



OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES

INTRODUCTION

Students play in teams of two. All teams play for the entire tournament, there are no eliminations of teams. The games are timed with digital clocks, which will be provided, and each team has a total of 22 minutes per game in which to make all of their plays before incurring an overtime penalty. After the first game, teams are paired with other teams that have similar win-loss records.

SETUP

Confirm that there are 100 tiles in the bag before starting. The team going first draws seven tiles from the bag and places them on their rack. Then the second team does the same. Once the first team has viewed their first tile, their clock is started by their opponents.

GAME PLAY

1. The first team combines two or more of their tiles to form a word and places it on the board to read either across or down with one letter on the center (star) square. The center square doubles the score for the first word.
2. A team completes a turn by announcing the score and pressing the clock. The team records their new cumulative score and then draws as many new tiles as played, always keeping seven tiles on their rack.
3. Play alternates between teams. Each team, in turn, adds one or more tiles to those already played to form new words. Diagonal words are not permitted. All tiles played in a turn must be placed in one row, across or down on the board, to form one complete word. If, at the same time, they touch other tiles in adjacent rows, they must form complete words, crossword fashion, with all such tiles. The teams gets full credit for all words formed or modified during their turn.
4. New words may be formed by:
 - Adding one or more letters to a word or letters already on the board.
 - Placing a word at right angles to a word already on the board. The new word must use one of the letters already on the board or must add a letter to it.
 - Placing a complete word parallel to a word already played so that adjacent letters also form complete words.
5. No tiles may be shifted after the clock has been pressed.

THE BLANKS

6. The two blank tiles may be used as any letters. When playing a blank, the team must state which letter it represents and record the letter on paper before pressing the clock to end their turn. The blank remains that letter for the rest of the game.

7. A blank tile may be turned over and confirmed to be a blank before the play is accepted. Once the next team makes a play, a false blank may not be corrected. If a false blank is detected before the next team makes a play, then the play using the false blank comes off the board. The team who played it loses a turn.

EXCHANGING TILES

8. A team may use a turn to exchange all or some of the tiles in their rack. To do this, the team announces how many tiles they will exchange then places the discarded tile(s) facedown and presses the clock to end their turn. After pressing the clock, they draw the same number of tiles from the bag and then mix the discarded tiles with those in the bag. Tiles cannot be exchanged if there are fewer than seven tiles in the bag; if this occurs a penalty applies, and the player(s) must call for the director.
9. A team may pass their turn at any time without exchanging any tiles by saying "pass." They receive no score for this turn.

CHALLENGING A PLAY

10. The *Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, Fourth Edition (OSPD4)* is used to adjudicate challenges. Words with more than 8 letters must appear in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (MW11)* and must not be labeled as foreign, hyphenated, capitalized, disparaging, derogatory, obscene or offensive. If a word is not in the current *OSPD4* or *MW11* or on the "Official Adjustments to *OSPD4*" sheet on the NSSC website, it is not acceptable.
11. Any play may be challenged before the next team starts their turn. If the team wants to consider challenging the play, they can call "hold" without stopping the clock. They must call "hold" before their opponents have drawn new tiles. Teams must not draw new tiles too quickly before their opponents have time to see the play. When a hold occurs, the challenged team cannot draw new tiles for 20 seconds. After this time, they can draw new tiles but must keep them separate from their other tiles until the other team decides to challenge the play or withdraws the hold. After one minute, if a challenge has not been issued and the clock stopped, the hold is automatically withdrawn, and the play can no longer be challenged.
12. To challenge the play, the challengers stop the clock and say "challenge." The challengers then write on a challenge slip any or all of the words formed on that turn. Only the words written down will be used to determine the result of the challenge. If there is at least one word that is found unacceptable, the team being challenged takes back their tiles and loses that turn. If all the words challenged are acceptable, the challenger loses their turn. There is no penalty for challenging the final play of the game. It is strongly advised that BOTH players on a team agree to challenge. This will help minimize careless challenges.

SCORING

13. Both teams should record each team's score, entering it after each turn is announced and before drawing new tiles. Always record your opponent's cumulative score before making your own play. Check the score announced by your opponents for accuracy when they make their play. Games will not be recounted later—though either team may correct a score or their addition before the game ends.
14. The value of each letter is indicated by a number at the bottom of the tile. The value of the blank is always zero.
15. The score for each turn is the sum of the letter values in each word formed or modified on that turn, plus the additional points obtained from placing tiles on premium squares.
16. A double letter square (DLS) doubles the value of a letter placed on it; a triple letter square (TLS) triples the letter value. The score for an entire word is doubled when one of its tiles is placed on a double word square (DWS); it is tripled when one of its tiles is placed on a triple word square (TWS). Include premiums for double or triple letter values, if any, before doubling or tripling the word score.

