

# Game Rules

## World English-Language Scrabble® Players' Association (WESPA)



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## **Preamble**

These Rules are for use in English-language word game tournaments. They establish international standards designed to facilitate play between players whose domestic norms may differ. These Rules apply at the World Championship and at tournaments organised and run by WESPA. Their use is also strongly encouraged at all other tournaments with a significant degree of international participation.

In the event of incompleteness or ambiguity in these Rules, the Tournament Director's decision binds the players. The Tournament Director should report such decisions to the WESPA Rules Committee. WESPA is the sole body with power to review the decisions of the Tournament Director. Players' appeal rights are set out in Rule 6.5 (Right of Appeal).

## **Part 1 – Equipment**

### **1.1 Standard Rules**

- (a) These Rules apply in addition to the standard game rules ('Standard Rules'). The Standard Rules, which may change from time to time, are set out in Appendix 1.
- (b) These Rules override the Standard Rules in the event of a discrepancy. Moreover:
  - (i) games played under these Rules must be one on one, with both players keeping score; and
  - (ii) games played under these Rules do not end if both players pass twice in succession.

### **1.2 Word Source**

- (a) The official word source, listed in Appendix 2, is endorsed by WESPA in consultation with the WESPA Dictionary Committee. It may change from time to time.
- (b) Tournaments played under these Rules must not deviate from the official word source.

### **1.3 The Game Set**

#### **1.3.1 Tile Distribution**

Both players should check before play that the set contains the correct number and distribution of tiles. Either player may request such a check. Once the game starts, corrections must not be made.

#### **1.3.2 The Tiles**

- (a) Tiles that best achieve both tactile and visual indistinguishability are preferred.
- (b) Any distinguishing marks (such as stickers) must be attached uniformly across the complete set of tiles.
- (c) Sets free from tactile or visible irregularities caused by detachment from plastic moulding (especially on the top edges of tiles) are preferred.

### **1.3.3 The Board**

Ordered by descending importance, the hierarchy of preferred attributes is:

- (a) boards with edges measuring 33-35cm, which are rigid or can be made rigid for play;
- (b) boards with indentations or ridges to prevent tiles from sliding;
- (c) boards that do not obstruct a player's view of the opponent's rack;
- (d) boards mounted on turntables that revolve with minimal disturbance to items on the playing table;
- (e) boards with a non-reflective surface.

### **1.3.4 Other Equipment**

- (a) Players may use any rack they wish. However, the number of tiles on the rack must be clearly visible to the opponent.
- (b) Tile bags must comfortably accommodate (simultaneously) the set of 100 tiles and a player's hand.

### **1.3.5 State of Equipment**

All equipment in the game set must be in an acceptable state of repair. This includes:

- (a) for tiles: clean, legible, not overly worn, hygienic;
- (b) for boards: smoothly rotating (if applicable), free from excessively distracting background designs;
- (c) for tile bags: opaque, not overly worn, of an appropriate size and design.

### **1.3.6 Varying the Equipment**

Local exigency may at times require departure from the provisions in Rules 1.3.2-1.3.5. Tournament organisers should, however, make every effort to avoid this.

### **1.3.7 Disputes**

The Tournament Director will resolve any disputes concerning equipment in the game set.

## **1.4 The Timer**

### **1.4.1 Checking the Timer**

- (a) Both players should check before play that the timer is set correctly and working properly.
- (b) If a problem with the timer arises during play, the Tournament Director must be notified, and may adjust the time remaining for either player or both players.

### **1.4.2 Precedence**

If there is a choice of timers, the order of precedence is:

- (a) digital timers with the following standard features:
  - (i) countdown from the specified time limit to 00.00,
  - (ii) display of overtime in minutes and seconds in a count-up fashion (digital timers incapable of measuring overtime are unsuitable), and
  - (iii) neutralisation through the depression of a central button;
- (b) digital timers lacking one or more standard features;
- (c) digital timers capable only of counting up from 00.00;
- (d) analogue chess clocks.

Other timing devices are not suitable.

### **1.4.3 Neutralisation of the Timer**

In these Rules, neutralising a timer means:

- (a) for a digital timer: depressing a button to stop the countdown of both digital displays;
- (b) for an analogue chess clock: depressing both clock buttons such that they are balanced and neither player's clock is ticking.

### **1.4.4 Use of Timer Mandatory**

The use of a timer is mandatory for all games played under these Rules.

### **1.4.5 Timer Position**

The non-starting player may choose the position of the timer.

## **1.5 Written Aids**

### **1.5.1 Score Sheets**

Players may use either their own score sheets or those supplied by the tournament organisers. Score sheets may incorporate tile tracking lists.

### **1.5.2 Separate Tile Tracking Lists**

Players may prepare separate tile tracking lists before a game, for use in addition to their score sheets. Such lists must not be designed as memory aids.

### **1.5.3 Acceptable Materials**

The only visible papers allowed in the playing area are blank paper, contestant scorecards, blank and current game score sheets, tile tracking lists, challenge slips, blank designation slips and result sheets. All other papers must be kept invisible and must not be referred to during play. Records of previously played games must be taped or clipped together.

### **1.5.4 Writing During the Game**

There are no restrictions on what may be written on paper once the game begins.



## **Part 2 – Starting the Game**

### **2.1 Determining Who Starts**

- (a) If no system to predetermine starts is in use, the players draw a tile each. The player whose tile is closest to the beginning of the alphabet, with a blank preceding an A, starts the game. In the event of a tie, each player draws again. No tiles are returned



to the bag until the starter is decided. Once a starter is decided, the non-starter should return all tiles to the bag.

- (b) Systems to predetermine starts must aim to ensure that all players in a tournament start approximately half their games. Such systems may include:
  - (i) assignment of the start in each game by a tournament software program;
  - (ii) 'self-balancing starts', in which the players compare their start/reply records before each game. If one player has hitherto started fewer games than his or her opponent, that player starts. If the records are equal, the standard tile-drawing procedure is used.
- (c) When self-balancing starts are in use, any player who knowingly misrepresents his or her start/reply record is considered to be cheating.

## **2.2 Starting the Timer**

The timer of the player going first may be started once that player has removed a tile from the bag.

