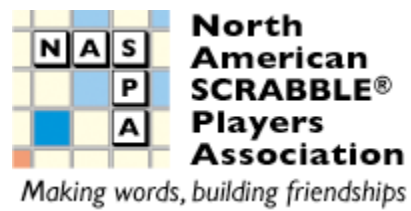


DIRECTOR'S MANUAL



Updated: 9 November 2009

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Introduction

This Director's Manual is designed to help you learn all about how to run a SCRABBLE® club and a SCRABBLE® tournament using North American SCRABBLE Players Association (NASPA) guidelines and rules. It is a "how-to guide" that you can refer to when answers are needed for special situations that arise in club and tournament play.

The director of a club or tournament has a great deal of flexibility and responsibility. Some clubs operate like social gatherings, others are run like SCRABBLE tournaments and still others endeavor to maintain a balance between the two. You and your players will develop your club's unique personality.

Regardless of whether you wish to direct a club, a tournament, or both, we want you to know where you can go to find answers when questions arise. The official [NASPA website \(www.scrabbleplayers.org\)](http://www.scrabbleplayers.org) contains a section for directors. It is well worth exploring.

Please do not hesitate to contact the NASPA office for advice should you need it.

Special thanks to NASPA members, John Luebke, Rebecca Slivka, Susi Tiekert, Ted Gest and Brad Mills for their invaluable contributions to this Director's Manual.

Sincerely,

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Help Us Protect the Trademark

Hasbro is sensitive about the use and misuse of the trademark SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game, simply because it wishes to preserve its legal right to the exclusive use.

When referring to the game we play, either orally or in print, please refer to it as SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game. The trademark, SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game, may not be used without the express permission of Hasbro and NASPA.

When referring to your club, always identify it as "NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #xxx [location]" (e.g., NASPA SCRABBLE® Club #56 New York).

For this manual, we will always put the word SCRABBLE in caps with a register mark when the word is part of the North American SCRABBLE® Players Association (NASPA), a tournament title such as the National SCRABBLE® Championship, or the game itself, SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game. Otherwise we will use the capitals only after the first occurrence of the word in a section.

Equal Access

The North American SCRABBLE® Players Association (NASPA) does not tolerate discrimination in any manner, shape or form. All persons who behave in an orderly, respectful manner are welcome to participate in any NASPA club or event for which they qualify.

Whenever possible, directors are strongly advised to secure tournament and club access for the physically challenged. Such information should accompany your materials to us and your promotions and advertising of the event.

How to Use This Document

Throughout this document [highlighted text](#) are hyperlinks that allow you to click on a link and bring up the specified webpage (obviously this only works if you are viewing the document electronically).

There are also page references (e.g., the Document History reference below) that you can click on to go to the referred page. These page references are available in the document and in the Table of Contents. Note: hold down the CTRL key and click on the [page number](#).

See Document History on page 55 for a summary of changes to this document.

Transition: NASPA takes over from NSA

On July 1, 2009, the North American SCRABBLE® Players Association (NASPA) took over responsibility for Tournaments and Clubs from the National SCRABBLE® Association (NSA). The NSA still exists, but is responsible only for Casual and School programs. This document mentions the NSA where appropriate for historical accuracy/context, but otherwise NASPA is the governing body for competitive SCRABBLE® play in North America.

Starting & Directing a SCRABBLE® Club

Guidelines & Responsibilities

Every club must have at least one sanctioned director who is a current member of NASPA. To become sanctioned, an individual must pass the Director's Test, and assume all responsibilities as described herein.

Club Fee and Sanctioning

There is an initial \$30 application fee for having your club sanctioned, followed by an annual club sanctioning fee of \$30. Check the [NASPA website](#) for the New Club Application Form and payment options.

When completing an application for a new club, the day, hour and place of each scheduled session must be indicated. This data will become part of an [Official Roster of Clubs](#) in the US and Canada and will be listed on the NASPA website.

Any changes regarding where or when the club is held or who the directors are should be emailed to NASPA.

It is not necessary to notify NASPA if an individual club session has to be cancelled because of a conflict with a tournament, religious or recognized national holidays, inclement weather or because no director is available to lead the session.

Club Name

All sanctioned clubs will be assigned a club number and that will serve as their official name, e.g., NASPA Club #___. If an existing games club wishes to offer SCRABBLE to its members, it must apply for sanctioning and use only the official number for its SCRABBLE activities.

Locating Your Club

When you first start your club, pick a day and location that work best for you and the people you initially recruit to attend. As your club becomes more popular, you might move to a different location or time, but it is important to meet where and when you advertise so club members and visitors can rely upon you to be there. Some clubs rent space, while others meet in bookstores or public locations, often restaurants, where they make purchases in lieu of paying for use of the space.

