

**2017 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE**  
**SPELLERS CONTINUING IN THE FINALS**

**Speller No. 264, Ananya Vinay**

*The Fresno Bee*, Fresno, California  
Age 12, 6th grade  
School: Fugman Elementary School  
Hometown: Fresno, California, United States

Ananya is a natural speller and an avid reader. In her free time, she imagines stories that she has not written down yet. She loves watching movies and playing with her younger brother, although not necessarily in that order! She considers spelling a sport and actually does enjoy spelling words like "dghaisa," which is pronounced "d?s?(TM)." Her favorite sport is basketball, and she is a Golden State Warriors fan. Last year, Ananya volunteered for the Fresno Community Food Bank, and she and her friends organized a food drive for Thanksgiving. Ananya competed in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

SPELLING CHAMP

**Speller No. 235, Rohan Rajeev**

*The Oklahoman*, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: Oklahoma Christian School  
Hometown: Edmond, Oklahoma, United States of America

Rohan wants to thank Jesus Christ for giving him this platform and opportunity. Rohan has been competing in spelling bees since the age of eight. Outside of spelling, he enjoys playing the piano, particularly pieces by Beethoven, and competing in chess tournaments. He also loves to play soccer at a local league. Watching soccer is one the many things Rohan enjoys doing in his free time, and Arsenal is his favorite soccer club. He also loves to watch NBA games, especially when his favorite team, the Oklahoma City Thunder, is playing. Rohan hopes to study neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University and become a neurologist.

**Speller No. 75, Mira Dedhia**

Commonwealth Edison, Chicago, Illinois  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: McClure Junior High School  
Hometown: Western Springs, Illinois, United States

Mira is excited to return to the Scripps National Spelling Bee this year! She loves spelling and participating in spelling bees. In addition to spelling, she has participated in extracurriculars such as math club and lacrosse. Her favorite subject is math. Mira has played piano for almost seven years, and she enjoys learning a variety of new songs, including classical as well as modern and pop music. She is currently learning some songs by Coldplay and John Legend. Mira competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2016, and her mother, Lekshmi Nair, competed in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

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**Speller No. 254, Shourav Dasari**

Houston Public Media, Houston, Texas  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: McCullough Junior High School  
Hometown: Spring, Texas, USA

Shourav has been participating in spelling bees since he was in 2nd grade. He enjoys playing tennis in his free time, as well as watching football or basketball. His favorite basketball player is James Harden. Shourav enjoys playing the violin for his school's orchestra. He participated in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2016, where he tied for 11th place. Shourav's older sister, Shobha, competed in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

**Speller No. 143, Tejas Muthusamy**

*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: George H. Moody Middle School  
Hometown: Glen Allen, Virginia, United States

Tejas loves learning about governments and cultures of various countries around the world. He aspires to use this knowledge to become a diplomat or a politician. Outside of politics and geography, Tejas enjoys studying English and history in school. Tejas also loves reading, and his favorite author is Ayn Rand due to her unique perspective. His favorite book is *Animal Farm*, and his favorite movie is *Remember the Titans*. Tejas has competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee three times previously: in 2014 he tied for 8th place, in 2015 he tied for 7th place, and he tied for 22nd place in 2016.

**Speller No. 200, Raksheet Kota**

Houston Public Media, Houston, Texas  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: Beckendorff Junior High School  
Hometown: Katy, Texas, USA

Raksheet is deeply involved in many school activities, including Mathcounts, American Mathematics Competitions, Science Bowl and Science Olympiad. Raksheet and his twin sister, Rakshita, started a math and science club at their elementary school to prepare students for educational competitions. Some of his favorite movies are the *Batman* trilogy and the *Mission: Impossible* movies. He also enjoys playing tennis and video games.

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**Speller No. 36, Erin Howard**

Adventure Travel, Birmingham, Alabama  
Age 12, 6th grade  
School: Mountain Gap P-8 School  
Hometown: Huntsville, Alabama, United States

Erin loves all kinds of art. She plays both the trombone and the piano, draws and sketches, and writes short stories. In addition, she reads books from several different genres voraciously, but her favorites are science fiction and fantasy. Erin and her friends enjoy playing Undertale, an adventure role-playing game, and listening (or rather, shout-singing along) to the soundtrack of Hamilton: An American Musical. She loves to watch Doctor Who, the longest-running sci-fi TV show ever, and her favorite Doctor is the 12th one. She would like to attend Harvard University and become a pediatrician. Erin tied for 22nd place in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

**Speller No. 114, Shrinidhi Gopal**

*East Bay Times*, Walnut Creek, California  
Age 13, 8th grade  
School: Gale Ranch Middle School  
Hometown: San Ramon, California, USA

Shrinidhi loves spelling and geography and puts a lot of effort into learning new words/facts every day. In her free time, she likes to read books such as the Kiki Strike series and classics such as Anne of Green Gables and The Swiss Family Robinson. Shrinidhi also enjoys playing the piano and practicing Carnatic vocal music. She eventually wants to pursue a career in medicine.