## **2.3 Late Arrivals**

### **2.3.1 Duty to be Present**

- (a) All players must arrive by the scheduled starting time for each round.
- (b) A player has arrived only when he or she is seated at the playing table ready to commence play immediately.

### **2.3.2 Both Players Absent**

If neither player arrives by the scheduled starting time, the Tournament Director must:

- (a) exercising due discretion, start the timer to be used for the game;
- (b) when the first player arrives, whether or not that player is due to play first, start the second side of the timer. The first player will be assigned the time showing on the first side of the timer;
- (c) when the second player arrives, neutralise the timer. The second player will be assigned the time showing on the second side of the timer minus the time already deducted from the first player.

The game then proceeds as usual. No tiles may be drawn until both players arrive.

### **2.3.3 One Player Absent**

If one player fails to arrive by the scheduled starting time, the Tournament Director must:

- (a) exercising due discretion, start the late player's side of the timer;
- (b) when the late player arrives, neutralise the timer. The player will be assigned the time showing on his or her side.

The game then proceeds as usual. No tiles may be drawn until both players arrive.

### **2.3.4 Optional Forfeiture due to Lateness**

A late player whose timer has been started may elect to forfeit the game if his or her assigned game time, as calculated under Rule 2.3.2 or 2.3.3, is less than 15 minutes.

### **2.3.5 Compulsory Forfeiture due to Lateness**

A player who fails to arrive before his or her assigned game time expires forfeits that game.

### **2.3.6 Consequences of Forfeiture due to Lateness**

- (a) A game forfeited under Rule 2.3.4 or 2.3.5 will count as a win for the opponent by a margin of 75 points. The Tournament Director may increase this margin if strategic lateness is suspected.
- (b) A game forfeited under Rule 2.3.4 or 2.3.5 will not count towards player ratings for the tournament.

## **2.4 Shuffling Tiles**

Each player may shuffle the tiles within the tile bag before play.

## **2.5 Special Needs**

- (a) Players must notify their opponents and the Tournament Director of any special circumstances, such as physical impediments, that may affect their capacity to comply with any procedures set out in these Rules.
- (b) The Tournament Director will determine alternative acceptable procedures that are within the capacity of such players.



## **Part 3 – The Turn**

### **3.1 Playing a Word**

#### **3.1.1 Elements of the Turn**

To complete a turn by playing a word, a player must, in this order:

- (a) place the tiles on the board;
- (b) announce the score for the turn (this may be computed aloud quietly);
- (c) press the timer to start the opponent's time running;
- (d) record the score for the turn and the cumulative score in the normal space on his or her score sheet;
- (e) draw replacement tiles;
- (f) tile track (if desired).

### **3.1.2 Completing Turns When No Tiles Remain**

If no tiles remain to be drawn, the writing of scores and cumulative scores is not a required element in completing a turn.

### **3.1.3 Establishing Orientation**

- (a) The first accepted turn determines the game's orientation with respect to the board's bonus square lettering. If this turn as played does not conform to the natural orientation of the bonus square lettering, it may be placed in the equivalent conforming position at any time before the next turn is completed.
- (b) The orientation of further turns is determined by the orientation of the majority of the tiles played, or the natural orientation of the board in the case of an equal split. Misoriented turns may be challenged (see Rule 3.10.16 (Challenging Word Placement)).

## **3.2 Exchanging Tiles**

### **3.2.1 Elements of the Exchange**

To complete a turn by exchanging tiles, a player must, in this order:

- (a) check that the bag contains at least seven tiles;
- (b) announce the exchange and the number of tiles to be exchanged;
- (c) place the unwanted tiles face down on the table;
- (d) press the timer to start the opponent's time running;
- (e) record the exchange on his or her score sheet;
- (f) draw the required number of replacement tiles, keeping them separate from the unwanted tiles;
- (g) return the unwanted tiles to the bag;
- (h) place the replacement tiles on the rack.

### **3.2.2 Exchange to Score Zero**

An exchange of tiles scores zero points.

## **3.3 Passing**

To complete a turn by passing, a player must, in this order:

- (a) announce the pass;
- (b) press the timer to start the opponent's time running;
- (c) record the pass on his or her score sheet.

## **3.4 Significance of Pressing Timer**

### **3.4.1 Pressing Timer Concludes Deliberation**

- (a) By pressing the timer in the course of playing a word, exchanging or passing, a player indicates a final choice of move. The move may not be changed after this act.
- (b) A player may alter his or her choice of move at any point before pressing the timer.
- (c) A player may indicate a final choice of move only by pressing the timer.
- (d) By pressing the timer, a player confers on the opponent an immediate right to challenge the turn.

### **3.4.2 Elements Overlapping with Opponent's Next Turn**

- (a) By pressing the timer in the course of playing a word, exchanging or passing, a player starts the opponent's next turn. Certain elements of the original turn may therefore overlap with elements of the opponent's next turn.
- (b) If a player tile tracks before drawing replacement tiles, and the opponent is thereby delayed from drawing or counting tiles, the opponent may petition the Tournament Director for extra playing time.
- (c) The Tournament Director will resolve any disputes concerning misordered turns. See also Rule 3.10.4 (Challenging an Improperly Ordered Turn).

## **3.5 Keeping Score**

- (a) Until the bag is empty, both players must promptly record in the normal spaces on their score sheets the score for each turn and the cumulative scores.
- (b) Once the bag is empty, all further move scores and cumulative scores may be written after the timer is neutralised at the end of the game.
- (c) Both players should verify the cumulative scores with reasonable frequency.
- (d) Scoring errors may be corrected at any time prior to signing the result sheet.

## **3.6 Prerogatives of the Player On Turn**

### **3.6.1 Actions Reserved for the Player On Turn**

A player may do the following things only when it is his or her turn:

- (a) adjust tiles on the board (however, tiles misoriented by the opponent may be adjusted at any time);
- (b) rotate or adjust the board; or
- (c) ask to verify scores with the opponent, who must co-operate.

