast tricks to learn to tackle this sound, keep the variability of spellings of this sound in mind when studying.

Languages of South Asia

South Asia is one of the most populous and linguistically diverse regions on Earth, home to hundreds of distinct languages across several major language families. Estimates vary, but over a thousand languages are spoken in India alone! Because of this diversity, words from South Asian languages often appear in spelling bees, usually related to the unique customs of religion, philosophy, food, animals and traditional arts of the Indian subcontinent.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit has brought many words to English, particularly in religious and philosophical contexts. As the classical language of Hinduism, Buddhism and much of ancient Indian literature, it has contributed many spiritual terms of these religions to English. Sanskrit is an Indo-European language and shares some language structures with ancient languages like Latin and Greek.

Sanskrit words show some unique spelling patterns, especially with consonants. Many consonants are aspirated, meaning they're pronounced with an added puff of air. For example, Sanskrit includes distinctions between sounds by adding an h next to the consonants b, d and t. Words like bhikshuni, kathakali, apabhramsa, ardhamagadhi and svarabhakti demonstrate this pattern.

In Sanskrit-derived words, **the /ah/ sound is often spelled as just** *a*, while **the long /ee/ sound is typically spelled** *i*, as in *Devanagari*.

Other South Asian Languages

Hindi and Urdu, the largest languages in South Asia, are related to Sanskrit but also have Arabic and Persian influences due to historical contact with the Mughal Empire, so you may also encounter spellings with *kh*, such as in *rajpramukh*. At the end of some Hindi and Urdu words, the /ah/ sound may actually be spelled *ah* as we see in Arabic.

Words from South Indian languages like Tamil and Telugu are less common but do appear occasionally in spelling bees. These languages belong to the Dravidian family, which is linguistically distinct from Indo-European languages like Hindi and Sanskrit, so their patterns don't carry over. They have distinct sounds, scripts and grammatical systems. Due to British colonization, most of these words entered English through heavily anglicized forms as we saw earlier with words of Chinese origin. For example, bandicoot comes from the Telugu word "pandikokku." Those two look nothing alike! In these cases, it's often safest to spell the word the way an English speaker would have heard or interpreted it at the time.

Languages of the Middle East

The Middle East is the birthplace of civilization and written language, as well as the birthplace of three major world religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—so languages from this region have indubitably had a large influence on the English language. The four most spoken languages in this region are Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish.

Hebrew

Hebrew is an ancient language from the Semitic family traditionally used for Jewish religious texts. Another origin you might see is Yiddish, a language influenced by Hebrew that developed among Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. It blends German and other European languages with Hebrew. Yiddish tends to follow more Germanic language patterns than Hebrew, especially in pronunciation and structure.

Words from Hebrew mostly come from religious contexts. **One noticeable feature is the frequent use of double letters**, such as in *kapparah* and *tikkun*. Another common pattern is that words often end in *ah*, like *gelilah* and *genizah*. Asking for alternate pronunciations is always super helpful for words of Hebrew origin as it might lead you to a different but correct spelling.

Arabic

Arabic is the most commonly spoken language of the Middle East and the main language of Islam. It also belongs to the Semitic language family, the same family as Hebrew. Because of this, Arabic shares some features with Hebrew, such as the *ah* ending in certain words like *bismillah*, though this is less frequent in Arabic with words like *halala* and *Jahiliya* not following this pattern. Arabic also tends to use double letters, as seen in *Shawwal* and *fellahin*. The /ee/ sound is often spelled with *i*, as in *hadith* and *qiyas*. The word *qiyas* also highlights another common Arabic feature: the /k/ sound is frequently spelled with *q* (without a u after it), which can seem unusual to English speakers.

Due to Europe's storied trading partnerships with the Middle East and the influence of Arabic-speaking Moors in Spain, many Arabic words entered English through European languages like Spanish or Italian. So, when you hear a word of Arabic origin, check whether it passed through one of those languages as its spelling may follow European patterns instead.

Persian

Persian, or Farsi, is the most widely spoken language in modern-day Iran. While Arabic influenced Persian vocabulary, Persian itself is not a Semitic language, and it is an Indo-European one more closely related to Hindi and Urdu. Historically, Persian cities like Baghdad were major centers of culture and learning, helping to spread Persian words into English. When spelling a Persian word, it may help to think of the spelling patterns found in Sanskrit, Arabic or Hindi, and words of Persian origin often also went through one of these languages.