Player Fees at Club

Most clubs charge a modest fee ranging from \$2-\$5 per club meeting. This may cover basic club expenses, rent, materials, prizes, refreshments, etc. or be set aside for a special tournament prize. As of 2009, the range of fees per club varies from free to \$15 for Club #56 in Manhattan.

To encourage participation by players of all ages, you might consider a Senior Citizen discount or offer a student discount to attract younger players. Often fees are waived for the first session attended by a newcomer.

Equipment Needed

All members should be told at the outset that they should bring acceptable equipment: deluxe board, tournament style tiles & a game timer if they have it. If they do not have it, plan on having some extra equipment available for walk-ins and new players. You might also suggest where to purchase these materials.

As the director of the club, you should have available at least one copy of the [Official Word List, Second Edition \(OWL2\)](#) and a copy of the [Long List \(LL\)](#) booklet for challenge lookups even if you have a computer available for Software Self Lookups (SSL). See the [Directors Page](#) section of the NASPA website for a suggested list of approved SSL programs. There is also a list in the Appendix of this Manual

The [Official Tournament Rules](#) are regularly updated and available online at the NASPA website. Please be alert to any announced changes and reprinting and make sure you have the latest versions available for any decisions that might arise.

Pairing Players at Club

Some clubs are run very casually and players choose their own partners to play with. Others use a rigid ladder system, and many others pair players using a modified King-of-the-Hill method adjusted to avoid repeats.

Use a pairing method that you think will work best, and modify, if necessary, to suit the needs of your players. A full list of Pairing Methods (mostly used for tournaments) is available later in the Manual.

For newcomers, try not to match them against the top players in your club. Even with more new-to-club players having played online, they tend to overestimate their ability so matching them against your club's lower rated players is usually a good way to start.

Expert Points

Some clubs use Expert Points (one point for each club game win) to encourage and celebrate club achievements. They can be a motivating factor for the newcomer to continue attending your club. Those certificates reflect many hard-fought victories.

Certificates may only be awarded to current members of NASPA. It is up to the club director to notify NASPA which Expert Award certificates should be awarded and what level. Some typical levels of achievement are: 50, 100, 250, 500 and 1000 Club wins.

Check the NASPA website for more information on Expert Points and Certificates.

A Review of the Director's Responsibilities

Keep in mind that as a director you represent not only your own interest for promoting the SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game, but that of NASPA and Hasbro, Inc. The proper behavior of our directors will affect the future of all organized SCRABBLE game tournaments.

It is desirable for each club to have more than one director who is a current member of NASPA. This enables the club responsibilities to be shared, which in turn makes it that much easier to maintain club stability and continuity.

Each director should:

- Encourage NASPA membership and renewals. These can be handled easily at NASPA website www.scrabbleplayers.org or through the mail. Check the NASPA website for membership options and contact information.
- Oversee each session in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in this Director's Manual and the [Official Tournament Rules](#).
- Be the final arbiter in game decisions.
- If your club collects fees from its attendees, do so near the start of each session.
- Relay details of any NASPA updates or tournament news.
- Be alert to the possibility of inappropriate behavior and take necessary action if need be. See [Code of Conduct](#) and the Incident Report Form available on the NASPA website.
- Correspond with NASPA regarding rule clarifications, interesting plays, photos, statistics, new club records, etc.

Club Sessions

Administrative Functions

You may want to keep a record of each player's statistics at the club or obtain a software program for doing so {see [NASPA website](#) for technical resources for directors}. Make sure your club members are aware of upcoming tournaments and the procedures for entering them.

Always have a copy of the [Official Tournament Rules](#) available for club sessions and encourage your club members to read it.

Remind your players about correct procedure and make sure they are not developing bad habits. For example: Periodically check to make sure all players have a maximum of 7 tiles on their rack. Remind players to keep the tile bag raised ABOVE eye level and avert their eyes from the bag when drawing tiles. Encourage players to call "Director!" if they have any question about rules or procedures.

Welcoming Newcomers

Whether your club is new or has a long history, you should always be ready to welcome new players. In order to make the newcomer's first club session as welcoming as possible, we suggest the following:

- Get the player's name, address, phone number and email address for contact purposes
- Before the first game begins, either the director or an experienced player should show and explain the "tools of the trade" to the newcomer. That is, the game timer and how it works, tournament style tiles, dual scorekeeping, the sequence of play, etc. Additionally, describe how to challenge a play by describing the adjudication procedure that your club uses (SSL or manual lookup).

