



# SCRABBLE RULES & REGULATIONS FOR 2024

## Game Rules

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



Version 4.0

**Issued by the WESPA Rules Committee**

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# **WESPA Rules Version 4**

## **Acknowledgements**

After four years in the making, we are glad to be able to release the fourth version of WESPA Rules. This version is hopefully just the start of many improvements that will be made over the next few years. It could not have happened without the hard work of both current and former members of the WESPA Rules Committee, and the players who have put forward numerous modifications to improve the Rules. Those we owe thanks to include: Evan Cohen, Liz Fagerlund, Dave Wiegand, John Hamilton, Trevor Hovelmeier, Philips Owolabi, Karen Richards, Chris Lipe, Nick Ivanovski, Mauro Pratesi and many others who have contributed helpful suggestions, too numerous to mention.

Jessica Pratesi  
WESPA Rules Chairperson

## **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. The procedures for a player to appeal a decision 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 must 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 may 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 Over Equipment**

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

## **1.4 The Timer**

### **1.4.1 Checking the Timer**

Both players must check before play that the timer is set correctly and is working properly.

### **1.4.2 Precedence of Timers**

(Note that in the list below, an 'optically passive' LCD screen is an LCD screen that does not emit light, such as the screen of a regular calculator)

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

- (a) digital timers with optically passive LCD screens 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;
    - (ii) neutralisation through the depression of a central button or designated area of the screen;
  - (b) smart device digital timers with a minimum diagonal screen size of 3.5 inches (89 millimetres) and sufficient power for expected use, with all the standard features above;
  - (c) digital timers with optically passive LCD screens capable only of counting up from 00.00 in such a way that overtime can be accurately calculated in minutes and seconds and which can be neutralised through the depression of a central button;
  - (d) analogue chess clocks.
- Other timing devices are not suitable but may be considered, at the discretion of the Director, if there is a shortage of suitable timers.
  - In general, devices with a reputation of good reliability take precedence over those with a reputation of poor reliability.
  - When smart device timers are used, it is recommended that every reasonable measure be taken to prolong battery life.
  - All else being equal, a smart device with a larger screen takes precedence over one with a smaller screen.
  - Any dispute over timing devices will be settled by the Director.



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

In these Rules, neutralising a timer means:

- (a) for a digital timer: pressing a button or part of the screen whose purpose is 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 a Timer is Mandatory**

The use of a timer is mandatory for all games played under these Rules, though if there is a shortage of suitable timers, the Director will, using discretion, decide on a course of action.

### **1.4.5 Timer Position**

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

### **1.4.6 Malfunction of Timers**

The malfunctioning timer must be stopped and the Director called. If the timer cannot be stopped or if the display has malfunctioned then both players must immediately write down their most accurate recollections of the amount of time left for each player at the moment of the malfunction. If the timer malfunctioned due to lack of power then the power source may be replaced or replenished and it may be used again. Otherwise, the timer must be removed from the competition, its owner must be notified, and it must be replaced with a suitable timer. The Director will, in conjunction with the players and, if necessary, any other observers of the game, determine as accurately as possible how much time each player had left. The Director will then assign each player the agreed remaining time on the replacement timer and the game will resume.

## **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 and may be double-sided.

### **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 slips. All other papers must be kept invisible and must not be referred to during play. Records of previously played games must be stored in such a way that they are neither readable nor easily accessible (See also 1.6 Use of Electronic and Other Devices During Play).

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

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

## 1.6 Use of Electronic and Other Devices During Play

Apart from during adjudication of a challenge and with the exception of the timer, no electronic devices (including wearable devices) may be used by a player during play, unless for a justifiable reason related to health or simply for telling the time. Non-electronic devices that give an advantage to the user during play (such as calculating devices) are also not permitted. Prior to the start of the game and immediately after the game, electronic devices may be used in a way that does not distract other players. All electronic devices in a tournament venue must be set so that they cannot make distracting sound



## 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 must 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 a player has hitherto started fewer games than his or her opponent, then 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 officially 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 one side of 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. For consequences see 2.3.6.

### **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. For consequences see 2.3.6.

### **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 100 points. The Tournament Director may increase this margin if strategic lateness is suspected.
- (b) A game forfeited due to lateness 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 bag before the game and while on turn. Shuffling tiles excessively and noisily, including hitting the bag on the table during shuffling, is distracting to fellow players and thus constitutes unethical behaviour (see Rule 6.3.1 (b)).