Turkish

Turkish is a language of the non-Indo-European Turkic family and is unrelated to any other large language that has donated words to English. While words of Turkish origin are relatively uncommon in English, it is worth knowing that the /ee/ sound is spelled with an i, and the /ahy/ sound is spelled with ai. Otherwise, keep it simple!

Other Language Families

So far, we have mostly discussed words from Asian and European languages which have long and well-documented histories of contact with English. These interactions began far before the relatively recent conquests of the Americas and Africa by European powers. As such, this next group of etymologies has a significantly smaller level of contribution to the English language than the languages we discussed earlier, and there are rarely any patterns that unite these languages. But understanding how they entered English might provide some clues when spelling a word.

Languages of Africa

Much like the Indian subcontinent, the continent of Africa is also linguistically diverse, home to over a thousand different languages. Understanding the migration patterns that led to the development of all these languages can be an interesting endeavor, but for the purposes of spelling bees, there are not many words in the English language from the continent of Africa. Some of the most spoken languages include Swahili, Amharic, Yoruba and Igbo. You may also sometimes just hear the origin as from an African native name, meaning the precise origin is not known. For words of Swahili origin, it's good to know that there is notable Arabic influence, due to centuries of trade along the East African coast. Amharic, spoken in Ethiopia, is a Semitic language with ties to Hebrew and Arabic. For the other languages, there are no clear patterns, but it's worth exploring the dictionary to see what cool words and stories you can discover from the African continent, as there are a manageable number of words to study.

Languages of the Americas

Indigenous languages of North America include Algonquian, Hopi, Chinook and Ojibwa. Like the words of African origin, you may also be told that the origin of a word is from an American native name. These words mostly went through American English, so spellings often reflect American phonetic conventions. An example is the Algonquian word wejack with a *ck* ending that seems intuitive to American English speakers.

South American indigenous languages include Araucan, Tupi, Nahuatl, Taino and Quechua. These words entered English by passing through Spanish first, so they usually have some Spanish influence in their spelling. Something to know about Nahuatl in particular is that it has a lot of words ending in /ee/ spelled with e, like ahuehuete and cacaxte.

Languages of Eastern Europe

Despite geographic proximity and being part of the Indo-European language family, languages of Eastern Europe – also knowns as Slavic languages – have not had an outsized effect on the English language. Words of Russian, Polish and Czech origin are relatively uncommon in English and tend to describe specific cultural practices of Eastern Europe as we saw with several languages of Asia. Still, there are a few patterns worth noting. The /k/ sound is often spelled with a k as seen in chastushka and promyshlennik, and the schwa sound is often spelled with an a as seen in purga.

Other Origins

Words from People or Places

Some words in the spelling bee come from the names of people or places; these are called eponyms. You will always be given the language or country of origin, which is helpful because it tells you what language patterns to apply.

For example, take the word *Llullaillaco*. Its origin is listed as a South American geographical name. Since Spanish is predominantly spoken in South America, you can infer that the /y/ sound is likely spelled with *II*, following Spanish patterns.

Words derived from a U.S. or American name are a bit trickier. Due to the country's diverse immigrant populations, the spelling can be unpredictable. In these cases, memorization is the best way to learn.

A fun way to study these is by looking at maps and researching interesting names of parks, bodies of water or cities. Then, check if they're listed in Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, and you might just discover a cool word!

Trademarks

Words that originate from a trademark can be tricky. There are no inherent patterns, as they are usually associated with a brand that was coined by an individual or group of people rather than a word that has passed through several languages. However, there are not too many words originating from trademarks in the English language. It is certainly worth exploring trademarks in Merriam Webster's Unabridged Dictionary via the Advanced Search function, and you'll get to learn about some pretty interesting products along the way!

