

## The New York Times Spelling Bee

### Background

The New York Times' Spelling Bee, a word game that challenges players to construct as many words as they can with pre-selected letters, has garnered a significant amount of popularity since its 2018 online debut. With September approaching, the NYT noted more people were returning to the office and with students going back to school, they had a prime opportunity to drive more awareness and sign-ups for their Spelling Bee.

### Objective

#### Build General Awareness.

Recognizing a "perfect storm" with commuters returning to office and students going back to school, the NYT saw an opportunity to launch a first-of-its-kind experiential OOH campaign to drive awareness and engagement for their Spelling Bee.

### Strategy

The NYT launched a multifaceted approach including a DOOH "subway takeover" campaign that invited commuters to play the Spelling Bee together as they left the office with a new puzzle rotating daily to mimic the actual on-site game experience in subway cars. Knowing that the MTA average in subway dwell time is 30 minutes, the NYT optimized this opportunity by encouraging commuters to play Spelling Bee through a QR code with the [nytimes.com/beetime](https://www.nytimes.com/beetime) vanity URL on the OOH ads. The NYT also partnered with the iconic Bravo host Andy Cohen and other celebrities and influencers to raise campaign awareness. Lastly, the NYT went big with a social campaign that encouraged Spelling Bee fans to post their Queen Bee or Genius Spelling Bee scores to benefit the First Book charity for up to \$50,000.

### Plan Details

**Market:** New York City, New York

**Flight Dates:** 09/05/22 - 10/02/22

**OOH Formats:** New York Subway Digital Liveboards; Digital Livecard MAX; Long Island Railroad Digital Livecards

**Target Audience:** People between the ages of 18 to 44

**Target Campaign Impressions:** 21,459,937

**Budget:** \$10,000 or larger

### Results

The first-of-its-kind experiential OOH campaign was successful. Of traffic to the NYT Games, 81% started playing Spelling Bee, and 76% played until they reached a paywall that asked them to subscribe to continue playing. Further, 6.2% registered or subscribed to the Spelling Bee.

The NYT's celebrity partnerships and social campaigns generated buzzworthy results with more than 300 qualifying social posts benefitting First Book. Many users repeatedly posted their scores and discussed the Spelling Bee. Overall, the NYT experienced a 5.2% increase in earned conversation reach and 3.4% increase in word of mouth and press conversations, including coverage in pop culture publications covering the NYT Spelling Bee campaign for the first time.

Andy Cohen's campaign specifically drove 9% of the paid social conversion with Cohen saying, "as a New Yorker and a proud member of the #hivemind, the New York Times Games Spelling Bee is my daily ritual and one of the few productive ways I spend time on my phone. I'll be hitting the subway to play with my fellow puzzle people while introducing more people to the joy of this game."