- Be sure to provide newcomers with a cheat sheet containing basic words (2's, 3's, etc., check NASPA website for printable word lists) and have them begin to familiarize themselves with the basic words. Perhaps you can allow them to use this during club play for a few sessions.
- Explain the differences between club/tournament play and home play. The blank may not be exchanged for the letter it designates after it is played, one cannot get a free trade-in if one has three or more of a particular tile on one's rack, etc. There are many "table rules" that people use at home that are NOT used in club and tournament play and newcomers should be introduced to the [Official Tournament Rules](#) as soon as possible.
- Explain to new players that though they might be the best in their family or among their friends, they should expect to lose many games before defeating a club player. This may be explained by the unfamiliar use of the clock and the limited time allowance. If their ego is prepared, they are more likely to return
- Tell the new player about NASPA, membership and tournaments
- Be helpful and understanding about any infractions until the newcomer becomes used to the procedures

Remember that no matter what courtesies you extend, some newcomers might not return – for reasons that have nothing to do with your club or you.

Keeping Newcomers

The SCRABBLE club and tournament scene is thriving with several thousand people regularly taking part. Despite wide publicity, including Stefan Fatsis's 2001 book ["Word Freak: Heartbreak, Triumph, Genius and Obsession in the World of Competitive SCRABBLE Players,"](#) various movies about SCRABBLE, ESPN telecasts and School SCRABBLE promotions, only a tiny fraction of SCRABBLE players in the United States joins the tournament and club ranks.

One key to increasing our numbers is to do more to retain newcomers at both clubs and tournaments.

Most of us have had this experience: A new player walks into a club having heard about us from a friend or on the Internet. We tell the person, "This is how we do it..." Even if paired with low-rated players, the newcomer is soundly defeated in several games and is never seen again.

Of course, it is possible that this player is one of the many who will never enjoy playing in a club or tournament regardless of how nice the regulars are. It is also possible that the fault lies on our side—that a "sink or swim" attitude on the part of directors and other veteran club members turns off some new players.

A previous edition of this manual pointed out that most newcomer dropouts of organizations, in general, result from "an attitude of indifference or superiority towards them by the regular members."

Suggestions from Club Directors

Here are some suggestions that other club directors have made to combat this tendency:

Get the word out to people most likely to be interested in club play. Send out **press releases** to local media about your club and/or your tournaments. Often, a story about your tournament will bring new players into your club.

Contact organizations whose members might have an interest in competitive SCRABBLE® (e.g., game clubs, literary organizations, libraries, community clubs, etc.).

Provide a full welcome to new players. This should include sitting down with the newcomer to explain in some detail how club/tournament play differs from living room play, and encouraging the person to observe some games, particularly among medium- or low-rated players.

Do not pair a newcomer with an expert who will likely beat them soundly.

Suspend key rules for the newcomer's first few visits. This may differ from club to club, but it could include nonpayment of fees, free challenges, in-game access to word lists and not using the clock (or giving newcomers an extra 5 minutes or some other allowance per game). This may interrupt the normal flow of the club, but could pay dividends in the long run if it allows new players to become acclimated. How long normal rules should not be enforced may vary. One general rule of thumb might be to let the newcomer use word lists and have other advantages until they start beating regular players.

Even if this is not done in the newcomer's first few games, explain why it is important for both players to keep score. Everyone makes errors. Especially in the end game, it is important that both players agree on the score.

It is ideal to try to pair a newcomer with a player whose temperament is suited to easing a newcomer into the mechanics of club play.

Try to **avoid pairing two newcomers** together, as neither of them will probably know how to use the clock, draw tiles, score, etc. Once they have played a few games with experienced club players, then you can pair newcomers together.

Try to **make sure that the newcomer understands** that because he/she is not familiar with advanced strategy and significant word knowledge, the established player may have an advantage. Advise new players that they should not be surprised if they do not win a game during their first few club outings—but also stress that most players have gone through this same experience.

Monitor the newcomer's performance and offer to help when appropriate. Some players welcome advice from someone standing over their shoulder; others do not. Of course, if you do this, make sure the opponent is comfortable with your helping a new player. Another possibility is a team game in which you or another veteran plays with the newcomer so that you can discuss the pros and cons of potential plays as they happen.

At the end of the club session (or afterwards by e-mail or phone), **ask the newcomer about his/her experience.** Offer advice about improving his/her game, and reinforce that the first visit is often a daunting experience and that you hope they will come back again.

If a new player does not show up again after one or two sessions, get in touch to determine why. It may be that they just are not going to enjoy sanctioned play. Or, it may be that they have concerns that you can resolve, particularly with the level of their competition.

Listed below are some sample issues and possible answers about formal competitive SCRABBLE provided by veteran directors Luise Shafritz and Ted Gest.