## **2.5 Special Needs / Disabilities**

- (a) Players must notify the Tournament Director, and, if relevant, the tournament organisers and venue of any special circumstances, such as physical impediments, that may affect their capacity to comply with any procedures set out in these Rules. Ideally, this notification should be done at least a week before a tournament.
- (b) At the discretion of the Tournament Director, alternative procedures may be allowed or arranged to assist or accommodate players with special needs.
- (c) At the discretion of the Tournament Director, a player with special needs may be awarded an amount of extra playing time, provided that this extra time will not interfere with the smooth running of the tournament, and with the proviso that the amount of time may be shortened if the tournament is so affected.



## 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 (all blanks among said tiles must be properly declared according to rule 3.8 (Declaring a Blank), before the timer is pressed);
- (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 Writing Scores When No Tiles Remain in the Bag

If no tiles remain to be drawn, the writing of scores and cumulative scores is not a required element in completing a turn, so if one player wishes to confirm scores and the opponent has not recorded scores since the bag emptied, the timer may be stopped until both players agree on the scores.

#### 3.1.3 Establishing Orientation

- (a) The first play of the game 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, then:
  - (i) if the error is noticed by or is pointed out to the starting player before his or her turn has ended, then the starting player must correct the error on that player's own time, or;
  - (ii) if the error is only noticed by the player going second after the second player's timer has been started, then the second player may stop the timer and correct the error of orientation, after which the timer of the second player must be started by either player.
- (b) If the first play of the game is misoriented but is not corrected before the end of the second move of the game, then the first play of the game determines the orientation of all plays for the rest of the game, so any plays after the first play which are misoriented relative to the first play may be challenged.

## 3.2 Exchanging Tiles

(For content relating to improper tile exchanges, refer to Rule 3.13.2 (Improper Tile Exchanges))

### 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, after which no more unwanted tiles may be placed on the table, regardless of what the announced number of tiles to be exchanged was (note that if no tiles were placed on the table prior to pressing the timer then this constitutes a passed turn);
- (e) record the exchange on the 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.

Note that pressing the timer so that the opponent can declare his or her blank on his or her own time does not count as a passed turn.

## 3.4 Significance of Pressing the Timer

### 3.4.1 Pressing the 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 indicates a final choice of move only by pressing the timer, but if the player neglects to press the timer, final choice of move is indicated when the player places any part of a hand into the bag to draw tiles.
- (d) By indicating a final choice of move as in (c), above, a player confers on the opponent an immediate right to challenge the turn.
- (e) If the timer was pressed so that a player who just played an undeclared blank could declare the blank on that player's own time, it does not count as a passed 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 / Timer Not Pressed After Play).
- (d) Where tile drawing or tile counting by the opponent prevent the player on turn from immediately accessing the bag for the purpose of counting tiles, see 3.6.3 (Right to the Bag).

### **3.4.3 Unintentionally Pressing the Timer**

If the timer has been pressed unintentionally, for example, when rotating the board or with a sleeve, the Tournament Director may be petitioned to nullify this action. If the petition is accepted, any time adjustments will be made at the discretion of the Tournament Director if deemed necessary. Play will then proceed as normal.

## **3.5 Keeping Score**

- (a) Until the bag is empty, both players must promptly record in the normal spaces on their score sheets both 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 must verify the cumulative scores with reasonable frequency.
- (d) Scoring errors may be corrected at any time prior to signing the result slip, though for correction of errors after the result slip is signed, see 5.4.1 (Result Slips Final Once Signed).

## **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 (errors of misorientation or imperfect placement of tiles may be pointed out to the player on turn, but may only be corrected by a player who is on turn);
- (b) rotate or adjust the board; or
- (c) ask to verify scores with the opponent, who must co-operate (keeping in mind that if the opponent has not written down the scores since the bag emptied, then the timer may be stopped until both players agree on the scores).

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

- (a) The player on turn has priority for the following:
  - (i) shuffling or counting the remaining tiles (see 3.6.3 Right to the Bag)
  - (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.

### **3.6.3 Right to the Bag**

The player on turn has immediate right to the bag for the purpose of counting tiles and the opponent must promptly surrender the bag upon request, except if the opponent is still drawing tiles or if the opponent already has a hand in the bag and is busy counting tiles, in which case the player on turn may stop the timer until the bag is in the player on turn's possession, after which either player must restart the player on turn's timer.

## **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 (see 3.9.1);
- (d) show the opponent an empty hand after shuffling or counting.