### **3.6.2 Actions Where the Player On Turn Has Priority**

- (a) A player has priority in doing the following things when it is his or her turn:
  - (i) shuffling or counting the remaining tiles; or
  - (ii) checking the legality of an exchange.
- (b) The player not on turn, if doing one of these things, must ensure that the player on turn is minimally disturbed by the act.

## **3.7 Shuffling or Counting the Remaining Tiles**

### **3.7.1 Procedure for Shuffling or Counting Tiles**

To shuffle or count the remaining tiles, a player must, in this order:

- (a) announce an intention to shuffle or count the tiles;
- (b) show the opponent an empty hand (open palm with fingers stretched apart);
- (c) hold the bag in a position acceptable for tile-drawing while shuffling or counting;
- (d) show the opponent an empty hand after shuffling or counting.

### **3.7.2 Right to Object**

A player may object to the opponent shuffling or counting the remaining tiles. If this occurs, a tournament official may shuffle or count the tiles while the timer is neutralised, notifying both players of the result of the count.

### **3.8 Declaring a Blank**

- (a) Blanks must be declared in writing on a neutral sheet of paper. Neither oral declarations nor players' records on their personal score sheets are determinative.
- (b) A player who plays a blank must declare it before completing the turn. The opponent must ensure that the blank is properly declared, neutralising the timer if necessary.
- (c) If the identity of an improperly declared blank is disputed, the player on move may redesignate it. All words formed by the redesignation are taken as words played in that player's next turn, and may therefore be challenged.
- (d) If a blank is properly declared and its identity is nonetheless disputed, the Tournament Director may permit a move based on a misapprehension of the blank's identity to be replayed.

### **3.9 Drawing Tiles**

#### **3.9.1 Bag Position**

When drawing tiles, a player must:

- (a) hold the tile bag so that its rim is at or above eye level;
- (b) avert his or her eyes from the tile bag; and
- (c) keep the tile bag in full view of the opponent.

#### **3.9.2 Drawing Protocols**

- (a) Players need not draw tiles individually.
- (b) Players must not put a hand containing tiles into the tile bag. All drawn tiles must be placed on the rack or the table before further tiles are drawn.
- (c) Players must show an empty hand both before and after drawing.
- (d) Tiles must be drawn with reasonable speed.

#### **3.9.3 Keeping Tiles Above Table**

Players must keep all tiles above the level of the playing table at all times.

#### **3.9.4 Improper Drawing**

The Tournament Director will resolve any disputes concerning the propriety of tile drawing.

#### **3.9.5 Overdrawing**

If a player draws too many replacement tiles ('overdraws'), the players must neutralise the timer and correct the overdraw as follows:

- (a) if a newly drawn tile has touched the overdrawing player's rack:
  - (i) the overdrawing player intermixes the newly drawn and old tiles face down on the table;
  - (ii) the opponent randomly turns face up  $X+2$  tiles, where  $X$  represents the number of overdrawn tiles;

- (iii) the opponent chooses X tiles to return to the bag and two to return to the overdrawing player, leaving that player with a total of seven tiles to place on his or her rack.
- (b) if no newly drawn tile has touched the overdrawing player's rack:
  - (i) the overdrawing player places only the newly drawn tiles face down on the table;
  - (ii) the opponent randomly turns face up X+2 tiles, where X represents the number of overdrawn tiles (unless only one replacement tile should have been drawn, in which case the opponent turns face up all newly drawn tiles);
  - (iii) the opponent chooses X tiles, returns them to the bag, and returns all remaining face up tiles to the overdrawing player, leaving that player with the correct number of newly drawn tiles to add to his or her rack.

### **3.9.6 Improperly Corrected Overdraws**

If an opponent correcting an overdraw turns too many tiles face up, all exposed tiles must be replaced face down. The opponent then repeats subsection 3.9.5(a)(ii) or (b)(ii) as necessary, but may turn face up only X tiles, and must return those X tiles to the bag.

### **3.9.7 Duty to Disclose Overdraw**

A player who becomes aware that he or she has overdrawn must disclose the overdraw. Non-disclosure is regarded as cheating.

### **3.9.8 Late-Game Underdrawing**

- (a) This rule applies if a player underdraws, and the opponent empties the bag in his or her next draw.
- (b) If the underdraw is discovered before the player completes his or her next turn, the opponent chooses and gives to the player the appropriate number of tiles from his or her rack.
- (c) If the underdraw is discovered only after the player completes his or her next turn, there is neither a correction for the mistake nor a penalty.
- (d) Late-game underdrawing is regarded as unethical.

### **3.9.9 Drawing Out Of Order**

- (a) Subject to section (b), no penalty applies if a player draws tiles when the opponent should have done so first. However, drawing out of order is regarded as unethical, especially late in the game.
- (b) If the out of order draw is conducted before the opponent has had a reasonable chance to draw replacement tiles, and leaves fewer tiles in the bag than the opponent would have rightfully drawn, all of the player's newly drawn tiles are treated as overdrawn tiles to which the following procedure applies:
  - (i) the overdraw procedure given in Rule 3.9.5 (Overdrawing) is followed;
  - (ii) the opponent draws as many replacement tiles as are needed to complete his or her own draw;
  - (iii) any tiles remaining in the bag are replaced on the player's rack.

### **3.9.10 Drawing While Awaiting Adjudication**

Players must not draw tiles while awaiting the adjudication of a challenge.

## **3.10 Accepting and Challenging Turns**

### **3.10.1 Accepting the Turn**

- (a) Once a player presses the timer under Rule 3.1.1(c), the opponent may:
  - (i) issue an immediate challenge (see Rule 3.10.3 (Issuing a Challenge));
  - (ii) call 'hold' (see Rule 3.10.5 (Holds));
  - (iii) neither call 'hold' nor issue a challenge.
- (b) The opponent accepts the turn if he or she neither calls 'hold' nor issues a challenge before the player removes a replacement tile from the bag under Rule 3.1.1(e).
- (c) Accepting a turn waives the right to challenge that turn.
- (d) Writing by the opponent does not affect acceptance of a turn.