-- If people say, "*I just want to play for fun—I do not care about word lists and ratings.*" The fun comes through learning and playing new words, increasing playing skills by planning ahead for good tiles and seeing new board patterns. It is a lot of fun to learn ways to get thirty points for the same tiles that you used to get only ten for!

-- "*I'm not good enough.*" Our club members represent many skill and experience levels from beginners to experts. The way to get better is to play against more experienced players.

-- "*Why must I use a timer?*" We use timers to ensure that everyone gets to play full three /four (or however many) games during the club session. It makes for a much fairer and more exciting game when both people have time restrictions. Using the clock may seem awkward at first, but most players get used to using the clock after a few sessions. Once you learn easy shortcuts to scorekeeping and what "rack management" and "hot spots" are all about, you will play much faster, and hardly even think about the clock.

-- "*Do I need to know tens of thousands of obscure words?*" Not really. Expert level players spend a lot of time studying, but when you are just beginning we suggest first learning all of the (101) 2-letter words and then you can move on to the 3-letter words, common "bingo" stems, and other word lists that interest you. The two-letter words can be mastered in a few months of club play. It may take longer for the 3-letter words. You only need to learn as many words as you want to, but be warned, once you start studying, it is often hard to stop!

-- "*What should I do with blanks or esses?*" Those are the most valuable tiles in the bag. If you have a blank and an S on your rack along with a good mix of one-point tiles (like AEINRST) the chances are excellent for finding a 7-letter word (called a bingo) worth a bonus of 50 points. It takes a little practice but we can show you how! As your anagramming skills improve, try to set goals for yourself. For example, try not to use an S for fewer than 20 points (unless you have another one on your rack) or a blank for fewer than 40 points.

-- "*What about other high-point tiles?*" With the addition of QI and ZA to the [Official Tournament and Club Word List, 2nd Edition \(OWL2\)](#) in 2006, joining two letter X words—AX, EX, OX, XI, XU—be alert to chances to play parallel two-letter words that can score 50 or more points in a single turn.

Minors

If the new player is a minor and has come to the club with a parent or guardian, explain to them both that the [OWL2](#) is slightly different from the [OSPD4](#) and includes words that may be "offensive" but are acceptable for play. You should also make it clear that the young player will be expected to keep score and use the clock. Just as with other new players, they shouldn't expect to win games right away and this can be even more difficult for younger players.

If the minor is younger than 12, you might want to require his/her parent to stay at the club with the minor—your club is not a babysitting service. Some youngsters might be enthusiastic, but lack the mathematical ability to keep score or the maturity to sit through an entire game or club session. The parent needs to be there to handle the situation if the child has had enough.

Organizing & Directing a SCRABBLE® Tournament

So, you want to run a tournament....

Perhaps your club members have been voicing their interest in playing in a local tournament, or you simply want to expand your club experience. Running a SCRABBLE game tournament can often be a good way to reach a greater audience and generate added excitement in your community.

We encourage you to contact other directors and players; learn from their experience. Better yet, attend a few yourself if possible.

Enlist a Team

Many directors begin by forming a tournament team. For those of you who do not have the help of a team, please go to the NASPA website for any extra informational assistance you may require. Many directors have run successful tournaments without the help of a team. Even if you have a team assembled, please do not hesitate to contact members of the NASPA Tournament Committee should you need advice on your tournament. There are also various list-servs (group email lists) where you can consult with other directors. Please see Resources for Club Directors on the NASPA website for how to join the **naspa-tcd** (NASPA Tournament and Club Directors) group.

Assembling Your Team

You will need a committed team to help with long-range planning to decide what kind of tournament you want and look for a tournament venue, etc., mid-range planning (register players, get equipment & materials, etc.), and at-the-tournament administration (room setup, procuring supplies, player check-in, adjudication, pairings, data entry, cleanup).

The team may include non-game players or members of your club. This team will help you make some of the important decisions necessary for running a good tournament and can help you with many of the details.

We suggest that you also have a co-director. If you are not using a computer to assist in the administration of your event, many directors recommend that you have one assistant for every 20 players.

Break the tasks down into manageable pieces, so it is easier to identify each person's responsibilities. Tasks can be shared among many players, allowing them all to play as well as assist the running of the event. It is possible to both direct a tournament and play in it, as long as you have another director available to handle any possible "director calls" that involve you as a player. Be aware that your tournament performance may suffer from the distractions of directing.

Decide What Kind of Tournament

First major decisions: **One-day** or **Multi-day** tournament. For a one-day tournament, you also need to decide whether you are running an **Open Rated Tournament (ORT)** or a **Local Club Tournament (LCT)**. Team Challenge and Championship (TCC) tournaments are also sanctioned by NASPA. Entry may be restricted by club/region (for team challenge) or region/rating (for championships). When in doubt, contact the Tournament Committee.

