

NASPA Official Tournament Rules: Player Edition

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Introduction

This condensed edition of the Official Tournament Rules lists everything that you need to know in order to compete in North American SCRABBLE Players Association (NASPA) clubs or tournaments. For more in-depth coverage of what happens in unusual situations, please consult the corresponding sections of the Director Edition. If the Player and Director Editions of the Rules appear to be in conflict, the Director Edition should take precedence.

I. Conduct

All players are encouraged to play with a spirit of fun, guided by a sense of fairness. Conduct at NASPA tournaments is subject to the terms of the *Code of Conduct* at the NASPA website. All players are honor-bound not to cheat or distract their opponents, collude with other players or interfere in other games.

II. General Principles

If an unusual situation occurs in your game and you are not sure what the rules call for, neutralize the clock and call the Director. Do not use the rules to intimidate your opponents.

If you see any of the following occur in your game or in other games, notify the players involved and tournament staff: potentially incorrect rulings, overdrawn racks, mistakenly moved tiles, disconnected tiles on boards, stray tiles, stopped clocks, or clocks left running during an adjudication.

Do not inform players of other games of mistakes in scoring.

III. Beginning the Game

Bring to the table only those items required for play.

If the director has not determined the order of play, choose according to the first of the following methods that applies: the player with fewer firsts, the player with more seconds, the player who draws a tile closest to “A” with a blank beating an “A”.

If players disagree about where and with what equipment a game will be played, director’s instructions or equipment standards will be consulted first, and then the preferences of the player who is due to go second.

Confirm all playing equipment, including the tile set, before starting play.

Both players may shuffle the tiles in the bag before the game begins, with the second player shuffling last.

The first player draws seven tiles. His/her game timer should be started as soon as s/he has seen the face of any tile. When the first player has finished drawing tiles, the second player draws seven tiles.

IV. Playing the Game

IV.A. Basic Rules

Players alternate taking turns. On each turn, a player may do one of: place tiles on the board, exchange (discard) tiles, or pass (do nothing). At the end of a player's turn, the player should start his/her opponent's timer, record the cumulative score, and if possible draw enough tiles to bring the player's total back to seven tiles. The winner is the player who has scored the most points at the end of the game.

When placing tiles on the board, all tiles must spell one main word of at least two letters, reading horizontally from left to right or vertically from top to bottom. If it is the only word on the board, one of its tiles must lie on the center square; if not, then it must touch existing words either horizontally or vertically. When the main word makes additional cross-words, they are each considered to be part of the play for the purposes of scoring the play and determining its validity. The score of the play is the sum of the scores of its words, plus a 50-point "bingo" bonus if all seven tiles are used. The score of a word is the sum of the scores of its letters, each multiplied according to any letter bonus squares newly covered, then finally multiplied according to any word bonus squares newly covered. (The center square counts as a double word square.)

The letter value of each blank tile is designated when it is played, and does not change. Blank tiles always score zero points.

Exchanging tiles or passing score zero points.

IV.B. Tile Drawing

When drawing tiles, show the open palm of your drawing hand to your opponent, raise the tile bag above eye level, hold the bag where s/he can see it but not between you and your opponent, look away from the bag, draw tiles and place them either facedown on the table or onto your rack. Do not hold tiles in one hand while drawing with the other.

IV.C. Managing Tiles

Never bring tiles below the plane of the table. Always keep your tiles in sight and on your rack unless moving them to/from the bag, board, or table when appropriate. Although you are free to change your play before starting your opponent's clock, do not use the board as a physical working area for deciding a play.

IV.D. Board Etiquette

During your turn, you may rotate the board to whatever angle you prefer. Allow your opponent clear visual access to the board at all times, except when making a play or verifying a score.

During your opponent's turn, do not speak unnecessarily, touch the board or any tiles on it.

IV.E. Passing and Exchanging

To pass your turn, announce that you are passing and start your opponent's game timer. Score zero for your turn.

You may exchange one or more of your tiles for new tiles from the tile bag, as long as there are at least seven tiles in the bag. To do so: announce the number of tiles that you are exchanging, place those tiles facedown on the table, start your opponent's game timer, draw new tiles from the bag and place them separately facedown on the table or directly on your rack, place the discarded tiles in the bag and mix, move any newly drawn facedown tiles from the table to your rack.

IV.F. Playing the Blank

When you play a blank tile onto the board, you must designate its letter value by circling or printing it as a capital letter on an appropriate slip.

IV.G. Completing a Turn

To complete a turn in which you play a word, you must do the following things in the following order: record your opponent's cumulative score (unless the tile bag is empty), place the appropriate tiles on the board, designate the blanks (if any), declare the score for the play, start your opponent's game timer (or stop yours if this is the last play of the game), record your cumulative score (unless the tile bag is empty), record your play (optional), draw replacement tiles, track which tiles were played (optional).

IV.H. Scoring Issues

During your turn, you may ask your opponent what his/her previous play was, how much it scored, and what s/he thinks the current cumulative game score is. If you disagree, you may neutralize the game timer until agreement is reached. It is considered cheating to knowingly announce or verify incorrect scores.

IV.I. Holding and Challenging

When your opponent plays a word, you may hold or challenge the play during the period that begins when your game timer is started and ends when your opponent has drawn a replacement tile. If challenged, a play is acceptable only if all the words challenged in it are acceptable.