### **3.10.2 Flash-Drawing**

- (a) If the player fails to record scores as required by Rule 3.1.1(d) before drawing a replacement tile, or if the player pre-writes the scores, he or she has flash-drawn. The opponent is not considered to have accepted the turn, and may challenge even after a replacement tile is drawn.
- (b) Flash-drawing constitutes unethical behaviour (see Rule 6.3.1 (Definition of Unethical Behaviour)).
- (c) If a turn is successfully challenged after a flash-draw, then:
  - (i) if no flash-drawn tile has touched the player's rack, all flash-drawn tiles are revealed to the opponent and returned to the bag;
  - (ii) if a flash-drawn tile has touched the player's rack, the player is overdrawn by the number of tiles drawn in the flash-draw, and Rule 3.9.5 (Overdrawing) applies.

### **3.10.3 Issuing a Challenge**

- (a) To challenge the validity of any word or words played in a turn by the opponent, a player must, in this order:
  - (i) verbally express an unambiguous intention to challenge;
  - (ii) neutralise the timer;
  - (iii) write the word or words being challenged legibly on a challenge slip;
  - (iv) seek the opponent's agreement as to the accuracy and legibility of the challenge slip; and
  - (v) call for a runner.

Both players then await the result of the challenge.

- (b) The challenge may be issued as soon as the opponent has indicated a final choice of move. See Rule 3.4.1 (Pressing Timer Concludes Deliberation).
- (c) The timer must not be restarted after a challenge until (depending on the outcome) either the move score has been re-announced or the tiles retracted.
- (d) See Rules 3.10.8 (Self-Running) and 3.10.9 (Self-Adjudicating) for protocols regarding self-run and self-adjudicated challenges.

### **3.10.4 Challenging an Improperly Ordered Turn**

A player who omits to press the timer while making a turn completes that turn by placing any part of a hand in the bag to draw replacement tiles. As soon as this occurs, the opponent may:

- (a) compel the player to press the timer immediately, if he or she has not yet done so; and
- (b) issue a challenge as normal.

### **3.10.5 Holds**

- (a) A player considering a challenge must call 'hold', thereby warning the opponent not to draw replacement tiles. The player may take any amount of time to accept or challenge the play after calling 'hold'.
- (b) Unambiguous words such as 'okay' or 'accept' must be used to release a hold.

### **3.10.6 Courtesy Draws**

- (a) A player whose opponent has called 'hold' may, one minute after pressing the timer, draw and look at replacement tiles. These tiles must be kept separately from the player's rack.
- (b) If a challenge is upheld after a courtesy draw, the replacement tiles must be seen by the opponent and returned to the bag. The player is not considered to have overdrawn.
- (c) If a challenge is upheld after a courtesy draw and the replacement tiles have (contrary to section (a)) been intermixed with the player's old tiles, the player is considered to have overdrawn, and Rule 3.9.5 (Overdrawing) applies.

### **3.10.7 Adjudicating a Challenge**

- (a) The adjudicator must:
  - (i) carefully check the acceptability of the word or words on the challenge slip, using either computer software or a printed word list;
  - (ii) place a tick on the challenge slip if all challenged words are acceptable, or a cross if at least one is not; and
  - (iii) return the challenge slip to the runner.
- (b) When multiple words are challenged, runners and adjudicators must not reveal to players the acceptability of individual words.
- (c) If docket printers are in use to print the result of challenges, the printout may be returned to the players in lieu of the original challenge slip.

### **3.10.8 Self-Running**

- (a) If there are no runners, the challenger may take the challenge slip to the adjudicator. Before this is done, both players must cover or turn face down any tiles on their racks.
- (b) The timer must not be restarted after a self-run challenge until both players are seated, all face down tiles have been returned to their racks, and either the move score has been re-announced or the tiles retracted.

### **3.10.9 Self-Adjudicating**

- (a) The following challenge procedure applies when self-adjudication is in use:
  - (i) the challenger verbally expresses an unambiguous intention to challenge;
  - (ii) the challenger neutralises the timer;
  - (iii) the challenger clearly informs the opponent which word or words are being challenged, and may choose to record the word or words;
  - (iv) both players cover or turn face down any tiles on their racks, and proceed to the adjudication computer;



- (v) the challenger types the word or words being challenged into the adjudication program;
  - (vi) the opponent verifies that the word or words are correctly typed and executes the adjudication command.
- (b) The timer must not be restarted after a self-adjudicated challenge until both players are seated, all face down tiles have been returned to their racks, and either the move score has been re-announced or the tiles retracted.

### **3.10.10 No Retraction or Concession of a Challenge**

- (a) A player who verbally expresses an unambiguous intention to challenge and neutralises the timer is compelled to challenge.
- (b) The challenger may change his or her mind about which word or words to challenge at any time before the challenge slip is given to the runner, or (if the challenge is self-run or self-adjudicated) before leaving the playing table.
- (c) A player whose turn is challenged may not concede the challenge prior to adjudication.

### **3.10.11 Rechallenging**

- (a) Either player may request the re-adjudication of a challenge.
- (b) If such a request is made, the original adjudicator should not perform the re-adjudication.
- (c) The re-adjudication is final unless it differs from the original adjudication, in which case the Tournament Director will provide a final adjudication.

### **3.10.12 Erroneous Challenges**

If it is discovered that a word written on a challenge slip does not correspond to a word played on the board in the most recent turn, the challenge may be reissued.

### **3.10.13 Misadjudication**

If a player is challenged, and the challenge is discovered to have been misadjudicated, the error may be corrected if and only if:

- (a) no newly drawn tiles have touched the player's rack, or
- (b) no retracted tiles have touched the player's rack.

Otherwise, play continues as normal and no account is taken of the error.

### **3.10.14 Board Control During Challenge**

When the timer is neutralised pending an adjudication, the player whose turn has been challenged retains control of the board.