Letter and word premiums count only on the turn in which they are played. On later turns, tiles already played on premium squares count at face value. When a blank tile is played on a DWS or TWS square, the value of the word is doubled or tripled, even though the blank itself has no score value.

- 17.** When two or more words are formed in the same play, each is scored. The common letter is counted for each word and the full premium value, if any, is awarded for both.
- 18.** Any team that plays all of their seven tiles on a turn scores a premium of 50 points after totaling the score for the turn. This play is commonly called a "bingo."

USING THE CLOCK

- 19.** The clock has two digital timers, each set to an initial readout of "22:00". As time is used, the timers countdown until they reach "00:00". At that point, all of a team's time has been used. After that, the team enters an overtime period with a reduction of 10 points for each minute, or partial minute, that they use. The time during this period counts up and is always shown with a negative sign in front of it.

Each side of the clock has a button that, when pressed, starts running the other team's timer. A team is only allowed to press the button on their side. Pressing the button officially ends a team's turn, and no changes to the play can be made after that point. There is a middle button on the clock, which can be pressed to stop the timer for both sides. This is only done when there is a scoring dispute, a challenge, a question that requires a director to resolve or when the game ends.

ENDING THE GAME

- 20.** The game ends when all tiles have been drawn, and one team uses their last letter; or when all possible plays have been made; or when there are six successive scores of zero resulting from passes, exchanges or challenges and the cumulative game score is not zero-zero; or when the round officially ends.
- 21.** No game may continue after the Director at the podium ends the round. Once the official end of the round is announced, the team that is not currently taking their turn should press the middle button to stop the clock. Once the clock has been stopped, no tiles can be placed on the board. Neither side may touch the clock again until after both scorecards have been signed.
- 22.** If a team makes their play and the end of game is announced, they must still draw their replacement tiles. Each team must end the game with full racks unless there are no tiles left in the bag to be drawn.
- 23.** When the game ends, each team's score is reduced by the sum of their unplayed tiles. In addition, if a team used all their tiles and the bag is empty, the sum of the other team's unplayed tiles is added to that team's score.
- 24.** The team with the highest score wins the game. In case of a tie, both teams earn 1/2 of a win. The spread for each game is limited to a maximum amount. In Round 1, this limit is 100 points. For Round 2, it is 150 points. For Round 3 and all rounds that follow, it is 250 points. For example, in Round 2, an actual score of 400-225 will be recorded as 375-225. These adjustments are made automatically by computer; players do not need to calculate them.

ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS

- 25.** At the start of each round the clock will start. Any team not present will automatically lose 10 points for each three-minute interval they are absent. The game will be forfeited if they fail to arrive 15 minutes after the round begins, with the opposing team earning a win and 50 points added to their cumulative spread. The forfeiting team is awarded a loss and -50 points of spread.
- 26.** Always hold the tile bag at eye level or above and avert the eyes when drawing tiles. A player may be disqualified from drawing additional tiles for his/her team if a Director determines that he/she has violated this rule.

- 27.** Never pronounce, discuss or define any word(s) out loud to your opponents.
- 28.** Never return any tiles to the bag unless you are exchanging letters on your turn. If you have drawn too many tiles, raise your hand and ask for assistance; an overdraw penalty will be applied.
- 29.** Never make use of any dictionary, word list or electronic device during a game.
- 30.** Never communicate with anyone during a game except your teammate, opponents and event staff.
- 31.** Never speak in an abusive, offensive or confrontational tone to your opponents and do not tell them what they can or cannot do. Whenever there is any question or concern, a team should raise their hand and ask to speak with a Director.
- 32.** Tile tracking is allowed and players may use the tile tracking sheet provided at the tournament or their own version showing the same information.
- 33.** Cellphones and electronic equipment must be turned off in the tournament room.
- 34.** No ear pieces (i.e. iPods, etc.) are allowed in the tournament room.
- 35.** All four players must remain at the table until the signed results slip has been reviewed and validated by event staff. No other players, coaches, parents, etc. may approach the game table until the slip has been validated by staff.
- 36.** Penalty points may be assessed by a Director for the violation of these rules.

WINNING THE TOURNAMENT

The team winning the most games wins the tournament. If there are multiple teams with the same number of wins, the winner is the team with the highest spread. A team's spread is calculated as explained in Rule 24. For example, if a team wins their first game by 40 points and loses their next game by 10 points, their spread after two games will be +30.

PLEASE NOTE:

All rules are subject to updates before the event.
Final decisions on all rulings are at the discretion of the official
National School SCRABBLE® Championship Directors.