### **3.7.2 Right to Object to Opponent Shuffling Tiles**

A player may, only for a legitimate reason, 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 preferably by circling a printed letter or else by writing a capital letter on a neutral sheet of paper, which must remain in clear view of both players for the duration of the game. If neither of the above papers are available for designation of the blank, then the timer may be stopped until one is procured. If a blank has been declared but the opponent is still not certain of the actual designation of the blank, then the opponent may stop the timer and demand that the player repeat the declaration of the blank. Neither oral declarations nor players' records on their personal papers are determinative.
- (b) A player who plays a blank must declare it as in (a), above, BEFORE pressing the timer. If a player ends the turn without correctly declaring a blank, the opponent may immediately restart that player's timer and demand that the blank be properly declared. Pressing of the timer by the opponent in this instance does not count as a passed turn.
- (c) If the identity of an improperly declared blank that was played on an earlier turn is disputed then the Director must be called. If the Director agrees that the improperly declared blank could have been legitimately mistaken for another letter by the opponent, then the opponent may declare the improperly declared blank to be that letter. All words formed that include this newly declared blank may be challenged.
- (d) If a blank is properly declared and its identity is nonetheless disputed at any later time, the Director must be called. The Director will decide if there is a legitimate misunderstanding of the identity of the blank and may permit a move that has just been played 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 the 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 timer must be neutralised and the overdraw corrected as follows:

- (a) if NONE of the newly drawn tiles have touched the overdrawing player's rack then:
  - (i) the overdrawing player places ONLY the newly drawn tiles face down on the table and shuffles them randomly;
  - (ii) if the overdrawing player has 6 tiles on the rack, then the opponent turns all the newly drawn tiles face up, and proceeds to step (iv) of 3.9.5(a);
  - (iii) if the overdrawing player has 5 or fewer tiles on the rack, then the opponent turns face up  $X+2$  of the newly drawn tiles, where  $X$  is the number of OVERDRAWN tiles;
  - (iv) from the face-up tiles, the opponent chooses  $X$  tiles and returns them to the bag;
  - (v) all remaining tiles are returned to the overdrawing player, leaving that player with the correct number of newly drawn tiles to add to his or her rack.
- (b) if AT LEAST ONE newly drawn tile has touched the overdrawing player's rack then:
  - (i) the overdrawing player must place the newly drawn tiles AND all his or her other tiles face down on the table and intermix them;
  - (ii) where  $X$  is the number of overdrawn tiles, the opponent turns face up  $X+2$  tiles;
  - (iii) from the face-up tiles, the opponent chooses  $X$  tiles and returns them to the bag;
  - (iv) the remaining tiles are returned to the overdrawing player, leaving that player with a total of seven tiles to place on his or her rack.

The opponent has 15 seconds to correct the overdraw. If a correction has not been made, the opponent's timer is started. There is no time limit to making a correction except when it exceeds the assigned game time by 10 minutes (see 5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture). Once a correction has been decided, the timer is neutralised, and the chosen tiles are returned to the bag. The remaining tiles are returned to the overdrawing player. Play resumes with the player on turn's clock being restarted.

### **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)(iii) 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 unethical behaviour (see 6.3 (Level 2 Offences)).

### **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) If the out of order draw occurs 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, then 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.
- (b) If the out of order draw does not contravene (a), above, then:
  - (i) if any of the tiles drawn out of order have touched the rack of the overdrawing player, then the other player has been too slow to notice the out of order draw and the overdrawing player may replenish the rack without penalty.
  - (ii) If a player notices that the opponent has drawn out of order before any of the drawn tiles have touched the rack, then that player must call a halt to the out of order draw and stop the timer. The tiles drawn out of order must be shown to both players and returned to the bag, after which the correct order of drawing must be followed.

### **3.9.10 No Tile 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 3.11 (Procedures for Issuing and Adjudicating a Challenge));
  - (ii) call 'hold' (see Rule 3.10.5 (Holds));
  - (iii) choose to accept the turn without calling 'hold' or issuing a challenge.
- (b) The opponent accepts the turn if he or she neither calls 'hold' nor issues a challenge before any replacement tile drawn by the player is added to the player's rack.
  - (i) Once the tile bag is empty, and there are no further tiles to be drawn, there is no time limit with regard to a player accepting a turn and issuing a challenge. If a player goes over their assigned game time by 10 minutes, they will forfeit the game (see 5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture).
  - (ii) Where a player has 'played out' and the opponent has not, after five seconds, taken one of the three actions outlined in Rule 5.1.2 (Actions to be Taken Upon Playing Out), the opponent's timer is restarted until one of these actions is taken or they forfeit the game due to going overtime (see 5.1.3 Right to Restart the Timer and 5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture).
- (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 and Adjudicating a Challenge - (see 3.11 (Procedures for Issuing and Adjudicating a Challenge))

### 3.10.4 Challenging an Improperly Ordered Turn / Timer Not Pressed After Play

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 according to 3.11 (Procedures for Issuing and Adjudicating a Challenge).