### **3.10.15 Challenge Penalties**

- (a) A player whose turn is successfully challenged loses that turn. The challenger may be penalised only if all challenged words are acceptable.
- (b) The penalty for an unsuccessful challenge varies from tournament to tournament. The following penalty conditions are considered standard:
  - (i) no penalty ('single challenge');
  - (ii) five-point penalty per unsuccessfully challenged word;
  - (iii) five-point penalty per unsuccessfully challenged turn;
  - (iv) as in subsection (ii) or (iii), but using ten-point penalties;

- (v) loss of turn ('double challenge').
- (c) Other penalty conditions are not considered standard. Examples are:
  - (i) no penalty for first unsuccessful challenge, loss of turn for subsequent unsuccessful challenges ('dingle challenge');
  - (ii) five-point penalty for first unsuccessful challenge, ten-point penalty for subsequent unsuccessful challenges;
  - (iii) 5-5-10-20-30 point (or similar) increasing penalties for unsuccessful challenges;
  - (iv) time penalties.
- (d) Option (b)(ii) is the preferred international norm. Tournaments using non-standard penalty conditions may be considered non-ratable by WESPA.

### **3.10.16 Challenging Word Placement**

- (a) A player may challenge a turn on the grounds that a word has been placed illegally. Illegal word placements include, but are not limited to:
  - (i) failure to cover the centre square on the opening play;
  - (ii) placing tiles such that the tiles do not all form part of one word;
  - (iii) playing a diagonal word;
  - (iv) playing a word that extends beyond the 15x15 grid;
  - (v) playing a misoriented word (see Rule 3.1.3 (Establishing Orientation)).
- (b) A player wishing to challenge an illegal word placement must neutralise the timer and call the Tournament Director to adjudicate.
- (c) There is no penalty for an unsuccessful challenge.
- (d) A player is free to refrain from challenging an illegal word placement. In the case of subsection (a)(i), if a player so refrains, the centre square retains its double-word-score value for subsequent turns.

### **3.10.17 Challenging the Legality of an Exchange**

- (a) A player may challenge the legality of an exchange on the grounds that fewer than seven tiles remain in the bag. The challenge may be issued once the opponent has announced the exchange and pressed the timer.
- (b) A player wishing to challenge an illegal exchange must neutralise the timer and call the Tournament Director to adjudicate.
- (c) There is no penalty for an unsuccessful challenge.
- (d) A player is free to refrain from challenging an illegal exchange.
- (e) The right to challenge an illegal exchange survives until an unwanted tile is returned to the bag.



## **Part 4 – Interrupting the Game**

### **4.1 Neutralising the Timer**

The timer may be neutralised during the game for the following reasons only:

- (a) to issue a challenge;
- (b) to resolve a scoring discrepancy;
- (c) to correct an overdraw;
- (d) to ascertain the game time assigned to a late player;
- (e) to call the Tournament Director to resolve a problem;
- (f) to deal with an unforeseen event such as a power failure or a spillage of water; or
- (g) to follow any other procedure which requires neutralisation under these Rules.

### **4.2 Leaving the Playing Area**

- (a) Players must obtain the Tournament Director's permission to leave the playing area during a game.
- (b) If permission is obtained, the Tournament Director will supervise the following procedure:
  - (i) the player wishing to leave must complete a turn, except for drawing replacement tiles;
  - (ii) the player may then leave the playing area;
  - (iii) while the player is absent, the opponent may complete a turn, except for drawing replacement tiles.
- (c) In an emergency, players may leave the playing area without obtaining permission. The opponent must alert the Tournament Director immediately if this occurs.
- (d) Supervision of players who leave the playing area is at the discretion of the Tournament Director. An opponent may request but may not compel supervision.

### **4.3 Tiles Discovered Out of the Bag**

If any tiles (other than those properly in a player's possession) are discovered outside the bag at any time before the result sheet has been signed, then:

- (a) both players see the tiles;
- (b) both players check to ensure that the tiles were not accidentally displaced from the board, especially from the corners and edges (once this is agreed, the board may not be subsequently corrected);
- (c) the tiles are returned to the bag;
- (d) any tiles removed from players' racks in the belief that the game was over are replaced; and
- (e) one of the following steps is taken:
  - (i) if both players have seven tiles, play resumes as usual;
  - (ii) if only one player has seven tiles, that player's opponent draws from the bag; or

- (iii) if neither player has seven tiles, the players ascertain who should have drawn replacement tiles earliest, and that player draws from the bag. If only one player has tiles after this is done, the game is over and the result is recalculated as necessary.

Under no circumstances may any moves be replayed.

## 4.4 Spilled Tiles

If a player spills surplus tiles from the bag at any time, that player is overdrawn and Rule 3.9.5 (Overdrawing) applies.

## 4.5 Tiles Discovered In the Bag

If any tiles are discovered in the bag, which the players had thought to be empty, before the result sheet has been signed, then:

- (a) both players see the tiles;
- (b) any tiles removed from players' racks in the belief that the game was over are replaced; and
- (c) the players ascertain who should have drawn replacement tiles earliest, and that player adds the tiles to his or her rack.

If both players still have tiles after this process, play resumes. If only one player has tiles, the game is over and the result recalculated as necessary. Under no circumstances may any moves be replayed.



## Part 5 – Ending the Game

### 5.1 'Playing Out'

#### 5.1.1 Procedure for 'Playing Out'

'Playing out' occurs when, after completing a turn, a player has no tiles remaining, and no tiles remain to be drawn from the bag.

#### 5.1.2 Actions to be Taken Upon 'Playing Out'

A player attempting to play out must neutralise the timer, rather than starting the opponent's timer. The opponent must then either:

- (a) accept the turn by revealing his or her unplayed tiles;

- (b) call 'hold'; or
- (c) challenge the turn.

### **5.1.3 Right to Restart Timer**

- (a) If a player has attempted to play out, and the opponent fails to accept the turn within approximately five seconds, then the player is entitled to restart the opponent's timer while awaiting the opponent's action.
- (b) If an opponent's timer is so started, the opponent must neutralise the timer after deciding either to accept the turn or to challenge.

### **5.1.4 Tiles Remaining**

When a player has played out, then either:

- (a) his or her score is increased by the value of the opponent's unplayed tiles, and the opponent's score is commensurately decreased; or
- (b) his or her score is increased by twice the value of the opponent's unplayed tiles, and the opponent's score is unchanged.

The tournament organiser must ensure that all players know which section is in force.

## **5.2 Six Consecutive Zero Scores**

The game ends after six consecutive turns scoring zero, resulting from any combination of passes, exchanges and successful challenges. If this occurs, each player's final score is reduced by the total value of the tiles on his or her rack.

