

# BEGINNERS GUIDE TO PLAYING SCRABBLE

## THE BOARD

TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE WORD SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			TRIPLE WORD SCORE
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TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE WORD SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			TRIPLE WORD SCORE

### Letter Distribution (English-language version)

**A**, 9, **B**, 2, **C**, 2, **D**, 4, **E**, 12, **F**, 2, **G**, 3, **H**, 2, **I**, 9,  
**J**, 1, **K**, 1, **L**, 4, **M**, 2, **N**, 6, **O**, 8, **P**, 2, **Q**, 1, **R**, 6,  
**S**, 4, **T**, 6, **U**, 4, **V**, 2, **W**, 2, **X**, 1, **Y**, 2, **Z**, 1, Blanks 2

### Tile Value

0 points **Blanks**

1 point **A, E, I, L, N, O, R, S, T, U**

2 points **D, G**

3 points **B, C, M, P**

4 points **F, H, V, W, Y**

5 points **K**

8 points **J, X**

10 points **Q, Z**

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## Basic Rules

- (i) To determine who plays first, each player should draw a tile from the bag. Nearest to A starts (a blank beats an A). Return drawn tiles to bag.
- (ii) The player going first now draws seven tiles from the bag and places them on their rack. Second player now draws their tiles.
- (iii) The first player now makes their move, which must go through the centre pink square (which counts as a double word score).
- (iv) If a blank is used, then the letter it represents must be announced clearly to your opponent. The blank scores zero.
- (v) Add up your move score, taking into account any premium squares. Announce your score and write it down.
- (vi) Do not draw any more tiles, to replace those just used, until your opponent agrees with your move. If they wish to challenge your move, they should say 'challenge'. The word or words in question should then be checked, using any word authority agreed on before the game started.
- (vii) If the move is correct, your opponent should accept it by writing down the score, and you may then draw replacement tiles for those just used. If the move is incorrect, then you must take back the tiles just played, and replace them on your rack. Play then passes to your opponent.
- (viii) If you make use of tiles already on the board, say by extending a word or playing parallel to some, then you use the face value of those tiles already on the board when adding up your score. You do not take into account any premium squares that lie below them. For the tiles you played, remember to score in both directions to include all new words made.
- (ix) If you play all of your seven tiles in one go, then you add a bonus of 50 points to your move total. You then draw seven new tiles.
- (x) You can change some, or all, of your tiles at any time as long as there are seven or more tiles left in the bag. To do so, announce 'change'. Say how many. Then take the tiles you wish to change off your rack, and place them face down on the table. Now draw from the bag your replacement tiles, placing them on your rack. Return the facedown tiles back into the bag. This becomes your go, and play passes to your opponent.
- (xi) The game ends when the bag is empty and one player has no more tiles left. They then add on the point value of their opponent's remaining tiles to their total score. Their opponent subtracts this point value from their total. (NB - in some countries, the player going out adds on twice the value of his opponent's tiles, instead of subtracting them from his opponent)
- (xii) The game can also end if neither player can make a play once the bag is empty. Each player subtracts their remaining tile point value from their own game score.
- (xiii) The winner is the player with the most points at the end of the game.

## Using the board to your advantage

To start with, you can only play with the words that you already know. With this in mind, you will need to learn a few things in order to start to increase your scoring potential.

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**Premium squares** - these double or triple the tile value that is played onto them, or double or triple the word score that is played onto them. This increases your move score. (With practice you can even double–double or triple–triple a word score)

**Parallel plays** - these are moves that make one or more words other than the one you played onto the board, so your move score is increased.

**Hooks** - this is when you play a word onto the board, and one of its letters goes in front of, or at the end of, a word already on the board. Again this increases your move score.

**Bonus (or ‘bingo’)** - this is when you are able to play all of your seven tiles out onto the board in one go. This adds an extra fifty points to your move score.

### Premium squares

If the T is on a Double Letter square then it scores 4 instead of the usual 2 points.

	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE	
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	T <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			
TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	T <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE WORD SCORE
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				

If it is on a TL square, it scores 6 instead of 3.

				DOUBLE WORD SCORE						DOUBLE WORD SCORE				
	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE			T <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE		
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		T <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			
TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	T <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE WORD SCORE
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				

### Parallel play

TRAIN was played first then STOW was played below it to also make AS, IT and NO - thus making four words.

		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		
TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	T <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE WORD SCORE
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	S <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	W <sub>1</sub>		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		
	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE	

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## Hook play

HAIR was played first. Then, by playing CROWN, the C hooks in front of this to make CHAIR as well.

