

This Is How To Get Better At Scrabble!

1. Introduction

You're interested in Scrabble because you're intelligent, you love the English language, thrive on mental stimulation and enjoy problem solving. The beauty of Scrabble is that it can be played at any level, and no matter whether you're a beginner, a social player or a club player, your game can be improved by learning a few more words.

2. The Easiest Way to Improve Your Scrabble

Words are your weapons in Scrabble, so it follows that learning more words is the key to becoming a better player. The most important rule when you set out to learn new words is this: "**Don't be intimidated by word lists!**" Start in a relaxed manner by learning the short and easy lists of words that are in **Starter Pack Zero**, and slowly build up your knowledge from there. As you learn more words, your brain will become trained to unscramble the jumbled up letters quicker, so the more you learn, the easier it gets!

3. Winning Is the Best Fun!

The more words you know, the more games you'll win, and winning is not only great fun, but a well deserved reward for the word studying you'll do. The words that will help you the most are the ones which occur most commonly in Scrabble, and some of the most important of these can be found in **Starter Pack Zero**.

4. Tips To Make Word Study Easy!

With certain word lists, it helps to cross out the words that are very obvious to you. This can cut down the number words to learn by quite a lot. Some words are harder to learn than others, and there are various ways that you can mark the more difficult ones so you know that you need to revise those more often. You may highlight the words that are difficult to remember, or put a pen or pencil line next to the question whenever you don't get it right. Very soon the most difficult words will have a number of lines next to them, so you'll end up with a small list of the words that you know aren't that easy for you, thereby making revision so much more effective the next time you look at the list.

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5. What are “Alphagrams”, and Why are They Important?

When you start with a study list, you’ll notice that the question is in the form of a jumbled up word that you have to unscramble. If you look carefully, you’ll notice that the jumbled up letters are always in alphabetical order. This is called an ‘**alphagram**’. For example, the alphagram of DOG is DGO, the alphagram of FOOD is DFOO, the alphagram of HAPPY is AHPPY, and the alphagram of TAINTED is ADEINTT. Studying from alphagrams is the best way to learn new words, because your brain eventually learns the pattern of the alphagram, and when you see that alphagram again, your brain will often automatically unscramble it to give you the word! Virtually all top players study from alphagrams, and because of this, the majority like to arrange their racks in alphabetical order before they start shuffling their tiles. By doing this, their brains may recognise an alphagram almost instantly and the word then “jumps out at them”. For example, a good player who’s familiar with the alphagram AEHNORT will immediately spot the word ANOTHER. Try to make a habit of always first arranging the tiles on your rack in alphabetical order before you start shuffling, and you’ll notice that many of the words you studied will be easier to see.

6. Studying with Zyzzyva Software and Cardbox

If you prefer to study words on a computer or laptop, go to www.youthscrabble.org , click “Resources”, then scroll down to the heading “Computer programs”. Download the word study software called “Collins Zyzzyva” and follow the “[Demonstration of How to Set Up Cardbox](#) by Elliott Richards”. Read the advice of international expert Alastair Richards by going through the “[Suggested Zyzzyva Cardbox Order for adding words](#) by Alastair Richards” in the same part of the website.

7. The Final Word

Remember that studying words is quite easy, as long as you start with some basic lists and steadily build up your word knowledge from there. You get to decide the number of words to add at any time, and the pace of studying that you’re comfortable with. The more you study, the more your brain becomes trained to unjumble words, so the easier it gets! Don’t be intimidated by word lists – start with the essentials and add more words when you feel ready. Make your own lists, if you like, and think of creative ways to remember the words. Some suggestions for word lists are the words that end in -WOOD, or -FISH. Playing a lot of games will improve your strategy and tactics, but this isn’t nearly as important as learning some new words if you want to be a better Scrabble player.

Finally, always keep in mind my favourite mantra: “The more words you learn, the luckier you will get!”

(by Dr. Trevor Hovelmeier, South Africa)