## **5.3 Time Penalties**

### **5.3.1 Ascertaining When Time Penalties Apply**

A player who exceeds his or her assigned game time incurs time penalties. This occurs once:

- (a) the player's timer shows -00.01 (in the case of a digital count-down timer);
- (b) the player's timer shows xx.01 (in the case of a digital count-up timer, where xx represents the assigned game time in minutes); or
- (c) the flag on the player's side has dropped (in the case of an analogue chess clock).

### **5.3.2 Application of Time Penalties**

A player's score is reduced by 10 points per minute or part thereof by which he or she exceeded the assigned game time.

### **5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture**

A player who overruns his or her assigned game time by 10 minutes forfeits that game. If this occurs, the game margin is the margin at the time of forfeiture (including time penalties) or 100 points, whichever is the greater.

### **5.3.4 No Additional Time Penalties When Timer Not Neutralised**

- (a) If the timer is improperly left running at the end of the game, any time penalties that accrue beyond the point at which the timer should have been neutralised are disregarded.

- (b) If a player fails to neutralise the timer when playing out, the opponent is taken to neutralise the timer by revealing his or her unplayed tiles.

### **5.3.5 Standard Game Time**

An assigned game time of 25 minutes is considered standard. Tournaments using different times may be regarded by WESPA as non-ratable.

## **5.4 Result Sheets**

### **5.4.1 Result Sheets Final Once Signed**

A game result sheet signed by both players is final, and binds the players and the Tournament Director, unless:

- (a) before submitting the sheet, both players agree to correct an error on it;
- (b) after submitting the sheet, but before the start of the next game, both players petition the Tournament Director to correct an error on it.

### **5.4.2 Responsibility of Winner**

The winner must hand in the result sheet before leaving the playing area.

## **5.5 Recounts**

### **5.5.1 Right to Recount**

Either player may request a recount at the end of a game, but only if the game margin is 20 points or less.

### **5.5.2 Recount Procedure**

Partial recounts are not acceptable. A game must be recounted in full, or not at all. The timer remains neutralised during a recount.

### **5.5.3 Surrender of Score Sheet**

A recounting player may request the use of the opponent's score sheet. The opponent may object, but must, if asked, surrender the score sheet to the Tournament Director, who may use it to assist the recounting player.

### **5.5.4 Tournament Director's Discretion**

- (a) Since recounts can interfere with tournament scheduling, the Tournament Director may halt a recount if he or she believes it is frivolous or has taken an excessive time.
- (b) If the Tournament Director believes that a player is frivolously recounting or deliberately slowing the progress of a recount, then he or she may direct that no changes in that player's favour be made as a result of the recount.

## **5.6 Tile Check**

Before leaving the playing area, both players must ensure that the tiles are left on the board in a 10x10 grid or four 5x5 grids.

## 5.7 Resigning

- (a) A player may not resign a game except in an emergency.
- (b) A resigned game is forfeited and cannot be resumed.
- (c) The game margin in a properly resigned game is the greater of the following:
  - (i) 50 points,
  - (ii) the non-resigning player's lead at the time of resignation plus 50 points.
- (d) The Tournament Director will determine an appropriate margin for an improperly resigned game.



## Part 6 - Conduct

### 6.1 General Conduct

#### 6.1.1 Expected Standards

WESPA expects players to uphold high standards of both etiquette and ethics. Respectful, courteous, fair and honest play is required. Players are honour bound not to cheat.

#### 6.1.2 Tournament Director's Powers and Responsibilities

- (a) In disputes concerning conduct, the Tournament Director's ruling is final.
- (b) The Tournament Director must give each player a fair hearing, including (where relevant) taking the testimony of witnesses.
- (c) The Tournament Director must resolve factual disputes upon the balance of probabilities.
- (d) The Tournament Director may take the smooth running of the tournament into consideration.
- (e) In dealing with improper conduct, the Tournament Director has a wide discretion. The appropriate remedy will vary from case to case. The Tournament Director should always act with intelligence and impartiality.

#### 6.1.3 State of Mind

Disputes concerning conduct sometimes require the Tournament Director to form a belief about a player's state of mind. Many different factors may relevantly contribute to such beliefs. Subject to Rule 6.5 (Right of Appeal), the Tournament Director is the first and final arbiter of all such questions.

## **6.2 Level 1 Offences (Cheating and Abusive Behaviour)**

### **6.2.1 Definition of Cheating**

Any deliberate bad-faith violation of these Rules or the Standard Rules is an act of cheating. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) collusion;
- (b) concealing or palming tiles;
- (c) knowingly announcing or accepting incorrect move scores or cumulative scores;
- (d) knowingly misreporting game results;
- (e) using marked tiles;
- (f) looking inside the bag;
- (g) using accomplices, objects or materials to obtain an unfair advantage.

### **6.2.2 Suspected Cheating**

- (a) Players should avoid any personal action that might incur suspicion, and draw to the attention of their opponents any such action on their part.
- (b) A player who believes that an act of cheating has occurred in his or her game should call the Tournament Director.
- (c) A third party who witnesses an act of cheating should not intervene directly, but should report the incident to the Tournament Director.

### **6.2.3 Definition of Abusive Behaviour**

Abusive behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) making unauthorised physical contact with another player or a tournament official that intimidates, threatens or harms that person;
- (b) making a statement that intimidates, threatens or insults another player or a tournament official;
- (c) performing any other antisocial act that intimidates, threatens, insults or harms another player or a tournament official.

### **6.2.4 Penalties for Cheating and Abusive Behaviour**

If a player is found cheating or behaving abusively:

- (a) the player will be ejected from the tournament, and:
  - (i) if the tournament is a round robin, all of the player's games will be considered void; or
  - (ii) if the tournament is not a round robin, all games already played by the player will be retrospectively awarded to the opponent with a margin of 150 points (if the opponent achieved a better result, no change will be made), and the player will be moved to the bottom of the standings and treated as a bye for all further games;
- (b) the player's conduct will be reported to his or her national association; and
- (c) WESPA may restrict the player's participation in future tournaments.



