

54th Scripps National Spelling Bee

The **54th Scripps National Spelling Bee** was held in Washington, D.C. at the Capital Hilton on June 3–4, 1981, sponsored by the E.W. Scripps Company.

The winner was 13-year-old Paige Pipkin of El Paso, Texas, who had placed second in the prior year's bee.^{[2][3][4]} 12-year-old Jason Johnson Jr. of St. Joseph, Michigan placed second, missing "Philippic". Pipkin spelled that word correctly followed by "sarcophagus" for the win. Pipkin had earlier missed "vitrine" but Johnson also missed it.^[3] Third-place went to 13 year old Danielle Marie Spinelli of Staunton, Virginia, who missed "polyonymous".^[5]

There were 120 spellers this year, and a total of 571 words were used. 46 spellers made it to the second day. Round 4 on day one was especially harsh on the contestants, knocking out 44 spellers on 90 words. The final rounds were completed shortly before noon on June 4. Alex Cameron was the official pronouncer for the first time, replacing Richard R. Baker, who had retired.^{[1][5]} The top prize was \$1,000, followed by \$500 for second and \$250 for third. The next five spellers each received \$100.^[6]

Pipkin later joined the staff of the Bee,^[7] and was named its executive director (under her married name Paige Kimble) in 2013.^[8]

References

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54th Scripps National Spelling Bee



The Capital Hilton, site of the 54th National Spelling Bee

Date	June 3–4, 1981
Location	The Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. ^[1]
Winner	Paige Pipkin
Age	13
Residence	Denver, Colorado
Sponsor	<i>El Paso Herald-Post</i>
Sponsor location	El Paso, Texas
Winning word	sarcophagus
No. of contestants	120
Pronouncer	Alex Cameron (first time as chief pronouncer)
Preceded by	53rd Scripps National Spelling Bee
Followed by	55th Scripps National Spelling Bee

7. (31 May 1989). Spelling Bee (<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=860&dat=19890531&id=68w0AAAAIBAJ&sjid=DI8DAAAAIBAJ&pg=6750,4321223&hl=en>), *Ellensburg Daily Record* (UPI)
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