KEY DIFFERENCES between these types of tournaments:

	Open Rated Tournament (ORT)	Local Club Tournament (LCT)	Team Challenge and Championship (TCC)
Advance notice to NASPA	8 weeks (minimum)	None required	None required [TBA]
Tournament calendar listing	Listed on NASPA calendar	Not listed on NASPA calendar	Not listed on NASPA calendar
Rating Method	Fully rated	Rated at 1/3 value of an ORT	Fully rated
How often?	No other multi-day tournaments occurring within two weekends and 200 miles of your proposed tournament (a one-day tournament can be separated by just one week from a multi-day tournament). No other one-day tournament on same day within 200 miles. Exception: if the organizers of the conflicting tournaments are agreeable, NASPA can sanction both.	At most, once per month	[TBA]
How many games?	Usually 6-8 games per day, 1-3 days. Minimum of 4 games to be a rated tournament.	Usually just one day (6-8 games). Minimum of 3 games to be a rated tournament.	Minimum of 4 games to be a rated tournament.
How many players?	At least 4 players in each division, at least 2 rated players in each division.	At least 4 players in each division, at least 2 rated players in each division.	At least 4 players in each division, at least 2 rated players in each division.
Player Restrictions	All players must be NASPA members.	All players must be NASPA members.	All players must be NASPA members. Entry restricted by club/region (for team challenge) or region/rating (for championship).
Participation Fee	\$.50 per player per game	\$.50 per player per game	\$.50 per player per game
Examples	National Scrabble Championship, most tournaments	One-day tournament that is created on short notice	Portland-Seattle Interclub Challenge, Texas State Championship, Can-Am, Kingston Cup

ORT Conflict exceptions: There are two exceptions to the “two weeks and 200 miles” rule:

- One is when at least one of the conflicting events is a one-day tournament. In that case, one-week separation of events is allowed.
- No other one-day tournament on same day within 200 miles.
- If the organizers of the conflicting tournaments are agreeable, NASPA can sanction both.

There are two other subcategories of tournaments that the NSA has allowed in the past and NASPA will continue to sanction. These are only allowed when held in conjunction with an ORT, and (as with other rated tournaments), there must be at least 2 rated players in each division.

- **Newcomer Tournament.** Limited to unrated players and players under a maximum rating (e.g., 1000). Usually short—only 4 to 6 games.
- **Youth Tournament.** Limited to players under age 18 (or whatever limit is set by the director). Usually short—only 4 to 6 games.

Event Details

Number of Days

If you plan a multiday event, consider that some players may have difficulty committing to more than 2 days, so you might want to break your games into separate **early bird** or **late bird** events, so players can choose to play in some or all of the games. Some tournaments are actually made up of as many as 4 different events (e.g., Early Bird 1, Early Bird 2, Main Event and Late Bird). Some tournaments even offer a “**Night Bird**” or “**Late Bird**” event where games are played in the evening (e.g., 7 games main event during the day, then 3-4 games in the evening).

Tournament Format

The tournament format includes starting time, number of games, number of divisions, pairing system and method of adjudication.

Pairing System

Make sure you carefully read the descriptions of the various [pairing systems](#), which follow in this manual.

Starting Times

Do you need time for opening remarks? How close are suitable restaurants for lunch breaks? How quickly will you be able to post results and determine the next round’s pairings? Long distance travelers usually like to leave early on Sunday to arrive home at a reasonable time. This may affect the Sunday start time and the number of rounds that you schedule.

Number of Rounds

The recent trend for weekend tournaments is 11-14 games; however, there are several well-attended one-day events that are 6, 7 or 8 rounds.

Method of Word Judging

Most of today's events use computer self-lookup programs. You can find a list of available [Software Self-Lookup](#) (SSL) programs on the [Software](#) page of the NASPA website. Other directors and players can tell you which they prefer. However, please remember that there may still be those who will need manual adjudications due to physical limitations. Make sure that you have a person designated to handle manual adjudications who has passed the Word Judge Test (available on the NASPA website).

Number of Divisions

Choose the number of divisions that you will have and how you will define each division. This can range from one division (an Open) to many divisions. Division types are discussed in the following section.

Other Issues

Announcing Details

Once you announce the details of your tournament (date, location, divisions, entry fees, etc.), **you MUST stick to those specifics**. If unavoidable circumstances demand that you are unable to offer what you have advertised, it is important to contact the NASPA Tournament Committee as soon as possible to see if they can assist.