## **6.3 Level 2 Offences (Unethical Behaviour)**

### **6.3.1 Definition of Unethical Behaviour**

Any act which contravenes the spirit of equitable and fair play constitutes unethical behaviour, even if it cannot be classified as a violation of these Rules or the Standard Rules. Unethical behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) impairing the opponent's view of the board;
- (b) shuffling tiles persistently and noisily, or otherwise manipulating the board, bag or tiles to distract the opponent;
- (c) making statements capable of misleading the opponent or affecting the opponent's play;
- (d) talking unnecessarily (including loud computation of the score for a move);
- (e) knowingly overdrawing, underdrawing, concealing an overdraw, or drawing out of order;
- (f) deliberately flash-drawing;
- (g) deliberately drawing slowly, or tracking tiles before drawing, to deny the opponent access to the tile bag;
- (h) issuing frivolous challenges to gain thinking time, or calling 'hold' solely to prevent the opponent from drawing;
- (i) misrepresenting the number of tiles in the bag;
- (j) using unacceptable objects or materials, such as word-source devices, mobile phones, pagers, palmtops and laptops;
- (k) knowingly misrepresenting the identity of a blank;
- (l) checking scores solely in order to gain thinking time or disturb the opponent, or refusing to check scores when properly requested to do so;
- (m) intermixing old tiles with tiles drawn in a courtesy draw;
- (n) motioning to press the timer, but refraining, in an attempt to gauge the opponent's reaction to a turn;
- (o) violating self-adjudication protocols;
- (p) abusing game equipment;
- (q) improperly leaving the playing area during play.

### **6.3.2 Behaviour Not Considered Unethical**

The following acts are not generally considered unethical:

- (a) exploiting an opponent's failure to press the timer at the end of a turn;
- (b) playing quickly to render the opponent short of time;
- (c) failing to check the opponent's calculation of a score;
- (d) the use of non-verbal body language to give a particular impression (for instance, playing a word confidently in order to dissuade the opponent from challenging);
- (e) failing to challenge an invalid word for strategic reasons.

### **6.3.3 Penalties for Unethical Behaviour**

- (a) A Tournament Director who finds that a player has behaved unethically may choose to deliver an official or unofficial warning, or to impose another penalty.
- (b) Possible penalties for unethical behaviour include, but are not limited to:
  - (i) official warning;
  - (ii) reduction of margin in tournament standings;
  - (iii) loss of turn, loss of time or point penalty in the game in progress;

- (iv) forfeiture of a game;
- (v) ejection from the tournament.
- (c) The Tournament Director may report unethical behaviour to the national association of the player concerned, or to WESPA.

### **6.3.4 Privacy of Score Sheets**

It is the responsibility of individual players to ensure that private material recorded on their score sheets is adequately concealed.

## **6.4 Level 3 Offences (Poor Etiquette)**

### **6.4.1 Definition of Poor Etiquette**

Any failure to act with due courtesy and respect towards other players and tournament officials constitutes poor etiquette. Poor etiquette includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) deliberately arriving late;
- (b) rotating the board for the opponent at the completion of a turn;
- (c) playing tiles upside down;
- (d) placing the bag out of the opponent's reach;
- (e) conducting lengthy or loud post-game analyses.

### **6.4.2 Penalties for Poor Etiquette**

In general, poor etiquette attracts no penalty beyond an unofficial warning. However, a player aggrieved by poor etiquette may call the Tournament Director, who will assess the case on its merits.

### **6.4.3 Observational Etiquette**

- (a) Persons observing a game must not:
  - (i) distract the players;
  - (ii) audibly discuss the game;
  - (iii) do anything capable of passing information about the game to the players;
  - (iv) infringe the players' personal space;
  - (v) continue to observe, if asked to leave by a player or the Tournament Director.
- (b) The Tournament Director has general discretion to ensure that observational etiquette is maintained, including the power to impose penalties.
- (c) Annotators must fully understand and comply with observational etiquette. All other annotation arrangements, including the capacity of players to refuse annotation, are matters for the tournament organisers, the Tournament Director and the players concerned.

## **6.5 Right of Appeal**

- (a) A player whose conduct is subject to an adverse finding has no right of appeal during the tournament. However, the player may appeal to the WESPA Executive Committee to review the finding after the tournament has concluded.
- (b) The WESPA Executive Committee will form a committee of disinterested players to consider the appeal, which will be determined either in person or through written submissions sent by letter, fax or email. The committee so formed is the sole body

with power to review the correctness of the finding.

- (c) If the appeal is partly or wholly upheld, the committee will recommend a course of action to the WESPA Executive Committee. This may include the amendment of tournament results.
- (d) There is no further right of appeal.



## Appendix 1 – Standard Rules

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Note: In the event of a discrepancy between the Standard Rules and the WESPA Game Rules, the WESPA Game Rules prevail. See Rule 1.1 (Standard Rules).

### HOW TO PLAY

#### EVERY WORD COUNTS!

SCRABBLE® is a word game for 2, 3 or 4 players. Play consists of forming interlocking words, crossword fashion, on the SCRABBLE® playing board, using letter tiles with various score values. The object of the game is to get the highest score. Each player competes by using their tiles in combinations and locations that take best advantage of letter values and premium squares on the board. The combined total score for a game may range from about 400 points to 800 or more, depending on the skill of the players.

### CONTENTS

1 Playing Board  
100 Letter Tiles  
4 Tile Racks  
1 Tile Bag

#### 100 Letter tiles:

- There are 98 tiles with letters of the alphabet and two blank tiles.
- Each of the letter tiles has score values indicated by the number to the bottom right of the letter.
- The two blank tiles have no score value, and can be used as any letter desired. When it is played, the player must state what letter it represents, after which it cannot be changed for the remainder of the game.

## SET UP

- Get a pen and paper to keep score.
- Set up the board in the middle of the playing area.
- Each player takes a rack for arranging their tiles and places it in front of them.
- All the tiles are placed in the tile bag. Each player takes a tile out to find out who plays first. The player who has the tile nearest the beginning of the alphabet, with the blank preceding 'A,' plays first. The exposed tiles are put back into the bag and the bag is shaken to shuffle them.
- Each player, in turn, then draws seven new tiles and places them on their racks. Everyone is now ready to play SCRABBLE®. Play proceeds clockwise.

