



Stellenbosch

UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
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WOW

Words Open Worlds
Amagama aVula iHlabathi
Woorde Open Wêrelde

SANLAM WOW SPELLING FESTIVAL

Rules and Format 2026



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SANLAM WOW SPELLING FESTIVAL 2026

1. Goal

- To promote educational fun through spelling and language skills.
- To improve learners' vocabulary, spelling, and language literacy.
- To cultivate a love for words and language.
- To strengthen learners' confidence in oral and written language use.

2. Categories in the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival

The **Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival** is offered in the following grades:

Nr.	Category	Short description
1	Grade 1-10	Afrikaans
2	Grade 4-9	English
3	Grade 5-8	IsiXhosa

3. Schematic Representation of Participation

Participation	Short description	Type of Spelling Festival	Dates
Level 1	Internal school competition	School Spelling Festival	Schools determine
Level 2	Schools in the same circuit participate	Circuit Spelling Festival	Term 3
Level 3	Circuit winners participate	District Spelling Festival	Term 3
Level 4	District winners participate	Provincial Spelling Festival	Term 3 & 4
Level 5	Provincial winners participate	National Spelling Festival	Term 4

4. Short Description of the Levels of Participation

4.1 Participation: Level 1 (Internal Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival at the school)

The coordinator of each participating school determines the format by which the best learner in each grade is identified. For example, some schools hold internal WOW Spelling Festivals, and those who score above 80% are selected as finalists. They then compete until the winner of each grade can be announced. Some schools present their WOW Spelling Festivals as large gala events, with a WOW Spelling Festival in a hall or area where the other learners act as the audience. However, it remains the school's choice how the winners in each grade are determined. (These are only ideas being shared; schools decide for themselves how participants are chosen.)

The grade winners of each school advance to the Circuit WOW Spelling Festival. The regions into which schools are divided are determined geographically, depending on the number of participating schools per region, as well as the classification according to the relevant Education Department.

4.2 Participation: Level 2 (Circuits / geographical areas)

The grade winners of each school, as determined by the Education Department according to geographical areas, qualify for participation in the Circuit WOW Spelling Festival. This phase brings together the strongest learners from different schools within a region for further competition and recognition. The regions into which schools are classified are determined geographically based on the number of participating schools per region, as well as the official classification of the relevant education department. This structure ensures an organized and fair flow of participants to the next level of the WOW Spelling Festival.

4.3 Participation: Level 3 (Districts / geographical areas)

The grade winners of each *Circuit WOW Spelling Festival* qualify for participation in the District WOW Spelling Festival. This phase brings together the top achievers from various circuits within an education district for further competition at a higher level. The education districts into which schools are classified are geographically determined according to the structures and guidelines of the relevant education department, which ensures that participation takes place in an organized and regionally-based manner.

4.4 Participation: Level 4 (Provincial / national provinces)

The grade winners of each *District WOW Spelling Festival* qualify for participation in the *Provincial WOW Spelling Festival*. This phase brings together the most outstanding learners

from different districts within a province to compete at a higher and more competitive level. The provinces into which schools are classified are determined nationally according to the structures of the education department, which ensures a standardized and consistent framework for participation.

All WOW Spelling Festivals are judged and conducted according to the **official guidelines and criteria** of the WOW Spelling Festival, to guarantee uniformity and fairness across all levels.

5. Time and Place

- WOW Spelling Festivals are presented in parallel sessions at the same venue to save time and to ensure consistency and fairness between the different grades. This structure also provides for a smooth and well-organized flow of the program.
- 90-120 minutes are allocated to each grade's WOW Spelling Festival, which provides sufficient time for thorough participation, judging, and the celebration of each learner's achievement.
- This duration per session may vary, depending on the number of participants and the dynamics of the specific group, to ensure that each session is optimally adjusted for quality participation and a fair judging process.