		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		
TRIPLE WORD SCORE			C <sub>4</sub>	H <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	R <sub>4</sub>					DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		TRIPLE WORD SCORE
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	R <sub>4</sub>			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		
	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE		O <sub>4</sub>		TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE	
			W <sub>4</sub>	DOUBLE WORD SCORE						DOUBLE WORD SCORE				
DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			N <sub>4</sub>				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE
		DOUBLE WORD SCORE					DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE			DOUBLE WORD SCORE		

## Bonus play

Most bonus plays involve one of the above. So, work out your score for the move, then add on your 50 bonus points.

## Scoring

Unless you can quickly calculate the scores of various options, it is hard to choose which is the best move to make. Therefore, you should now work through the **SCORING TUTORIAL** (if you have not already done so)

## Increasing your vocabulary

As with anything that you do, you must always be willing to learn, to better yourself. Learning to play Scrabble is no different. Top players know all the 2, 3 and 4-letter words. They will certainly also know the high-scoring and the most probable 5-letter words, plus a good sprinkling of 6-letter words. With the 7 and 8-letter words, they will again know the most probable words, along with the high scoring ones. For example, take any 5 of the letters in RETAINS, and they will know all of the 7s and 8s that you can form, which include those 5 letters. They are the most common to be picked from the bag, so it pays to focus on learning these high-probability sets. The chance of playing something like MUGWUMP is very unlikely.

The road ahead is daunting, but believe me, it is very rewarding and addictive. So let's make a start.

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There are 124 two-letter words listed below.

<b>AA</b>	<b>AN</b>	<b>BI</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>ET</b>	<b>HE</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>NE</b>	<b>OI</b>	<b>OX</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>UM</b>	<b>XU</b>
<b>AB</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>BO</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>EX</b>	<b>HI</b>	<b>JA</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>OM</b>	<b>OY</b>	<b>SO</b>	<b>UN</b>	<b>YA</b>
<b>AD</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>BY</b>	<b>EF</b>	<b>FA</b>	<b>HM</b>	<b>JO</b>	<b>ME</b>	<b>NU</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>UP</b>	<b>YE</b>
<b>AE</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>CH</b>	<b>EH</b>	<b>FE</b>	<b>HO</b>	<b>KA</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>OO</b>	<b>PE</b>	<b>TA</b>	<b>UR</b>	<b>YO</b>
<b>AG</b>	<b>AW</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>EL</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>MM</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>YU</b>
<b>AH</b>	<b>AX</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>EM</b>	<b>GI</b>	<b>IF</b>	<b>KO</b>	<b>MO</b>	<b>OD</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>PO</b>	<b>TI</b>	<b>UT</b>	<b>ZA</b>
<b>AI</b>	<b>AY</b>	<b>DI</b>	<b>EN</b>	<b>GO</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>KY</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>OE</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>QI</b>	<b>TO</b>	<b>WE</b>	<b>ZO</b>
<b>AL</b>	<b>BA</b>	<b>DO</b>	<b>ER</b>	<b>GU</b>	<b>IO</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>MY</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>OU</b>	<b>RE</b>	<b>UG</b>	<b>WO</b>	
<b>AM</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>HA</b>	<b>IS</b>	<b>LI</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>OH</b>	<b>OW</b>	<b>SH</b>	<b>UH</b>	<b>XI</b>	

The only trouble with a list like the one above is that your eyes tend to look at the words you already know, and not the ones that you don't know. So taking out the ones that you should already know you may arrive at a slightly smaller list like the one below.

<b>AA</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>CH</b>	<b>EF</b>	<b>ET</b>	<b>HE</b>	<b>KA</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>NU</b>	<b>OO</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>UM</b>	<b>XU</b>
<b>AB</b>	<b>AW</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>EH</b>	<b>FA</b>	<b>HM</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>OP</b>	<b>PE</b>	<b>TA</b>	<b>UN</b>	<b>YA</b>
<b>AE</b>	<b>AX</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>EL</b>	<b>FE</b>	<b>HO</b>	<b>KO</b>	<b>MM</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>UR</b>	<b>YO</b>
<b>AG</b>	<b>AY</b>	<b>DI</b>	<b>EM</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>KY</b>	<b>MO</b>	<b>OD</b>	<b>OU</b>	<b>PO</b>	<b>TI</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>YU</b>
<b>AH</b>	<b>BA</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>EN</b>	<b>GI</b>	<b>IO</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>MU</b>	<b>OE</b>	<b>OW</b>	<b>QI</b>	<b>TO</b>	<b>UT</b>	<b>ZA</b>
<b>AI</b>	<b>BI</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>ER</b>	<b>GU</b>	<b>JA</b>	<b>LI</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>OI</b>	<b>OX</b>	<b>SH</b>	<b>UG</b>	<b>WO</b>	<b>ZO</b>
<b>AL</b>	<b>BO</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>HA</b>	<b>JO</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>NE</b>	<b>OM</b>	<b>OY</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>UH</b>	<b>XI</b>	

Further subgroups can be made to help learning. You could start with say the As to Es, then the Fs to Ls, and so on. Another way is to learn those starting with a vowel, and then those starting with a consonant. You could try looking for those that have two anagrams like OI and IO. There is no right way that suits everybody. Adopt a way that suits your style of learning. If you find learning all of them difficult, then do what we did above - that is, once some have been committed to memory, remove them from your list and gradually you will end up with none left.