### 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', provided that the amount of time taken does not cause the player to exceed his or her allotted game time by more than 10 minutes (see 5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture).
- (b) Unambiguous words such as 'accept' or 'okay' must be used to release a hold.

### **3.10.6 Courtesy Draws**

- (a) A player whose opponent has called 'hold' may, thirty seconds 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 Amount of Time Allowed to Challenge When a Player Has Played Out**

Once a player has made a move that will end the game if left unchallenged, the opponent may take as much time as desired to challenge that move, provided that the amount of time taken does not cause the player to exceed his or her allotted game time by more than 10 minutes (see 5.3.3 Overtime Leading to Forfeiture). If the opponent does not immediately accept the 'out play' by revealing his or her unplayed tiles as per rule 5.1.2, then after 5 seconds of deliberation by the opponent, the player may restart the opponent's timer.

### **3.10.8 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:
  - (i) if self-adjudicating via smart device, any letter of any word to be challenged has been typed into the adjudication program;
  - (ii) if self-adjudicating at an external device, the challenging player leaves the playing table;
  - (iii) if runners are used, the challenge slip is handed to the runner.
- (c) A player whose turn is challenged may not concede the challenge prior to adjudication.

### **3.10.9 Rechallenging**

- (a) Either player may request the re-adjudication of a challenge.
- (b) If such a request is made, in the case of External Adjudication, 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.

### **3.10.10 Erroneous Challenges**

If it is discovered that a word written on a challenge slip or entered into the adjudication program does not correspond to a word played on the board in the most recent turn, the challenge may be reissued (subject to 3.10.11 below).

### **3.10.11 Mis-adjudication of a Challenge**

If a move is challenged, and the challenge is discovered to have been mis-adjudicated, 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.

### **3.10.12 Board Control During Challenge**

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

### **3.10.13 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 may vary from tournament to tournament. The following penalty conditions are considered standard:
  - (i) five-point penalty per unsuccessfully challenged word (this is the preferred international norm);
  - (ii) five-point penalty per unsuccessfully challenged turn;
  - (iii) loss of turn ('double challenge').
  - (iv) no penalty ('single challenge' or 'free challenge');
  - (v) as in subsection (i) or (ii), but using ten point penalties.
- (c) Other penalty conditions are not considered standard, and tournaments using non-standard penalty conditions may be considered non-rateable by WESPA. 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,-10,-20,-30 point (or similar) increasing penalties for unsuccessful challenges;
  - (iv) time penalties.

## **3.11 Procedures for Issuing and Adjudicating a Challenge**

A challenge may be adjudicated by the players themselves (Self-Adjudication) or by an external person (External Adjudication). Self-Adjudication is the preferred international norm, though players with legitimate reasons may use External Adjudication. In the case of Self-Adjudication, both players take responsibility for ensuring that the word source is correct and up to date. The Director may not forbid the use of self-adjudication via smart device and must inform participants before the start of a tournament which other method/s of adjudication will be allowed.

After adjudication by any method below, the timer may not be restarted until both players are seated, the move score has been re-announced or the tiles retracted, and the player whose timer would be running after the challenge has either: returned all face down tiles to their rack (recommended); or commenced with any writing on their scoresheet.

### **3.11.1 Self-Adjudication**

#### **(a) Self-Adjudication at an External Device**

- (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/s are being challenged;
- (iv) to minimise errors, it is advised that either player writes the word/s down on a challenge slip;
- (v) both players cover or turn the tiles on their racks face down and proceed to the adjudication device;
- (vi) the challenger types in the word/s being challenged into the adjudication program;
- (vii) the opponent verifies that the word/s are correctly typed and executes the adjudication command.

**(b) Self Adjudication via Smart Device**

- (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/s are being challenged;
- (iv) the challenger types in the word/s being challenged into the adjudication program;
- (v) the opponent verifies that the word/s are correctly typed and then gives verbal consent for the challenger to execute the adjudication command.