6. Language of Presentation of Spelling Festivals

WOW Spelling Festivals are presented as follows:

- All WOW Spelling Festivals for Grades 1 to 10 in **Afrikaans** are presented in Afrikaans.
- **English** WOW Spelling Festivals for Grades 4 to 9 are presented in English.
- **isiXhosa** WOW Spelling Festivals for Grades 5 to 8 are presented in isiXhosa.

This language distribution aims to promote inclusivity and offer learners the opportunity to perform optimally within their respective language levels, while maintaining consistency and fairness across all Sanlam WOW Spelling Festivals.

7. Role Players Involved in the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival

- **Schools:** All registered schools participate in the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival and serve as the primary structures within which preparation, organization, and participation take place.

- **Learners:** Participants from each grade who showcase their language skills, knowledge, and confidence, and form the core of the competition.
- **Educators:** Act as officials and judges and ensure that the WOW Spelling Festival is conducted and evaluated fairly, consistently, and according to the prescribed guidelines.
- **Organizers / Coordinators:** Responsible for the overall planning, logistics, and smooth execution of the WOW Spelling Festival at all levels, as well as the communication between schools, districts, and judges.

8. Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival: Documents

- **Registration forms** that are completed and stored electronically for administrative purposes and accurate participation management.
- **Format and rules** that clearly set out the structure, guidelines, and judging criteria of each WOW Spelling Festival.
- **Preparation packages** for grades 4 to 9 that equip learners and educators with the necessary material to prepare optimally.
- **Programmes** for each WOW Spelling Festival that structure the proceedings of the day, timing, and sessions.
- **Scorecards** with participant information managed by the WOW organizer for accurate scoring and administration.
- **Specific WOW Spelling Festival packages** for all grades compiled and distributed by the WOW organizer to ensure consistency.
- **Winners' lists** that officially document and communicate the outcomes of each level.
- **Equipment** for each WOW Spelling Festival provided and managed by the WOW organizer to ensure smooth execution.
- **Packages for officials** at each WOW Spelling Festival that include all necessary guidelines, rubrics, and administrative material and are handled by the WOW organizer.
- **Media and press releases** managed by the WOW organizer and content manager to ensure communication, visibility, and public relations.

9. Format

- Participants are divided into groups of 30 learners per grade to ensure a structured, fair, and well-managed competitive environment where every learner gets adequate opportunity to participate.
- Each participant receives a unique identification number according to the official scorecards set up during registration, so that accurate point allocation and monitoring are ensured throughout the competition.
- Words are read out loud clearly, slowly, and consistently by an announcer (educator) to optimize understanding and prevent any misunderstandings.
- Participants must immediately spell the word out loud as their answer, which tests their language proficiency, concentration, and confidence under time pressure.
- Answers must be given within 30 seconds, creating a balance between speed, accuracy, and spontaneous language application under pressure.
- A **GREEN card** indicates a correct answer and is followed by points allocation on the scorecard, while a **RED card** indicates an incorrect answer and means immediate elimination from the round to maintain the standard and fairness of the competition.
- A **YELLOW card** is used in case of disturbances, technical interruptions, or when a question needs to be repeated, so that all participants get equal and fair opportunities without prejudice.
- Top achievers are determined based on the highest number of correct answers, consistent performance across rounds, and the ability to perform accurately under time pressure, which ultimately leads to the identification of the strongest participants in each group.

10. Rules

1. Learners must spell each word clearly, correctly, and audibly, focusing on accuracy, pronunciation, and confidence.
2. Learners must first repeat the word to confirm understanding and then spell it systematically before giving their final answer.
3. Privileges include:
 - Learners may ask for the word to be repeated if it was not clearly heard.
 - Learners may self-correct their answer, provided it happens before the final answer is submitted.
 - Learners may request that another official read the word if there is any uncertainty or communication breakdowns.

11. Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival: Timeline

February	Launch of WOW Spelling Festival	WOW
March to May	Information and training sessions Registration opens Learning material available	WOW
June to July	Preparation packages for different grades made available and uploaded to the website. Information and training sessions. Registration closes. Learner preparation as possible.	Organisers
July to October	WOW Spelling Festival: respective levels. Provincial finals	WOW Organisers

12. Officials at the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival

Coordinator

- Each participating school must identify a coordinator for the project.
- The contact details of the coordinator must be sent to the WOW project for further communication.
- Coordinators organize the **WOW Spelling Festival** at schools and often serve on the organizing committees within the circuit, district, or provincial **WOW Spelling Festival** (see the Checklist for Coordinators).

Judges (J)

- Educators who will serve as independent judges are submitted by the schools and placed by the WOW organizer.
- Three judges per **WOW Spelling Festival** per grade must be appointed.
- Preferably specialists / subject experts within the grade being judged.
- Judges must be thoroughly aware of the format and rules.

Announcer (AN)

- One announcer per **WOW Spelling Festival** per grade must be appointed.
- Preferably experts who can clearly read out words (or questions) in Afrikaans.
- Announcers must be able to interact at the child's level and speak / pronounce words and numbers clearly.

- The announcer reads the word/question once, after which participants must answer verbally within the specified time limit.
- Pronunciation will be discussed with announcers beforehand, especially for longer words or numbers that need to be read aloud.
- Announcers must be thoroughly aware of the format and rules.
- Announcers receive lists for the **WOW Spelling Festival** in advance for preparation.

Manager (M)

- One manager per **WOW Spelling Festival** per phase must be appointed.
- The regional coordinator is often the ideal person.
- Preferably experts, as decisive judgment is frequently required.
- Managers must be thoroughly aware of the format and rules.
- Handles any inquiries / ambiguities / disputes / disciplinary issues.
- Must ensure that participants, judges, and announcers are prepared for everything.
- Ensures that the stage and the first row of seats in the audience are reserved.
- The **WOW Spelling Festival** manager will be available at all times for any inquiries.

Timekeeper (TK)

- One timekeeper per **WOW Spelling Festival** per phase must be appointed.
- Must use an extremely reliable stopwatch (such as a mobile phone).
- The timekeeper starts the stopwatch immediately after the announcer finishes stating the word/question.
- Only the **WOW Spelling Festival** manager may give an indication to stop the clock as circumstances require (e.g., if there are disturbances in the venue or an official is not ready).
- The timekeeper rings the bell as soon as a participant exceeds their allotted time, resulting in elimination.
- The timekeeper must be thoroughly aware of the format and rules.

Assistants (AST)

- One or more assistants may be appointed per **WOW Spelling Festival**, depending on group size and logistical needs of the session.
- Assistants support the **WOW Spelling Festival** manager and other officials with administrative and practical tasks throughout the competition.
- Responsibilities include distributing and collecting scorecards, participant lists, and other documentation as needed.

- Assistants help organize participants into their groups and ensure they are seated correctly according to the predetermined seating arrangement.
- They provide support during technical or logistical interruptions to maintain program flow.
- Assistants also help with general venue management, such as setting up materials, controlling movement in the venue, and assisting timekeepers or recorders where necessary.
- They must be thoroughly familiar with the format and rules of the WOW Spelling Festival to provide effective support.

Recorder (REC)

- Conducts observations inside the venue.
- Makes comprehensive notes of errors made by participants.
- These notes are used to improve processes as well as address inquiries.

Participants

- Participants must first repeat each word, spell it clearly and correctly, and conclude their answer by saying **"THE WORD"**.
- Participants may ask for a word to be repeated and may self-correct, provided this occurs before **concluding with "THE WORD" again**.
- Participants must remain in their assigned places at all times, await their turn, and show respect to fellow participants, officials, and the overall proceeding of the WOW Spelling Festival.

13. Schematic Representation – Layout of the Spelling Festival Venue