Imitative Words

If you hear that a word's etymology is of imitative origin with no other hints given, it means the word entered the English language as a reference to a specific sound. Examples include *kazoo* or *zowie*. These words mimic natural sounds and typically follow English spelling conventions. Since these words were likely coined by English speakers to sound like what they describe, there are no consistent linguistic patterns, so just spell them the way they sound in English.



conclusion

This section is meant to be a jumping off point for your studies of language patterns and roots and give you some historical and linguistic context for how different languages interacted and influenced English. It is not meant to be comprehensive, and you'll likely discover new patterns and roots in further studies!

For influential languages like Latin, German, Greek and French, you'll begin to recognize their distinct roots and word patterns you learned from this section and your own exploration. For languages with a smaller influence, we recommend taking some time to explore Merriam-Webster Unabridged's Advanced Search function and trace the specific words they've contributed to English.

As you explore the vastness of the English language, remember each and every word carries a story shaped by centuries of cultural exchange. And when you're at the microphone, keep in mind that asking about the language of origin is perhaps the most useful question, guiding you with valuable clues about a word's history and spelling.

Use the space below to record some words from *Words of the Champions* that you'd like to explore further.



word stories, themed ists and aames





Every word has a story, and the order of its letters often tells us something about the road that it traveled to get to us. Some words go back thousands of years to ancient languages like Greek and Latin and Sanskrit; others have their roots in literature and historical events; and others might only have been invented recently – as a trademark, online slang, or to refer to some new bit of technology. And all of these words are still growing and changing as our language evolves. A new word in your friend's text message today might end up catching on and becoming a part of English! And years down the road, lexicographers will be hunting for the story of exactly how those letters came together to form a new word.

boondoggle

Definition:

an impracticable or useless project wasteful of time and money.



How did the silly-sounding word "boondoggle" come to be used for wasteful spending? Improbably enough, it all started with the Boy Scouts and their crafting projects. Credit goes to a scoutmaster from Rochester, New York, who taught his scouts in the late 1920s how to braid together brightly colored leather strips. The resulting bit of handiwork, which they called a "boondoggle," could hold a scout's neckerchief in place or could be worn like a hatband. When the Rochester scouts attended the World Scouting Jamboree in England in 1929, they presented "boondoggles" to the VIPs in attendance, and the craft caught on with scouts worldwide after that.

These colorful little doodads became national news in 1935 when New York City's Board of Aldermen held a hearing about relief programs in the city during the Great Depression. A witness explained that some people on relief were being taught to make "boondoggles" from leather and canvas. The aldermen thought this was a ridiculous waste of time, and newspapers in New York and around the country grabbed on to the story, putting "boondoggles" into headlines about the hearing.

Within months, the meaning of "boondoggle" shifted to become a kind of metaphor for useless work. Opponents of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies picked up on the word to criticize what they saw as wasteful government projects. That Rochester scoutmaster—who told reporters he came up with the word as a funny nickname for his newborn child—unwittingly created an enduring term in our political lexicon.

chortle

Definition:

a sound expressive of pleasure or exultation.



Lewis Carroll, the author of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and the sequel "Through the Looking-Glass," loved coming up with nonsensical words. "Through the Looking Glass," published in 1871, contains his most renowned work of nonsense: the poem "Jabberwocky," which begins with the lines, "'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe." When Alice comes across the poem, she is suitably puzzled, observing, "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are!"

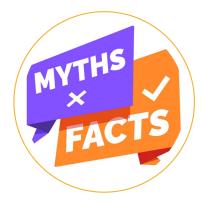
Carroll's nonsense was carefully constructed, and many of the "Jabberwocky" words were formed by blending preexisting terms. In the story, when Alice asks Humpty Dumpty about the meaning of "slithy," he explains, "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe' and 'slimy.' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." (A "portmanteau" in Carroll's time was a suitcase that opened into two sections.)

Later on in "Jabberwocky" is the line "He chortled in his joy." Humpty Dumpty doesn't tell Alice what "chortle" means, but she could probably figure out from context that it describes making a joyful sound halfway between a "chuckle" and a "snort." While most of the fanciful words in "Jabberwocky" didn't catch on more widely in the language, "chortle" is one that spread far beyond Carroll's imaginary world—along with "galumph," which combines "gallop" and "triumph." And people still refer to blended terms like "chortle" and "galumph" as "portmanteau" words, just as Humpty Dumpty explains in the story.

debunk

Definition:

to expose the sham pretensions or exaggerated claims of.