Note that the use of a smart device for self-adjudication must be agreed to by both players.

The following requirements with regard to smart device adjudication are mandatory:

- The minimum screen size must be at least 3.5 inches (89 millimetres) measured diagonally.
- The device must be set so that it cannot make distracting sounds or vibrations.
- The device must be used in adjudication mode and may not be used in other modes.
- While in use, the screen must remain visible to both players.
- The device's adjudication program must be capable of accepting multiple words to be challenged at a time.

**3.11.2 External Adjudication**

**(a) External Adjudication Using Runners**

- (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/s are being challenged, and must record the word/s legibly on a challenge slip;
- (iv) both players must cover or place face down any tiles they may have and the challenger calls for a runner;
- (v) the runner takes the challenge slip to the External Adjudicator;
- (vi) the External Adjudicator carefully checks the acceptability of the word/s on the challenge slip using the correct software or printed word list, then;
- (vii) places a single tick on the challenge slip if all challenged words are acceptable, or a single cross if at least one is not, and returns the slip to the runner.
- (viii) When multiple words are challenged, runners and adjudicators must not reveal to players the acceptability of individual words.
- (ix) If docket printers are used to print the results of challenges, the printout may be returned to the players in lieu of the original challenge slip.

**(b) External Adjudication via Self-Running**

The procedure runs as for 3.11.2 (a) (External Adjudication Using Runners), just above, except that the challenger takes the place of the runner.

**(c) External Adjudication via Tournament Director's Smart Device**

- (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/s are being challenged;
- (iv) the Director is called;
- (v) the Director types the word/s to be challenged into the adjudication program, shows both players that the words have been typed in correctly, then, after verbal consent from the challenged player, executes the adjudication command.
- (vi) the Director may choose to let the players use the Director's device themselves, in which case the procedure runs exactly as in 3.11.1(b) (Self Adjudication via Smart Device).

## 3.12 Correcting Errors of Misoriented or Imperfectly Placed Tiles

Once orientation of the game has been established (see 3.1.3 (Establishing Orientation)), errors of misoriented or imperfectly placed tiles may be corrected by the opponent as follows:

- (a) While the player at fault is still on turn, the opponent may not physically correct the error, but may point out the error.
- (b) If the error has not been corrected by the player at fault and that player's turn has ended, then the opponent may stop the timer and correct the error, after which either player may restart the opponent's timer.

Note that playing a tile in a misoriented position or imperfectly placing a tile is considered poor etiquette (see 6.4.1).

## 3.13 Illegal Moves

### 3.13.1 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 after orientation has been established (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), above, if a player so refrains, the centre square retains its double-word-score value for subsequent turns.

### 3.13.2 Improper Tile Exchanges

- (a) A player wishing to challenge an improper or illegal exchange must neutralise the timer and call the Tournament Director to adjudicate.
- (b) If an exchange is announced but no number of tiles is specified and no tiles are placed on the table before the timer is pressed, then the turn counts as a pass.
- (c) There is no penalty for putting the old tiles into the bag before drawing new tiles.
- (d) If the exchanger fails to put the face-down tiles back into the bag, and any new tiles in a turn after the exchange are drawn by either player before the discovery is made, then said face-down tiles must be seen by both players before being returned to the bag.
- (e) If the number of tiles placed face down does not equal the number of tiles announced, then the number of face down tiles at the moment the exchanger presses the timer shall be exchanged.
- (f) There is no penalty for an unsuccessful challenge of a tile exchange.
- (g) A player is free to refrain from challenging an illegal exchange.
- (h) An illegal exchange may be challenged at any time before the exchange has been completed according to the steps in Rule 3.2.1 (Elements of the Exchange).
- (i) If an exchange is announced and the timer has been pressed but there are less than 7 tiles in the bag then the timer must be neutralised and the following algorithm applies:

- (i) If the illegal exchange is only noticed after the non-exchanger has made an accepted move, or passed, or lost a challenge, then the player who made the illegal exchange will have 30 points deducted from that player's game score.
- (ii) If NO NEWLY DRAWN TILE has touched the rack and NO ORIGINAL TILES have been placed into the bag, then the exchanger passes the turn. All newly drawn tiles must be shown to the opponent and returned to the bag, while all original tiles are returned to the exchanger's rack.
- (iii) If NO NEWLY DRAWN TILE has touched the rack but AT LEAST ONE ORIGINAL TILE has been placed into the bag, then any original tiles on the table must be returned to the rack. The opponent exposes all newly drawn tiles and all tiles in the bag. Within one minute, the opponent replenishes the rack of the exchanger with a tile or tiles of the opponent's choice and the exchanger passes the turn. All remaining tiles on the table are returned to the bag.
- (iv) If AT LEAST ONE NEWLY DRAWN TILE has touched the rack, but NO ORIGINAL TILES have been put into the bag, then the opponent exposes all tiles set aside to be exchanged plus all tiles from the exchanger's rack. Within one minute, the opponent chooses 7 of the aforementioned tiles to return to the exchanger's rack, and the rest are returned to the bag. The exchanger passes the turn.
- (v) If AT LEAST ONE NEWLY DRAWN TILE has touched the rack and AT LEAST ONE ORIGINAL TILE has been put into the bag then the opponent exposes all tiles on the exchanger's rack, all tiles in the bag and any tiles set aside to be exchanged. From these tiles the opponent chooses 7 (within one minute) to be returned to the exchanger's rack, with the remainder being returned to the bag. The exchanger passes the turn.

### **3.13.3 Exchanging from Racks of Eight or More Tiles**

After announcing an exchange and starting the opponent's timer, if a player is discovered to have had a rack containing eight or more tiles, the following algorithm is to be applied:

- (a) If no new tiles have been drawn, the overdraw procedure is applied and the offender loses their turn, i.e. cannot exchange.
- (b) If the overdraw is discovered after any new tiles are drawn, but before any tiles have been returned to the bag: all exchanged, kept, and newly drawn tiles are combined. The overdraw procedure will then be applied (see part (b) of 3.9.5 Overdrawing).
- (c) If the overdraw is discovered after any tiles have been returned to the bag: combine the originally kept tiles, the replacement tiles, any tiles not yet returned to the bag and the newly drawn tiles. The overdraw procedure will then be applied (see part (b) of 3.9.5 Overdrawing).

### **3.13.4 Exchanging from Racks of Six or Fewer Tiles**

If a player is found to have exchanged from a rack of six tiles or fewer, one of the following steps is taken:

- (a) If there would have been seven or more tiles in the bag had the exchanger held a full rack, play continues with no penalty to the exchanger.
- (b) If there would have been fewer than seven tiles in the bag had the exchanger held a full rack, implement rule 3.13.2 (i) (Improper Tile Exchanges).



## Part 4 – Interrupting the Game

### 4.1 Neutralising the Timer

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

- (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 liquid; 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 (see also 4.9 (Emergencies and Medical/Health Problems)).
- (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 slip 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 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 tile/s are spilled from the bag during a game then the timer is neutralised, any tiles on racks are covered, and the Director is called. Players may look at spilled tiles which landed face-up, but may not touch spilled tiles before the Director rules on the spillage.

- (a) Spillage in the period before and including replenishing of the rack:**
- (i) this is managed by rule 3.9.5 (Overdrawing).
- (b) Spillage just after the rack has been replenished:**
- (i) the spilled tiles are turned face up on the table;
  - (ii) the non-spiller has the option to decline to invoke the overdraw procedure in rule 3.9.5(b), if s/he believes that there is a chance that the spiller may potentially benefit from said procedure, and the Director affirms that said belief is legitimate.
- (c) Spillage not related to drawing tiles, with 7 or more tiles in the bag:**
- (i) this type of spillage is generally deemed to be accidental and carries no penalty; however,
  - (ii) the non-spiller may petition the Director to scrutinise the circumstances of the spillage, after which management is at the discretion of the Director, with the maximum penalty being invoking the overdraw procedure in rule 3.9.5(b).
- (d) Spillage not related to drawing tiles, with less than 7 tiles in the bag:**
- (i) the Director places the spilled tile/s face up on the table;
  - (ii) the spiller's rack tiles are placed face down on a separate part of the table and s/he shuffles them randomly;
  - (iii) the non-spiller chooses two of said rack tiles, turns them face up and adds them to the spilled tile/s;
  - (iv) the non-spiller chooses any two of the face-up tiles and gives them to the spiller;
  - (v) the remaining tiles are returned to the bag.

## 4.5 Upset or Overturned Boards

The Tournament Director must be called immediately and the board and any scattered tiles must not be touched until they arrive. Any tiles knocked off a player's rack may be quickly covered or turned face down to prevent the opponent viewing them. After hearing the testimony of both players and any witnesses of the event, the Tournament Director must decide whether the board was upset accidentally or intentionally.

### 4.5.1 Accidental Board Upsets

If this occurred due to a table collapse, then all tables must immediately be checked for stability and correct extension of legs.