Some of these two-letter words can be the life blood of your game, now that you have learnt them. Let's say that your opponent started with TRAIN, and the A was just below a DL square. Your letters include a Z and an A. Your Z now becomes worth 40 points simply by playing ZA .

	TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE				TRIPLE LETTER SCORE	
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				Z <sub>40</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		
TRIPLE WORD SCORE			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE	T <sub>4</sub>	R <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>4</sub>			DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		TRIPLE WORD SCORE	
		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		DOUBLE LETTER SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		

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Two-letter wordplays containing the J, Q, X and Z are really worth looking out for, in situations like this. If a Y is on the board next to a premium square, check to see if you have a B, F, K or M on your rack. If there is a vowel next to one, then your choice is even greater.

### **Hooks**

Hooks can help you score more than just playing through another word already on the board. The most common hook is just making a word into its plural by adding an S. Start to look at words to see if they will take any other letters in front or behind them. Obviously you will only be able to do this with words already in your vocabulary. So transforming RATE into CRATE, GRATE, IRATE or ORATE should be easy to spot. With practice and learning you will find that you can place an F, P, U, or W in front as well.

With this in mind, I suggest that, having learnt the two-letter words, you look at them and find all their front and back hooks. You will find that some of those that you knew already make words that you don't know; also that some of the ones you didn't know, when hooked, make three-letter words that you do know. An example could be HM, that takes an O in front to make OHM. Your studies will tell you that HM also extends to HMM.

Find a way of learning these hooks that suits you. I suggest that you just go through them from A to Z, starting with AA and ending with ZO. Another way could be to create sub-lists of all the two-letter words that take an A in front of them or after them. Then repeat this exercise for a B, a C, etc.

Be careful once you have spotted that a word can take a hook. Your brain can switch off to the fact that the newly-formed word may now take a further hook front or back, that it previously couldn't - especially as your learning of words progresses and you start to play against more-experienced players. An example of this is TAP - you extend it to ATAP and your opponent then hits you with WATAP - leaving you shaking your head and saying 'challenge'.

There is a further type of hook that needs a mention, called a Benjamin. It is really an extension of a word already played, that involves more than one letter being added to the front or back of it. I once started a game with HIVES, that I later hooked to form CHIVES, forgetting that it could be extended to make ARCHIVES, giving my opponent a nice 48 points.

### **Three-letter words**

Now that we have an extra letter to play with in each word, we can start to produce more sub-lists, as I call them. (You will already have learnt some from the hooks to the two-letter words.) One such list would be all of the three-letter words that have a J Q X or Z in them. Learn these as you will need them in your armoury, as you progress in the Scrabble world. Another sub-list could be three-letter words that can not be formed from hooking a two-letter word to make it into a three - ZIG, for example. Yet another list is the words that have two or more anagrams. TEA is an example of this. It also makes ATE, EAT, ETA and TAE. This list can be subdivided into lists that have two, three, four or five anagrams. You may come up with other lists that will aid your learning.

Now is a good time to introduce you to another group of words that are worth some of your learning time - BLOCKERS. These are words that can not take any letters in front of or behind them. If you were to play one of these words and leave the end letter one space short of a premium square, you may tempt your opponent into trying to hook it. Your challenge

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will then lose them their turn, allowing you to increase your own score without reply. You may now wish to go back to the two-letter words and check to see which of those are blockers as well.

### Getting ahead

Once you have mastered all of the above, find yourself someone to practice with, do some word study, and find a club, if you can - or try playing on the internet. After you become proficient in the basics, try working through John Holgate's Koala's Coaching Clinic (found on the Australian Scrabble® Players website - [www.scrabble.org.au](http://www.scrabble.org.au)) Eventually, the best way to improve is to start playing in tournaments. Most countries have Scrabble® Associations which provide tournaments for their members.

**(This tutorial was prepared by Graham Wakefield, England, and edited by Karen Richards, Australia)**

For more information contact Karen Richards [[karen.d.richards@gmail.com](mailto:karen.d.richards@gmail.com)]

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