When shady claims need some fact-checking, we often call that "debunking." The word hit the mainstream in a 1923 novel by William E. Woodward called, appropriately enough, "Bunk." The protagonist of the book calls himself "a professional debunker," explaining, "Debunking is simply an intellectual deflation. It's the science of reality. That's my business." Woodward himself would go on to do some important historical debunking, writing a biography of George Washington in 1926 in which he dispelled such famous myths as Washington chopping down the cherry tree.

While Woodward is credited with popularizing the word "debunk," he was just adding the "de-" prefix to "bunk," a term for nonsense with roots in American usage going back about a century earlier. "Bunk" started off as a shortened form of "bunkum," which got its current meaning thanks to a long, windy speech that a North Carolina congressman named Felix Walker gave on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1820. He warned his colleagues, "I shall not be speaking to the House, but to Buncombe," referring to Buncombe County in his district back in North Carolina.

"Speaking to Buncombe" became political shorthand for pointless rhetoric, and that got boiled down to "speaking Bunkum." In the 1840s, "bunkum" came to be used on its own for insincere talk, further shortened to "bunk" by the end of the 19th century. So when Woodward wrote his novel "Bunk," people knew exactly what that meant—and how valuable a service "debunking" could be.

discombobulate

Definition:

to upset: to confuse: to disconcert.



The disconcerting word "discombobulate" sounds a bit like it comes from Latin, except for that peculiar "bob" syllable in the middle of it. In fact, that syllable is a clue that the word is really only posing as Latin, and it can be traced back to a time when Americans enjoyed coming up with funny-sounding words that achieved a comic effect by mimicking classical roots from Latin and Greek.

Back in 1825, during a time of great creativity in American English, an item in a Georgia newspaper referred to military plans getting "discomboberated." Later in that decade, the word appeared in humor columns as "discomboborated." In those forms, there was perhaps an echo of the word "bobbery," meaning "confusion" or "noise." After that, the word further transformed into "discombobulate," maintaining the silly "bob" element but changing its final syllables to "-ulate." That Latin-sounding ending may have been influenced by another bit of fake Latin that was popular at the time: "absquatulate," meaning "to abscond with."

If being "discombobulated" means to become upset or confused, then can you rectify the situation by becoming "recombobulated"? That light-hearted variation on the theme has been floating around since at least 1970, though it's not in the dictionary (yet). If you fly out of Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee, you might see a sign for the "Recombobulation Area," where you can recompose yourself after passing through airport security.

jeepney

Definition:

a small Philippine passenger bus converted from a small multipurpose motor vehicle equipped with four-wheel drive.



If you go to Manila, the capital of the Philippines, you'll immediately see a colorful form of transportation known as "jeepneys." Jeepneys are small buses that pack in a lot of passengers, decorated with vibrantly painted designs. The word "jeepney" combines two earlier words, "jeep" and "jitney," and that combination reveals some insights about the modern history of the Philippines and the use of English there.

The Southeast Asian island nation of the Philippines was a colony of Spain for a few centuries until the Spanish-American War in 1898, when the U.S. colonial period began. Americans and Filipinos fought side by side in the Pacific Theater of World War II, and during the war, the military used jeeps as multipurpose vehicles. The word "jeep" comes from "G.P.," an abbreviation of "general purpose," and it was influenced by a funny little character named "Eugene the Jeep" from the "Popeye" comic strip.

"Jitney" was originally an American word for a nickel, and small cheap buses were called "jitneys" because they cost five cents to ride. "Jitney" and "jeep" both entered Philippine English, and after World War II when the jeeps that were left behind got converted into minibuses, the two words were blended together to make the new word "jeepney." The linguistic creativity of coining the term matches the creativity of decorations on brightly painted jeepneys.

karaoke

Definition:

a device that plays instrumental accompaniments for a selection of songs to which the user sings along.



Japanese vocabulary includes many words derived from English, adapted to fit the language's sound patterns. Sometimes a word borrowed from English will get combined with a preexisting Japanese term. For instance, "tonkatsu" meaning "pork cutlet" takes the Japanese word "ton" for "pork" and adds "katsu," which comes from "katsuretsu," the Japanese version of English "cutlet."