## RULES OF PLAY

### Keeping score

One player is elected as scorekeeper. They keep tally of each player's score after each turn.

### Exchanging tiles

Any player may use their turn to replace any or all of the tiles in their rack. They may do so by discarding them face down, drawing the same number of new tiles, then mixing the discarded tiles with those remaining in the bag. They then await their next turn to play.

### Passing (missing a turn)

Instead of placing tiles on the board, or exchanging tiles, a player may also decide to pass, whether or not they are able to make a word (or words).

However, should all players pass twice in succession, the game ends.

### Placing the first word

The first player combines two or more of their tiles to form a word and places them on the board to read either across or down with one tile on the centre square (ribbon). Diagonal words are not permitted.

All tiles played in this and subsequent turns must be placed in one continuous line horizontally or vertically.

### Permitted words

You may play any words listed in a standard English dictionary except those only spelt with an initial capital letter, abbreviations, prefixes and suffixes and words requiring apostrophes and hyphens. Foreign words in a standard English dictionary are considered to have been absorbed into the English language and are allowed. Prior to starting the game, all players must agree on a dictionary to be used.

Once a tile has been placed on the board, it may not be moved unless the word is successfully challenged.

### Challenging words

Once a word has been played, the word may be challenged before the score is added up and the next player starts their turn. At this point only, you may consult a dictionary to check spelling or usage. If the word challenged is unacceptable, the player takes back their tiles and loses their turn.

### BOARD Premium Spaces

The playing board consists of 15 x 15 squares in the playing area with grid lines to separate the squares. There are special premium squares on the board with bonus score values:

#### Premium Letter Squares

A light blue square doubles the score of a letter placed on it.

A dark blue square triples the score of a letter placed on it.

#### Premium Word Squares

A light red square doubles the score of the word.

A dark red square triples the score of the word.

If a word crosses both premium letter and word squares, all the bonus letter values are added up before the complete word score is double or tripled.

The bonus scores of the premium squares only apply to the turn in which the tiles are placed on them.

When a blank is placed on a Triple or Double Word square, the sum of the tiles in the word is doubled or tripled even though the blank itself has no score value. When it is placed on a Triple or Double Letter square, the value of the blank tile is still zero.

### Scoring the first word

A player completes their turn by counting and announcing their score, which is recorded by the scorekeeper.

The score for the turn is calculated by adding up all the values of the numbers on the tiles, plus any premium values from utilising the premium squares.

### Ending a turn

At the end of every turn, the player draws as many new tiles as they have played, thus always keeping seven tiles in their rack.

### Added 50-point bonus

Any player who plays all seven of their tiles in a single turn scores a premium of 50 points in addition to their regular score for the turn. The 50 points are added on after doubling or tripling a word score.

### Next Player's turn

The second player and then each player in turn, has the choice of exchanging tiles,

passing or adding one or more tiles to those already played so as to form new words of two or more letters.

All tiles played in any one turn must be placed in one row only across or one column only down the board.

If they touch other tiles in adjacent rows, they must form complete words crossword fashion, with all such tiles.

The player gets full score for all words formed or modified by their play. Include the bonus scores of any premium squares on which they have placed the tiles.

There are five different ways that new words can be formed:

1. Adding one or more tiles to the beginning or end of a word already on the board, or to both the beginning and end of that word.
2. Placing a word at right angles to a word already on the board. The new word must use one of the letters of the word already on the board.
3. Placing a complete word parallel to a word already played so that adjoining tiles also form complete words. In this example, more than one word is formed in the same turn and each word is scored. The common letters are counted (with full premium value, when they are on premium squares) in the score for each word.
4. The new word may also add a letter to an existing word.
5. The last variation would be to "bridge" two or more letters. (This can only happen on the 4th move or later in the game.)

Sometimes a word may cross two premium word squares. The word score is doubled then re-doubled - 4 times the complete word score; or tripled and then re-tripled - 9 times the complete word score!

End of the game

The game ends when

- all the tiles have been drawn and one of the players has used all the tiles in their rack
- when all possible plays have been made
- all players have passed twice in consecutive turns

After all the scores are added up, each player's score is reduced by the sum of his unplayed tiles, and if one player has used all their tiles, their score is increased by the sum of the unplayed tiles of all the other players.

e.g. If Player one has an X and an A left on their rack at the end of the game, their score is reduced by 9 points. The player who used all their tiles adds 9 points to their score.

Remember - the game can be won or lost on the last letter in the bag!

## RULES CLARIFICATIONS

- If any tile touches another tile in adjacent rows, it must form part of a complete word crossword fashion, with all such tiles.
- The same word can be played more than once in a game.
- Pluralised words are allowed.
- A word can be extended on both ends within the same move e.g. TRAINER to STRAINERS.
- All tiles played in any one turn must be placed in one continuous line only, horizontally or vertically.
- Players may not add tiles to various words, or form new words in different parts of the board in the same turn.
- The bonus scores of the premium squares only apply to the turn in which the tiles are placed on them.
- When more than one word is formed in a single turn, each word is scored. The common letters are counted (with full premium value, when they are on premium squares) in the score for each word.
- If a word crosses two premium word squares, the word score is doubled and re-doubled - 4 times the complete word score; or tripled and re-tripled - 9 times the complete word score.
- When a blank is placed on a Triple or Double Word square, the sum of the tiles in the word is doubled or tripled even though the blank itself has no score value. When it is placed on a Triple or Double Letter square, the value of the blank tile is still zero.
- When one player has used all their tiles and the tile bag is empty, the game is over. In some games, no player succeeds in using all their tiles. In this case the game continues until all possible moves have been made. If a player is unable to move, they pass their turn. If all players pass twice, in consecutive turns, the game ends.
- A dictionary or word guide may not be used while a game is in progress to search for words to fit the tiles on your rack. It may only be consulted after a word has been played and challenged.

## Appendix 2 – Official Word Source

For tournaments ending on or after 1 January 2012, the official word source is Collins Official SCRABBLE® Words 2011 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). For other tournaments, the official word source is the HarperCollins SCRABBLE® Tournament & Club Word List (2007 edition).

