

SPELLING BEE: THE RIGHT WORD LIST

The word list is a speller's most important possession. A serious speller can be seen poring over his beloved list in all the free time that he can get his hands on. This is because any wise individual knows that for any contest, physical or mental, practice plays a pivotal role and constant perusal and revision of the right word list is a sure shot way to ensure a solid Spelling Bee preparation.

As mentioned in the first article, Dawn provides all registered participants with a book containing words for all the three age levels. There is a pronunciation guide at the beginning and each word is accompanied by its pronunciation, meaning and a sentence clarifying its proper usage.

Preparation for the Bee doesn't mean an undeterred rote-learning of the word list. It is imperative to 'know' your words inside-out. A good student is acquainted with the definition, part of speech, alternate pronunciation and etymology (origin) of the word.

Contest organisers encourage students to read newspapers by declaring that words in the contest might be selected from those which appear in the newspaper issues leading up to the contest.

Serious spellers are usually those who already are avid readers and can boast of a wide and colourful vocabulary. Serious spellers are also curious to surf the variety of websites available online to help them prepare.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee website is a must-view for all dedicated spellers. E. W. Scripps Company which has been organising the longest-running educational promotion in USA since 1925, published the Scripps annual study booklet called *Words of the Champions*, which offered 3,000 words. This collection evolved into *Paideia* (from the Greek word meaning education and culture), which ultimately contained more than 4,100 words. In 2006 came the shorter list, titled *Spell It!*

Available as a priceless treasure trove on the National Spelling Bee website is The Consolidated Word List of 24,000 words, also published by Scripps. This is an astounding collection for advanced spellers of all words used in the National Bee in USA as far back as 1950 demarcated into three sections: Words Appearing Infrequently, Words Appearing with Moderate Frequency, and Word Appearing Frequently.

Out of the many software and exercises on internet, here is an example of visual thesaurus where the audio of a word is played and its definition is displayed and the player has to guess the spelling. The site keeps score and aids to gauge the acumen of the speller.

To get into the desired momentum to prepare, many schools show its students movies which are spun around the theme of Spelling Bees. Some include the 1969 animated film *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, a 1986 TV-movie *The Girl Who Spelled Freedom* and the 1994 film *Billy Madison*. More recent endeavours are the 2001 novel *Bee Season* and its 2005 film adaptation, the 2002 Academy Award-nominated documentary *Spellbound*, and the 2006 film *Akeelah and the Bee*.

Episodes of several popular TV shows such as *Friends*, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, *Mr. Belvedere* and *Full House*, to name a few, have featured the theme of spelling bees.

It is no surprise that these contests are taken so seriously and prepared for with much fervour and determination. Spelling Bees are broadcast live on television in several countries, which is testimony to the tremendous interest it generates in not only the participants but also its umpteen viewers.