"Karaoke" is another such Japanese-English hybrid. The first part, "kara," means "empty" in Japanese, and also serves as a root for "karate," as the art of self-defense literally means "empty hand." The second part, "oke," is a shortened form of the English word "orchestra," or "ökesutora," as it was adapted when entering the Japanese language. "Karaoke" began as a term in Japan's music industry for instrumental backing tapes used for singers when a full orchestra wasn't available, so instead they would be accompanied by an "empty orchestra."

Sing-along karaoke machines using pre-recorded tapes date back to the early 1970s in Japan, and they rapidly became a popular form of interactive entertainment in nightclubs. A decade later, karaoke was introduced to American nightlife, and the word came with it. Thus, an English-derived term that entered Japanese made the return trip to English, much like such words as "anime" (from "animation") and "cosplay" (from "costume play").

logodaedaly

Definition:

arbitrary or capricious coinage of words.



Though it's not a word that gets used much these days, "logodaedaly" is a useful term to describe the act of manipulating words, particularly the cleverness necessary to come up with new ones. The roots, from Greek by way of Latin, tell the story. The first part, "logo-," is more straightforward, as it goes back to "logos," Greek for "word," also seen in "logophile" (a lover of words), "logomachy" (a war of words), and "logorrhea" (excessive wordiness).

The second root, "daedaly," might look familiar if you know about characters from Greek mythology, and indeed the root is related to Daedalus, whose name literally means "the cunning one." Daedalus, according to myth, was a master craftsman and architect who built the labyrinth on Crete that housed the Minotaur. He also made the wings that allowed him and his son Icarus to fly, until Icarus flew too close to the sun and the wax melted.

Inspired by the Greeks, ancient Romans used "logodaedalus" for a person skilled in using or crafting words. Later, in English, "logodaedalist" took on the same meaning. Nathanial Bailey's 1727 dictionary defined "logodaedalist" as "an Inventer or Forger of new Words, and strange Terms." Thus "logodaedaly" (like Latin "logodaedalia" before it) could refer to making new words, or craftiness with language more generally.

mondegreen

Definition:

a word or phrase that results from a mishearing of something said or sung.



It's always handy when a word is an example of what it defines, and that's the case with "mondegreen." It refers to something misheard, typically from a song or verse, and the word itself is based on a funny lyrical misinterpretation.

In 1765, Bishop Thomas Percy published a collection of ballads and popular songs called "The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry." Percy's "Reliques" would circulate for centuries to come, and reciting verses from it became a popular pastime. One ballad called "The Bonnie Earl o' Moray," about the murder of a 16th-century Scottish earl, begins with these lines:

Ye Highlands and ye Lowlands, Oh where have you been? They have slain the Earl o' Moray And laid him on the green.

Flash-forward to 1954, when a writer named Sylvia Wright recounted in an essay about how her mother would read to her from Percy's "Reliques" when she was a child. But instead of "...and laid him on the green," Wright thought the line was "...and Lady Mondegreen"! There was no one actually named Lady Mondegreen, of course. But Wright decided that mishearings like this should be named "mondegreens," noting that people's misinterpretations are often "better than the original." Collecting mondegreens has continued to this day, with websites devoted to cataloguing such examples as "All the lonely Starbucks lovers" from Taylor Swift's "Blank Space." (She's really singing "Got a long list of ex-lovers.")

panjandrum

Definition: a powerful personage or

pretentious official.



If you had to guess where "panjandrum" came from, you might think it's made up of classical elements, possibly from the Greek prefix "pan-" meaning "all" and an ending that seems like it could be related in Latin to "conundrum," meaning a riddle or a puzzling question. But the real puzzler is that neither "conundrum" nor "panjandrum" are from Latin at all, but instead were playfully made up simply to sound like Latin. "Conundrum" found favor in the 1640s among students at Oxford University, probably as an in-joke related to their Latin curriculum.

"Panjandrum" entered the language about a century later, and it also started off as a joke. The story goes that around 1755 an Irish actor named Charles Macklin boasted that he could memorize any stretch of text after hearing it only once. His friend Samuel Foote rose to the challenge and presented Macklin with a string of nonsense, including this line: "And there were present the Picninnies, and the Joblillies, and the Garyulies and the Grand Panjandrum himself."