- (a) If the game can be fully reconstructed from recorded plays (subject to approval by the Tournament Director to minimise any impact on tournament scheduling), this must be done and normal play resumes. If the Tournament Director rules that the game cannot be reconstructed due to time constraints, follow the procedure in 4.5.1 (b)).
- (b) If the game cannot be fully reconstructed, the game will end. The final game scores will stand at the point at which the board was upset. Where the number of turns played by each player is uneven, the score for the last turn made is subtracted from the appropriate player's total score. Any disputes concerning final game scores will be resolved by the Tournament Director.

#### **4.5.2 Intentional Board Upsets**

Upsetting a board intentionally is considered a very serious offence and results in an immediate loss for the offending player. The offending player will also be ejected from the tournament. The spread for the lost game is calculated as follows:

- (a) If the offending the player was not in the lead, they will lose the game by the current margin plus 100 points.
- (b) If the offending player was in the lead, they will lose the game by a margin of 100 points.

#### **4.6 Tiles Discovered In the Bag After the End of the Game**

If any tiles are discovered in the bag, which the players had thought to be empty, before the result slip 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.

#### **4.7 Tiles Noticed to be Missing During Play**

If a player notices that a tile has gone missing during play then the Director must be called to confirm this. If confirmed, a thorough search of the surrounding area must be performed, within reasonable limits. If the tile is found then refer to 4.3 (Tiles discovered Out of the Bag). If the tile cannot be found, the game must continue as if the tile was never in the bag, and after the game it must be ensured that the affected table has a full set of tiles for the next round.

#### **4.8 Scope of Uninvited Intervention by the Director in a Game**

- (a) the Tournament Director may not intervene in the event of any mathematical error/s noticed by the Tournament Director or a third party;
- (b) the Tournament Director must intervene when s/he notices cheating, but if the Tournament Director is made aware of alleged cheating by a third party, then s/he must investigate the allegation/s and take action as necessary, using discretion.
- (c) The Tournament Director must intervene in any noticed error of procedure that leads to one player being unfairly affected (e.g. an error in challenging procedure).

#### **4.9 Scope of Intervention by a Third Party in a Game**

- (a) a third party may not intervene DIRECTLY in an observed game in any way, including in errors of mathematics, errors of procedure and even cheating noticed by the third party;
- (b) instances of cheating noticed by a third party must be reported to the Tournament Director, who must then investigate the allegation/s and take action as necessary, using discretion;
- (c) errors of procedure noticed by a third party should be reported to the Tournament Director.

## 4.10 Emergencies and Medical/Health Problems

In the event of an emergency (whether medical or not), the affected player's timer must be stopped and the Tournament Director must be called. The Tournament Director must quickly assess the emergency, decide on a course of action and, in order to preserve the smooth running of the tournament, immediately restart the affected player's timer. If the affected player feels sufficiently recovered within the game time left for that player then the player may attempt to finish the game, otherwise the affected player resigns the game due to the emergency (see 5.7 Resigning).



## 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 the 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

- (a) When one player has played out, then either:
  - (i) his or her score is increased by twice the value of the opponent's unplayed tiles, and the opponent's score is unchanged (this is the procedure recommended by WESPA); OR
  - (ii) his or her score is increased by the value of the opponent's unplayed tiles, and the opponent's score is commensurately decreased.
- (b) If neither player is able to play out then refer to 5.2 (Six Consecutive Zero Scores End the Game)) just below.

### 5.2 Six Consecutive Zero Scores End the Game

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 (measured in full seconds, and NOT fractions of a second) by which he or she exceeded the assigned game time.

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

A player who goes over the assigned game time by 10 minutes immediately loses the game (a forfeit loss).

Note that the NON-FORFEITER's final score remains unchanged.

To work out the score to be recorded on the result slip for the forfeiter, first deduct 100 overtime penalty points from the forfeiter's game score, and then:

- (i) if, after the deduction from the forfeiter, the NON-FORFEITER has won by 100 points or more, then the forfeiter's score to be recorded on the result slip is the forfeiter's game score minus the 100 overtime penalty points;
- (ii) if, after the deduction from the forfeiter, the NON-FORFEITER has NOT won by 100 points or more, then the forfeiter's score to be recorded on the result slip is calculated by deducting 100 points from the NON-FORFEITER's score.

(Note that in the unlikely event of the forfeiter's final score being a negative number after the calculations above, 100 points must be added to each player's score.)