It is best to announce in advance as much as possible of what you are sure of and add language to the announcement clarifying details that may change depending upon the number of participants. If you are unsure of a detail (e.g., which pairing method you will use), either do not commit to it or state that it could change. Some examples:

- "Director retains the right to move entrants between divisions or merge or split divisions to maintain balanced divisions."
- "\$2500 Top Prize* *\$2500 top division prize estimate based on 150 entrants, will adjust accordingly depending on the actual number of entrants."
- Round Robin Groups of 12-24, depending on the number of players.

Divisions

A few tournaments are "**Open**" (all players vie against each other in one group), but typically, tournament players are separated into **Divisions**. Divisions are either of **fixed size** (so players are placed strictly by rating), or determined by **ratings cutoffs**. There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of tournament.

	<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
<u>Open</u>	All players have a chance to play any other player, giving ample opportunity for meeting and playing different people at different levels of expertise. Large prize pool attractive to many players.	Beginners may be paired with experts, resulting in lopsided games. Fewer prizes are awarded, although this can be counterbalanced by giving additional awards based on performance above expectations (e.g., player who finishes the most places above seeding, or highest finishing players below a certain rating).

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Fixed Div. Size	Simplified pairings, at most one bye, and smaller divisions. Easiest to run from a director's standpoint because pairings can all be precomputed.	Limits or prevents players from playing up, which many players like to do. Players will not know ahead of time which division they will be in. Some players may drop out if top seed in a division.
Ratings Cutoffs	Players know ahead of time where they will play (who their competition will be). Players can sometimes choose to play up (some tournaments allowing unlimited play-up). Can place unrated players in any division without displacing other players.	Can get vastly different division sizes depending on who signs up. Pairings can be more complicated, and time consuming because of different sizes of each division. Difficult to predict ahead of time what ratings cutoffs to use.

Here are some variations directors are experimenting with:

- **Unlimited Play Up.** Tournament uses rating cutoffs to determine divisions, but instead of the standard "may play up if within 100 pts" (see Playing Up, below), any player can play up into any higher division. This yields a hybrid "Open."
- **Peak Rating.** Some tournament directors are allowing players to use a peak rating within a few months of the tournament date instead of their most recently published ratings. This encourages players to not "sit on their rating" to preserve it for an upcoming tournament. This also enables players to count on playing in a particular division if they have a poor performance at another event or events scheduled before yours.
- **Premier Division.** Some tournaments have a "Premier Division" where the organizer decides in advance how many players will play in the Premier Division. Let us say it is 12. Then the 12 highest-rated players who enter the tournament are eligible to play in the Premier Division. The announcement of such a division can strongly affect the number of top players who compete. Therefore, if the organizer advertises this division, it is advised that there be no last minute changes in the number of eligible players. If you are unsure of the exact number of players for this division, make certain your advertising clearly reflects this.
- **Satellite Tournaments.** Steve Pellinen, a director from Minnesota, organized a series of one-day tournaments that are "satellite" events for a large final tournament. These North American SCRABBLE® Tour (NAST) satellites are run as separate tournaments, but a portion of the entry fees is transferred to the final and winners in the satellites qualify for entry into the final.

Playing Up

Players may be allowed to play in the next higher rated division. Most directors will limit this to players within 100 points of the rating limit, unless they have announced unlimited play-ups or the use of a peak rating. An exception to this is when a division has an odd number of players, and a director will move up a single player to even up the division.

Odd Number of Players

When the number of players in the top division is uneven, we advise the director to ask the top player in the next lower division if s/he would like to play up... followed by asking the next in line, and so on until someone is willing to play up. If no one from the division below it wants to play up, then there will be one player who has a bye each round.

This process may be repeated for the lower divisions. However, if the total number of players in the tournament is odd, then at least one division must have an odd number of players (unless you have a dedicated standby player who has volunteered to play when needed to make numbers even). Try to avoid having an odd number of players in a very small division (having fewer players than rounds) because then some players would necessarily have multiple byes.

Always choose the lowest rated player to have the first bye, but you should refrain from giving an unrated player the first bye. Thereafter, the player in last place gets the next bye. Byes are scored as a win with a +50pt spread. A player, if possible, should have, at most, one bye in a tournament. Therefore, if the player in last place has already had a bye, then the bye should go to the player in the next-to-last position...etc.

Pairings/Format

Pairings systems are used to determine how players are matched up in the tournament. You should choose a pairing system that fairly matches opponents. If there is a significant difference in the number of players in each division, you may decide to use different pairing methods for each of the different divisions.

There are several computer programs available to assist you with pairings and recording tournament results (see Tournament Software on page 50). This section will discuss different pairing methods and refers to the Appendix for detailed examples.

If the division size is small enough compared to the number of games being played, often each player will play against every other player in the division. This format is known as **Round-Robin (RR)**. Usually, at the end of the tournament the top finishers are paired against each other in a **King-of-the-Hill (KOTH)** format.