Foote's fanciful concoction would inspire later writers to imagine what a "panjandrum" might be. In 1825, the writer Maria Edgeworth included Foote's lines in a book of children's stories, and in 1885, the illustrator Randolph Caldecott published a picture book called "The Great Panjandrum Himself," repurposing Foote's nonsense. That helped solidify a meaning for the made-up word, understood to refer to a mysterious figure of great power, or else a pompous, self-important person in a position of authority.

shindig

Definition: a usually large often overly lavish party.



While "shindig" sounds like it was created simply by combining the words "shin" and "dig," perhaps suggesting a strenuous dance move one might attempt at a party, the actual origins are a bit more complicated than that.

Etymologists don't know for sure, but some scholars have suggested that the roots of "shindig" lie in a game similar to hockey that was played in Scotland and northern England in the 17th century. That game was called "shinny" or "shinty," which may have come from the cry of "shin ye" that players would make while wielding curved sticks. The game and its name made their way to North America, and to this day, Canadians use "shinny" to refer to informal pick-up hockey games played outdoors.

By the 19th century, Americans came up with another variation, "shindy," and that word got used not just for the hockey-style game but for more general amusements and merry-making. Newspapers in the 1840s began referring to social gatherings with lively dancing as "shindigs," taking the earlier word "shindy" and expanding it further. Since "dig" could refer to a thrusting gesture, it likely evoked dancing in which the feet vigorously push against the floor. Regardless of how those dances worked exactly, a "shindig" came to mean any big boisterous party. Nowadays a "shindig" doesn't even have to be that big or boisterous, as party hosts might invite you to a little shindig where no dancing is required.

themed lists

words about words

The title says it all.

- 1. manuscript
- linguistics
- 3. suffix
- epithet
- etymological
- plagiarism
- 7. polysyllabic

- 9. mondegreen
- 10. scripture
- haplography
- catachresis
- facundity
- 14. hyperbole
- 15. phraseology
- logodaedaly

horsin' around

Giddyup! This list is ready to bring out your equestrian side.

- carriage
- thoroughbred
- groom
- **Appaloosa**
- cavalcade
- 10. cavaletti
- centaur
- seton
- conestoga
- flehmen
- 12. sorrel

13. theriatrics

- remuda
- 14. latigo

hot or cold?

Cool things down or turn up the heat on your studying with these temperature-related words!

- 1. incinerate
- 13. sous vide
- combustible
- 14. refrigerant
- 3. cauterize
- 15. iceberg

glacier 4.

- 16. welding
- 5. calenture
- 17. purga
- 6. tramontana
- 18. anneal

- 7. broil
- 8. sangfroid
- 20. chamotte

ablation

9. simmer

- 21. diathermy
- 10. thawed

- 22. sous vide
- pasteurize
- 23. cryogenic
- 12. Euroclydon

buggin' out

Give yourself the creepy-crawlies with these words for and about insects.

- bumblebee
- 7. imago

- - chrysalis frass
- lousicide
- wasp
- spiracle
- cicada
- pulvillus

tetrapteran

- hibernaculum
- 12. multivoltine



express yourself

Tap into your creative side with these words all about the art of painting.

- Beaux arts
- portrait
- blottesque
- daubster
- Giorgionesque
- impasto 9.
- mediobrome
- 10. scenographer
- trompe l'oeil
- monochrome
- diptych



٠

there's a word for that?

Check out these words with such oddly specific definitions, you'll be surprised they even exist!

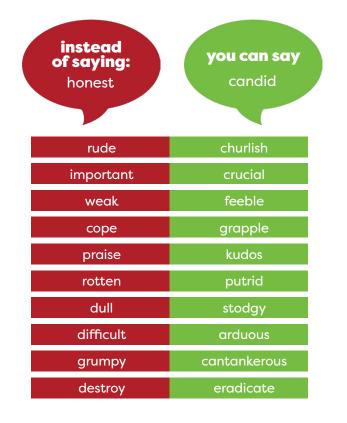
- coulrophobia
- vicenary
- incunabula
- turducken
- muktuk
- scumble
- 10. octonocular
- vexillologist