### **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-rateable.

## **5.4 Result Slip**

### **5.4.1 Result Slips Final Once Signed**

A game result slip 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 slip, one or both players petition the Director to correct ONLY an error where the final game scores of the winner and loser were accidentally reversed. The Tournament Director must make every reasonable effort to correct this error, but may refuse if doing so will affect the draw or the smooth running of the tournament in a way that s/he deems to be unacceptable or overly complicated. The Tournament Director must ensure that both players are made aware of the amendment to the result slip.

### **5.4.2 Responsibility of Winner**

The winner must hand in the result slip before leaving the playing area and assist with the Tile Check (see 5.6 Tile Check).

## 5.5 Recounts

### 5.5.1 Right to Recount

Either player may request a recount at the end of a game, regardless of spread differential, and with the agreement of the Tournament Director.

### 5.5.2 Recount Procedure

Partial recounts are ONLY acceptable with both players' consent. If one player refuses, 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 preferably four 5x5 grids or one 10x10 grid.

## 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 (see also 4.7 Scope of Uninvited Intervention by the Director in a Game)

- (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;
- (h) when a player knowingly misrepresents his or her start/reply record when self-balancing starts are in use.

### 6.2.2 Suspected Cheating

- (a) Players must 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 suspected cheating may not intervene directly, but must 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, at the discretion of the Tournament Director, the degree of abuse is deemed to be minor then the penalty is a stern warning and the offender must be informed that any further abusive behaviour could lead to ejection from the tournament. Otherwise, if a player is found cheating or behaving abusively:

- (a) the player will be ejected from the tournament and none of the player's games will count towards ratings. Furthermore:
  - (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 devices or materials to gain an unfair advantage;
- (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;
- (r) not notifying an opponent of a timer malfunction.

### **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 or with imperfect placement;
- (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 (see also 4.8 Scope of Intervention by a Third Party in a Game)**

- (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) As the Tournament Director's decision is final during a tournament (see 6.1.2 (a)), any appeal of a decision must commence after the completion of the tournament.
- (b) Any parties impacted by a Tournament Director's decision during a tournament, or by a disciplinary decision for improper conduct, has right of appeal.
- (c) Any appeal must follow the correct hierarchy of channels, namely:
  - (i) the first appeal must be to the appropriate local or provincial body, if any;
  - (ii) the second appeal must be to the appropriate national body, if any;
  - (iii) only then may the player contact the WESPA Executive Committee, who will arrange for the finding to be reviewed as below.
- (d) 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 email, fax or letter. Members of the WESPA Executive Committee are not allowed to be considered as "disinterested players". The committee so formed is the sole body that will review the correctness of the finding with the purpose of providing a recommendation to be considered by the WESPA Executive Committee.
- (e) 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. The WESPA Executive Committee will then review the report with a view to either accept (in part or in whole) or reject the recommendation.
- (f) 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).

## 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.

<b>A</b> <sub>1</sub> 9	<b>H</b> <sub>4</sub> 2	<b>O</b> <sub>1</sub> 8	<b>V</b> <sub>4</sub> 2
<b>B</b> <sub>3</sub> 2	<b>I</b> <sub>1</sub> 9	<b>P</b> <sub>3</sub> 2	<b>W</b> <sub>4</sub> 2
<b>C</b> <sub>3</sub> 2	<b>J</b> <sub>8</sub> 1	<b>Q</b> <sub>10</sub> 1	<b>X</b> <sub>8</sub> 1
<b>D</b> <sub>2</sub> 4	<b>K</b> <sub>5</sub> 1	<b>R</b> <sub>1</sub> 6	<b>Y</b> <sub>4</sub> 2
<b>E</b> <sub>1</sub> 12	<b>L</b> <sub>1</sub> 4	<b>S</b> <sub>1</sub> 4	<b>Z</b> <sub>10</sub> 1
<b>F</b> <sub>4</sub> 2	<b>M</b> <sub>3</sub> 2	<b>T</b> <sub>1</sub> 6	□ 2
<b>G</b> <sub>2</sub> 3	<b>N</b> <sub>1</sub> 6	<b>U</b> <sub>1</sub> 4	

## 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**

From 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019, the official word source is Collins Official SCRABBLE® Words, 5th edition, 2019.

## **CONVENOR: LILY-ANNE FERNANDES**

**An Event with Less than three (3) communities shall be cancelled. Subject to change without notice. Age As at 5th OF NOVEMBER 2024. For more information Contact your community**