**Speller No. 210, Naysa Modi**

*The News-Star*, Monroe, Louisiana  
Age 11, 6th grade  
School: River Oaks School  
Hometown: Monroe, Louisiana, United States

Naysa enjoys being in the limelight! She has performed stand-up comedy, shayaris (Hindi and Urdu poetry), dancing, and, of course, spelling. Naysa is also very physically active. She is a blue belt in taekwon do, and is part of her school's track team. She has also been a voracious reader since kindergarten. By 2nd grade, Naysa had read many book series, including the entire Harry Potter Series. She is working to get accepted into Harvard University so she can study medical science there. Naysa dreams of becoming a brain surgeon and experimenting with switching human brains. She admires Emma Watson and gymnast Simone Biles for their dedication to their work. Naysa previously participated in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2015 (tied for 50th place) and 2016 (tied for 46th place).

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**Speller No. 259, Alex Iyer**

*San Antonio Express-News*, San Antonio, Texas  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: Geneva School of Boerne  
Hometown: San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alex loves music because it helps him to relax while studying. He considers himself a cinephile, and he loves movies. Alex is a black belt, and he plays tennis and the cello. He is the president of his school's National Junior Honor Society. Alex earned third place in his school's oratory competition for Martin Luther King's Acceptance of Nobel Prize speech. He has enjoyed numerous travel adventures with his family, including journeying to the Dunn's River Falls, ziplining in Jamaica, parasailing in Florida, and relaxing at the beach in Cozumel, Mexico. Alex tied for 22nd place in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

SPELLING CHAMP

**Speller No. 278, Shruthika Padhy**

Rosa International Middle School, Cherry Hill, New Jersey  
Age 11, 6th grade  
School: Rosa International Middle School  
Hometown: Cherry Hill, New Jersey, United States of America

Shruthika is a voracious reader, and she also loves solving math problems. She is quite passionate about learning Indian classical music, and she sings in her school's chorus and plays the piano and flute. She is a member of her local swim team, runs cross country, and does track and field, as well as other sports in the summer. During her leisure, Shruthika likes to read books, listen to music, and watch basketball, football, and her favorite TV show, Shark Tank. Shruthika tied for 22nd place in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee, and she hopes to improve her place this year.

**Speller No. 27, Rohan Sachdev**

PAGE of Wake County, Raleigh, North Carolina  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: Carnage Magnet Middle School  
Hometown: Cary, North Carolina, United States

Rohan is a very motivated tennis player, and he considers the sport his true passion. Rohan travels all over the United States to play in the southern and national-level tournaments. He plays every match with focus, grit and perseverance. He is the number one tennis player in the state of North Carolina for 8th graders. Rohan aspires to be like tennis icon Roger Federer, who is his role model. Rohan tied for 39th place in the 2015 Scripps National Spelling Bee, and his brother Rahul competed in 2016.

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**Speller No. 167, Sreeniketh Vogoti**

*The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, Florida

Age 14, 8th grade

School: Fruit Cove Middle School

Hometown: Saint Johns, Florida, United States of America

Sreeniketh is fascinated with languages, and he is currently learning Spanish and Esperanto. In his spare time, Sreeniketh explores an assortment of topics, from philosophy to psychology, history to calculus. Tennis, chess and music are a few avocations he often finds himself indulging in for leisure. Sreeniketh plays the clarinet in his school band, and was selected for his county's honor band. Sreeniketh is enthusiastic about both math and science due to their logical, straightforward nature. He aspires to study at an Ivy League college such as Princeton University. Sreeniketh participated in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee (tied for 7th).

SPELLING CHAMP

**Speller No. 187, Saketh Sundar**

Howard County Library, Columbia, Maryland

Age 11, 6th grade

School: Mayfield Woods Middle School

Hometown: Elkridge, Maryland, United States of America

Saketh has been good at math from a young age and attends an accelerated gifted and talented math program. This year Saketh received an award for high honors from the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University. Saketh plays the violin and is part of his school's orchestra. He is part of the student government association at his school, and he is also involved in news team, film, coding and debate clubs. Saketh likes watching football, especially his favorite team, the Baltimore Ravens. Justin Tucker is his favorite player because he is very accurate. Saketh wants to be a gastroenterologist when he grows up because he wants to cure people with stomach disorders. Saketh participated in the 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

**Speller No. 191, Alice Liu**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, St. Louis, Missouri

Age 10, 5th grade

School: Wild Horse Elementary School

Hometown: Chesterfield, Missouri, United States of America

Alice is rarely without a smile on her face. She not only enjoys spelling but also is talented with math. Alice was a state champion and represented Missouri at a national math contest in 2016, and she hopes to participate this year, too. During her free time, she likes to read, play basketball, dance and swim. Alice also loves to play piano and violin. When she gets the chance, she enjoys going on vacations, especially to beaches. She aspires to become a hematologist and help cure kids with leukemia and blood-related diseases.

**TheSpellingChamp.com**

**THE 2017 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE**  
**CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS**

THURSDAY, MAY 26

8:00 P.M.

LIVE ON ESPN