tomalley

- 11. ex libris
- zugzwang

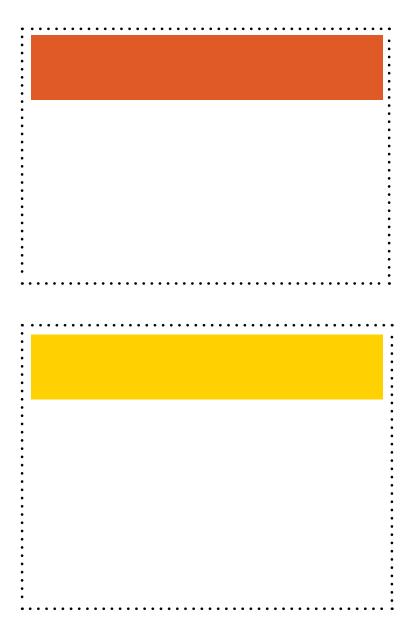
say this, not that

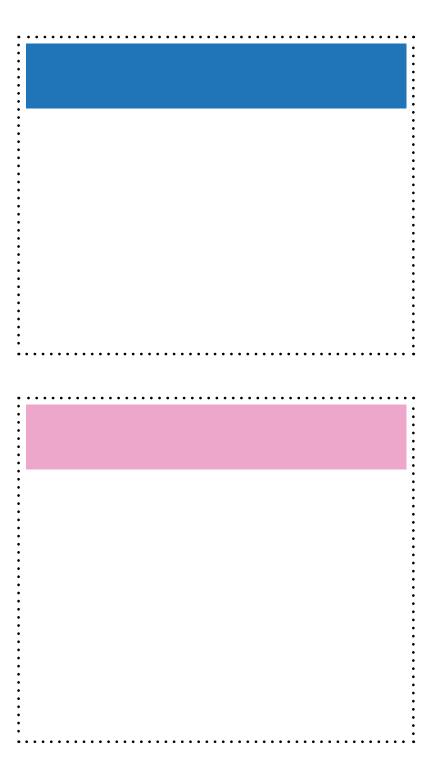
Here are some easy swaps you can make usings words from this list that are sure to spice up your everyday conversations.



Use this space to create your own themed word lists and to take notes about words with interesting stories.

Need help getting started? Here are some themes we spotted amongst the words in the previous pages: plant words, words from mythology, sports words, eponyms, and religious words.





games

snacktime scramble

Read the clue for each puzzle and then unscramble the letters to reveal the name of the food (each food is a word in this year's edition of Words of the Champions). Then, use the letters from the highlighted spaces to solve the final clue!

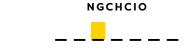
Popular at cookouts and holiday dinners, this meal can contain just about any ingredient, as long as it fits in a covered dish



makes a great dairy-free ice cream

RBOSTE

This frozen dessert made from fruit



The earliest forms of this pasta-

like dumpling dish have been

traced back to Ancient Rome, but the introduction of potatoes

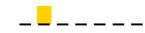
to its recipe in the 16th and 17th

centuries led to the rich comfort food many know and love today.



This cherrylike fruit is commonly used in smoothies, juices and supplements due it its richness in nutrients like vitamins C and A.

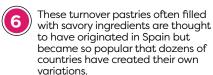
CALEORA



ESARLCSEO



Though its roots and leaves were once used as medicine during the Middle Ages, this smelly herb is now more commonly mixed with vinegar and served as a sauce.



final scramble

Now gather the highlighted letters from the clues to reveal your final scramble:

This "baby" version of a popular veggie is known for its long, thin stems and milder taste compared to its jolly green giant of a counterpart.

DHHESSRORAI

This marinated beef dish was once

primarily served to the wealthy and

socially elite, but can now be found

Korean fast-food restaurants.

prepared burger-style in many South





MEPAAAND

Though its name makes it sound

like it could be something out of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, this southeastern U.S. tree bears very real, edible fruit.

RYREEKLAFBR

answers on page 107



While this iconic, savory Japanese

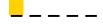


This flat, Italian bread can be served as a side or used as a sandwich bread—some even think it makes a great pizza crust since it shares many of the same ingredients.

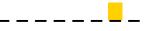
noodle dish can be dressed up and riffed on, you might find yourself eating lots of it right out of the

package when you get to college.





