

## Spelling Bee

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# GETTING READY FOR THE BEE

**THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF SIX ARTICLES TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE DAWN SPELLING BEE 2011.**

**W**ords are fascinating elements which, when put together, form sentences which can convey information, serve as promises, build or break relationships and form potent prayers which can move mountains. If used in the wrong context it can confuse the sanest of people. If misspelt, with even a slight nuance from here to there, it can transform the meaning of the message.

Thus, comes the need to spell a word properly.

English is an international language which serves to bridge the different nations of the world and its importance cannot be denied. "If one wishes to judge a student's intellect and level of literacy, improper or clumsily spelt words are the major turn-off when checking an essay," says a colleague I work with. She continues that the chatting culture has helped to make students' spellings even more atrocious than ever.

Even though Spelling Bees have existed for the last 150 years in some form or the other in the world, it was welcomed with open arms in Pakistan, when Dawn initiated the annual Dawn Spelling Bee in 2004. It provides a glorious opportunity for students to improve and advance the skills associated with good spelling habits and also to expand vocabulary and encourage accurate word usage and pronunciation.

These contests help inculcate poise in the participants and groom them to handle pressure. It serves as a commendable educational venture whereby the community interacts and shares a healthy spirit of learning.

As the Bee approaches, here is a checklist of what you should be prepared to do in order to participate in the contest.

### Knowing the Contest

Students need to register for The Dawn Spelling Bee through their schools. There are three age levels: 9-11, 12-14 and 15-17 years. In each age group, one team comprising three members can participate. In case the number of teams registered at the contest

exceeds a number that cannot be accommodated, the number of teams per age group is selected through a ballot.

According to the Dawn website, each school that registers is ensured representation in at least one age group if balloting takes place. Thus, it is smart for a school to register at the earliest to get a place in every group. Once the names are submitted, no changes are accepted in the names of the participants. There is a very strict rule as far as the age bracket is also concerned and participants are required to present their birth certificate at the time of registration.

It is in the participant's best interest to be thoroughly acquainted with the rules and format of the Bee. This information is available on the website and can also be accessed by talking to previous participants from your school.

### **The right word list**

Dawn provides all registered participants a properly bound word list with recommended words for each age level, complete with each word's pronunciation, meaning and usage. To get an edge, participants must take an initiative to get their hands on the word list available online and get them printed.

Several online sites provide students challenging spelling exercises to sharpen their skills. However, one thing which is a pre-requisite for a good speller is having an inherent love for the language. Being an avid reader and having command over the language will surely fuel your enthusiasm.

### **Origin of the words**

All internationally acclaimed word lists are divided into sections by language of origin. According to the Scripps National Spelling Bee study site, studying the language of origin enables you to learn and remember several important rules, tips and guidelines for successfully spelling words in English.

Ranging from Latin, French, Greek and even Arabic and Japanese – the colourful English language borrows generously from the influence of other languages. A good speller is always acquainted with the nuances of such words.

### **Setting a routine**

The most important thing for a participant to do is set a routine to prepare for the Bee. You cannot bank on revising words from your word list at the eleventh hour. Schools usually help their students prepare from the beginning of the academic year, so that they are well-prepared by the time they are registered for the contest.

Students already have a taxing routine at school and to take out more time to prepare for the Bee is something which requires a will of steel. This extra time has to be taken out in the early morning hours when one is fresh; or while commuting to

and from school in your school van or car. A few evening play hours may have to be sacrificed to revise your word list but all the effort is sure to bear fruit in the end.

## **A helping hand**

When tackling a task as difficult as a Bee, one must not hesitate to ask for help from one's family and friends. Your mother, father or siblings can constantly grill you on your word list. A special friend in your class can serve to constantly quiz you about the words you have revised that particular day.

Language teachers at school, who mentor the teams, play a crucial role in answering queries about etymology and pronunciation. Having a support system is crucial to help motivate and encourage the participant if he/she begins to tire of the constant effort.

## **Teamwork**

It is imperative that an excellent rapport exists between the three teammates comprising a team. Members of each team must be able to tackle the learning of the words in the list in an organised manner. They must also be quick to confer with each other and trust their partners while rehearsing for the Bee.

Drills can be done by creating lists of 10 or 20 spelling words according to a theme, and taking turns spelling the words with your teammates. It is only fair that all three partners put in the same amount of dedication and share an equal workload while preparing for the Bee.

The above pointers can serve to be a good start to your preparation for the Bee. Keep your eyes open for the upcoming articles which will help you prepare for the big day!

### **Reference:**

Dawn Young World, September 24, 2011