To hold a play, call "hold" and hold the tile bag. By doing so, you reserve the right to challenge the play, and delay your opponent from drawing tiles for 15 seconds. After that period, your opponent may announce that they are drawing provisional tiles, then do so but keep them separate, in case you later successfully challenge and the tiles need to be returned to the tile bag.

To challenge a play, call "challenge", neutralize the game timer and proceed to a word adjudication station.

IV.J. Adjudicating Challenges by Computer

Here is the procedure for adjudicating a challenge by computer. The challenger writes the challenged word(s) on a slip of paper (the words may be changed at any time before the computer has adjudicated the play). Both players verify that the word(s) are written as played. Both players place all racked tiles facedown. Both players walk to the

computer station without speaking or disturbing others. The challenger types the word(s) being challenged. Both players verify that all the word(s) have been entered correctly. The player being challenged presses the adjudication key (usually TAB). The adjudication result is marked on the challenge slip. Both players return to their board without speaking or disturbing others. The player who lost the challenge loses his/her turn. If the losing player had already drawn tiles and kept them separate, those tiles are shown to the opponent and returned to the bag. When both players are seated, all facedown tiles have been returned to their racks, any successfully challenged play has been removed from the board, any blank designations involved in such a play has been crossed out or erased, and (in the case of an unsuccessful challenge) the drawer has seen the face of at least replacement tile (if any), the appropriate game timer is restarted.

IV.K. Adjudicating Challenged Manually

Players with physical challenges should inform the Director prior to the event that they will require manual lookups. All others must use computer adjudication where available. Here is the procedure for adjudicating a challenge manually. The challenger writes the challenged word(s) on a slip of paper, verifies spelling and legibility with the opponent, and alerts a designated word judge. The word judge confirms that the words on the slip were actually played, and rules whether or not the play was acceptable. Either player may request a review from another word judge, and a third opinion if the first two differ. The player who loses the challenge loses their turn, and play resumes as in the previous rule.

IV.L. Leaving the Playing Area During a Game

If you must leave the playing area during a game, do so only after making a play, starting your opponent's clock, and recording the cumulative score. Do not draw tiles. If your opponent plays while you are gone, s/he starts your clock and records the cumulative score, but does not draw tiles. When you return, the clock should be stopped and your opponent must point out any play that was made. The clock is started when you see your first new tile, and then you have 5 seconds in which to hold or challenge a play that was made in your absence.

V. Ending the Game

V.A. Final Play

The game ends when one player has successfully played all of his/her tiles, and the bag is empty.

V.B. Six-Zero Rule

The game may also end by either player neutralizing the game timer after a sixth successive zero-scoring play from passes, exchanges, challenges, or illegal plays.

V.E. Neutralizing the Clock on the Out Play

When you make your last play, stop the game timer. Your opponent may then accept your last play by revealing his/her final tiles, announcing their value, agreeing on the final score, or doing anything else to concede that the game is over. If not, s/he has 20 seconds to hold or challenge the play before the game ends. If s/he holds the play, start his/her game timer.

Do not touch the game timer or tiles again until all required paperwork has been completed and signed.

V.G. Adjusting the Score (Unplayed Tiles, Overtime)

If you go out, increase your score by double the value of your opponent's unplayed tiles. If the game ends with neither player going out, each player's score is reduced by the total value of his/her unplayed tiles.

If you use more than 25 minutes, reduce your score by 10 points for every additional minute or part of a minute. For example, if your game timer read 25:00 to begin, then from -00:01 to -01:00 you would lose 10 points, and from -01:01 to -02:00 you would lose 20 points.

If you use more than 35 minutes (25 regular and 10 overtime), you lose the game. Subtract 100 points from your score. If your opponent's score is still lower than yours, increase it so that s/he wins by one point. Disregard the value of any unplayed tiles. No recount is permitted.

V.H. Winning the Game

The player who has more points wins the game. In the case of a tie, both players are credited with half of a win.

V.I. Recounting the Game

Time permitting, either player may recount the game. They must ask to do so during the one-minute period beginning with the end of the game, and before paperwork is signed. No other people may be involved in the recount. Both players must make their scoresheets available in a recount. If you choose not to participate in your opponent's recount, you may not later ask for a recount, and you may contest only specific mistakes pointed out by your opponent.

V.J. Recording the Game

Complete designated paperwork at the end of each round, verify its correctness, then sign/initial as required to indicate that you accept these results as final. The winner submits the paperwork promptly before discussing the game or leaving the tournament area.

V.K. Byes and Forfeits

If you do not show up for a game, you receive an unrated forfeit loss and -50 spread; your opponent an unrated forfeit win and +50 spread. If all parties agree, you may make up such a game outside of the regular schedule.

If you leave a game in progress and there is not unanimous consent to continue the game later, you receive a rated loss for the game.

If you are not assigned an opponent in a round (typically because the number of players is odd), you receive an unrated win and +50 spread.

VI. Play Using the International Lexicon

When playing using the international lexicon, Collins Official Scrabble Words (2015), special rules may be announced concerning unsuccessful challenges. In this case, the challenged player will add to his/her score either 5 or 10 points per acceptable word challenged.