IACFCOCA





bee-hee-hee hunt

Can you find these words that the Bee calls "gigglers" for how fun and silly they are to pronounce?

ETEFYXWOWHEEDLE GLOMKEJKDEAM GTXHBACGCUPW BALSSAWNGHKFF EAIUBYCORIEKEPO SGAIFOMHU OEKKINOCUE ELCBGOHSC DRIFFRAFFSRQWNX CYTUTELAGEMYEKG toties quoties
festooned
riffraff
babouche
foozle
tutelage
okapi
buffoonery
munchkin
jingoism

waggery
wheedle
jankers
ginglymous
schnecken
pickerel
farouche
pongee
cudgel



digits in disguise

In 2025, the Scripps National Spelling Bee turned 100 years old! Did you know that there is a fancy word for that exact thing? You'll find it below! In fact, there are lots of words in English that communicate information about numbers.



You probably already know how many movies are in a **trilogy**, or how many musicians are in a **quartet**. All of this number information comes to the English language from Greek and Latin roots. Once you learn those roots, you'll be able to figure out a lot about words, even ones you don't already know. If you want to dive deeper into language patterns and Greek and Latin roots, be sure to check out our new resources beginning on page 62!

number	Greek root	Latin root
1	mono-	uni-
2	di-/dy-	bi-
3	tri-	tri-
4	tetra-	quadri-/quart-
7	hept-	sept-
8	oct-	oct-
10	dec-	dec-
12	dodeca-	duodec-
100	hecato-	cente-

Take a look at the definitions below – each of them has some number information in their definition. Next, look at the roots in the chart above and see if you can figure out which word from the word bank matches the root. (These words are all from the Two Bee section of Words of the Champions.) Then write the word into the right slot.

Let's do the first one together.

number	word	definition
1		"only having a single color"

Looking at the definition, we can tell we are looking for a word with a "one" root, because the definition refers to something only having one color. The Latin root is *uni*-, but there aren't any words in the bank that begin with "uni." The Greek root is "mono" – is there a word that starts with "mono?" Yes! "Monochrome!"

Now, do the rest on your own, checking the table of roots as you go. Some will come from Greek roots and others from Latin.

number	word	definition
1	MONOCHROME	only having a single color
2		differences between two individuals of the same type
3		a plant-eating dinosaur with three horns
4		a large muscle in the thigh with four parts
7		a group of seven
8		having eight eyes
10		occurring every ten years
12		a solid having twelve plane faces
100		a one-hundredth anniversary or its celebration

	word bank	
octonocular quadriceps	monochrome triceratops	centennial dodecahedron
heptad	dimorphism	decennial

Some English words use Greek roots and others Latin, even for the same number – for example, "bifurcate" (from Latin) means to separate into two parts. What other words can you think of that use these number roots?

0	
9 0	
0	
0	

answers on page 107

a few thank-yous

We'd like to thank the following individuals that helped bring this year's edition of Words of the Champions to life:

Molly Becker, Bee editorial director

Akshay Ahuja, Bee editorial manager

Emily Hare, Bee editorial specialist

Jacob Niswonger, Bee editorial specialist

Ben Zimmer, language columnist, linguist, lexicographer and Bee Word Panelist

Saketh Sundar, 2019 Bee Octochamp, current undergrad at Harvard University



About the

Scripps National Spelling Bee®

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program. By inspiring the exploration of words, the Scripps National Spelling Bee illuminates pathways to lifelong curiosity, celebrates academic achievement and enriches communities. Visit spellingbee.com for more information about the Bee and to check if your school is enrolled. The Scripps National Spelling Bee is administered on a not-for-profit basis by The E.W. Scripps Company.



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snacktime scramble answers: 1) CASSEROLE, 2) HORSERADISH, 3) BULGOGI, 4) RAMEN, 5) SORBET, 6) EMPANADA, 7) FARKLEBERRY, 8) FOCACCIA, 9) GNOCCHI, 10) ACEROLA, Final answer: BROCCOLINI

digits in disguise answers: 1) monochrome, 2) dimorphism, 3) triceratops, 4) quadriceps, 7) heptad, 8) octonocular, 10) decennial, 12) dodecahedron, 100) centennial