A Complete RR is not possible if the number of players (P) in the division exceeds the total number of games (G) by more than one ($P \leq G+1$ for a complete RR). If your division size is less than the number of games, then you can have a complete RR followed by one or more KOTH rounds.

When you have significantly more players than games being played (almost always the case for large tournaments), a complete RR is not possible. In this situation, a combination of different pairing methods is used to match players based initially on their starting ratings (**Snake Pairings**, **Speed Pairings** or **Partial RR**), and in subsequent rounds based on their performance during the tournament (**Modified Swiss**, **Speed Pairings**). Ending rounds are usually one or more **KOTH**.

You can find a detailed explanation of how each of these [pairings systems](#) works (with examples) in the **Appendix starting on page 33**.

The table below gives a brief overview of the different systems.

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Round Robin (on page 34)	Each player plays every other player or most every other player	Easy to generate pairings. All pairings can be computed at the beginning of the tournament	Best for small divisions (number of games \leq number players per division)

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Swiss (on page 43 and 45)	For each round, players play opponents with similar records (first round can be random or paired)	Handles any number of players in a division. Bases pairings on performance during tournament, rather than just starting rating	Must take care to avoid repeats until towards the end of the tournament
Snake/Speed (on page 40 and 44)	Subdivide division into groups and each group plays a RR	Can compute pairings for multiple rounds at a time	Can have the top performer playing too many lower performing players instead of playing against those with a more similar record
King of the Hill (on page 46)	Top ranked plays second, third plays fourth, etc. Usually used for the last round(s) of the tournament	Easy to generate	Must wait until all games finished before pairing next round
Factored Pairings (on page 41)	Similar to KOTH pairing players with "close" records. Usually used for round(s) preceding KOTH	Gives #3 and #4 players a somewhat better chance at ending up at #1 or #2	

Unrated Players

First-time tournament players often do not know what they are getting into. Strongly encourage these newcomers to attend a NASPA club to learn the mechanics of official play and ask them to read the [Official Tournament Rules](#). Many newcomers have played extensively online, but are not prepared to compute scores, track their opponent's score, draw tiles, track tiles, use the clock etc. The more comfortable they are with simple game procedure, the better their tournament experience will be.

If the newcomer lives nearby, it is not unreasonable to require them to attend at least one club session (or arrange for a private game session) before allowing them to sign up for a tournament. Even one session will demonstrate that the player is either up for the challenge of a real tournament or is not yet ready. It's much better for all involved for that realization to take place in a club setting than in the heat of a tournament.

If you are contacted by a player who has never come to a club or tournament, be sure they understand to what they are committing to before signing them up. Some people may not realize that they are expected to play every game in the tournament, believing that they can be eliminated early. Media coverage or advertising may bring inquiries from newcomers—so be prepared to explain standard tournament procedures, particularly if you accept walkup entries.

If you do not accept walkup entries, please make sure all your advertising and pre-event materials make that clear. Unrated players are usually placed in the bottom division. You **must always have at least two rated players** in each division, as NASPA will NOT rate a division that contains fewer than 2 rated players. Ideally, you should strive to have no more than 50% of the players unrated within a single division, so keep this in mind when forming your divisions. One way to handle a situation where you have a lot of unrated players at the bottom is to merge the two bottom divisions, and then split them into "A" and "B" halves alternating players by rating.

With the advent of computer study tools and online play, some players new to the SCRABBLE tournament scene are quite skilled at the game, so a director **may choose** to place an unrated player in a division higher than the bottom. Before moving him/her up be sure that the unrated player is able to handle a higher division by observing his/her play at club against rated players.

Note that this can be problematic with other players if your tournament has fixed division sizes (since an unrated player would displace a rated player), so tread lightly if that is the format you have chosen. Again, be sure to announce your policy in advance (e.g., "Unrated players will be placed at the director's discretion").

[Announce the Pairing System](#)

In a rated tournament, players want a pairing system that will quickly determine individual matches and more experienced players want to know in advance how directors will pair them. In order to attract players from many areas and keep them returning year after year, your reputation as a good director is important.

[Repeat Pairings](#)

Repeat pairings allow for players to play the same player more than once. Announce under what conditions there will be repeat pairings, and if you are using the [Gibson Rule](#).

[Tournament Software](#)

If you have a one-day tournament with fixed division sizes and you use Round Robin pairings and post results on a wall chart, you do not need a computer. But, for longer tournaments with more players and more complicated pairings systems, computer assistance is essential to a smoothly run tournament. There are several software programs available to assist you. Check the [NASPA website](#) for more information.

[Long-range Planning/Tasks](#)

The following are the steps that you should take to conduct a successful SCRABBLE tournament:

Note: while we list "Select the Date(s)" and "Secure the Playing Venue" as separate steps, in reality you should contact NASPA with a proposed date to make sure it doesn't conflict with other nearby tournaments while you are in the process of securing your venue. Do not sign a contract with the venue until NASPA has sanctioned your event.

[Select the Date\(s\)](#)

You must notify NASPA no later than **8 weeks in advance** so that they can verify that there are no tournaments that conflict with your event. Scheduling restrictions are listed below:

- No other multi-day SCRABBLE game tournaments occurring within two weekends and 200 miles of your proposed tournament (however a one-day tournament may be separated by just one week from a multi-day tournament).

Exception: if the organizers of the conflicting tournaments are agreeable, NASPA can sanction both.

- No other one-day tournament on same day within 200 miles.

By doing some preliminary review of the [Tournament Calendar](#), you can see what is already scheduled and if your proposed date(s) qualify.

Three-day holiday weekends are popular for multiday events. Consider a non-holiday weekend for a single-day or a new event.

Although 8-weeks advance notice is sufficient to have your tournament sanctioned, many directors allow a considerably longer amount of time to properly plan and market the event, many planning 6 months to a year, or even longer, in advance.

Advantages of long-range planning:

NASPA will have more time to publicize your event online and in the newsletter.

Players from other areas of the country and beyond can use the advance notice to make travel arrangements.

You can often secure a more cost effective deal for event space.

Once you have decided on dates, contact NASPA to have your event sanctioned and listed. You can also submit your tournament information directly to the NASPA website.

Secure the Playing Venue

Once you have verified the acceptable date(s) for your event, you can decide which location would be best.

Most tournaments are funded solely from entry fees, though some are subsidized by local club members or sponsorship by local businesses. Decide what you can afford to spend on a venue based on your entry fees and anticipated attendance.

Typical locations for SCRABBLE tournaments are hotels, park and recreation community activity centers, schools and shopping malls.

Hotels - are ideal places for tournaments as they often have meeting space and immediate access to meals and lodging. When first contacting a hotel, ask for the hotel's group sales department. Different hotels charge different rates at various times of the year based upon their supply and demand. Although weekends are typically less expensive than weekdays, certain times of the year draw other events to the hotel. As you look for dates for your event, look for dates when your city does not draw a lot of outside visitors and hotels will welcome the business, and you can negotiate a better deal.

Many hotels charge a fee for meeting space unless you fill a minimum number of room nights during the event. On average, you should not count on more than 30% of your players staying at the hotel, so try to negotiate as low a minimum of room nights as possible; otherwise you will be financially responsible for the difference. Directors often charge **Commuters** (those not staying at the host hotel) a "commuter fee" or "facility fee" to help defray the cost of the facility and to discourage them from staying elsewhere.

One negotiating tool to use with hotels is called a "sliding scale rate". In this format, you can negotiate a certain amount of money per room night sold going towards paying for the facility with the end result being that the facility could end up being free.

Another negotiating tool is to purchase/cater meals from the hotel and make those meals part of your tournament package. Hotels will often apply a certain credit for catering to go towards the rental for the playing space.

A discounted hotel rate for the players, lower entry fees for hotel guests or package deals offering special breakfast and dinner rates are all attractive advantages for players to stay at the host hotel and should assist you to sell more rooms.

You might also ask the sales department if they offer SMERF (Social, Military, Educational, Religious and Fraternal) rates. SMERF rates are often cheaper than general public rates. Also, quotes can be generated by contacting a city's Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB); most cities have CVB websites.

Try to have a special reservation code for your players who are making reservations at the host hotel. This will make sure that players get any advertised discounted rate and help identify players who should go towards your credit.

Other locations to consider:

Note that many schools or public event centers charge a high hourly rate for a maintenance worker to be on hand during the tournament. Be sure to consider that additional cost in your budget.

- **Park & Recreation/Community Activity Centers** – These facilities are typically less expensive during those times of the year that they are less in demand. Factor the cost of renting the facility into your entry fee. There are usually hotels and perhaps, less expensive motels nearby where the players' total travel expenses can end up generally being about the same or less as when attending a tournament held at a hotel. Try to get your local players to help with lodging and local transportation to help defray expenses and make your event more appealing.
- **Schools** – The advantage of approaching schools or universities is the likelihood of abundant available space – particularly during the holidays and summers. Some universities have short-term lodging available as well.
- **Shopping Malls** – The sales office of such centers is usually the place to approach about using their facilities. By distributing a flyer with the names of the stores supporting your event, you may be able to trade the use of their space for advertising the various shops at that shopping center and often stores can support you by providing gift certificates.

Whatever type of playing location that you choose please keep the following in mind:

- **Contracts** – If you must sign a contract, get as many of the details as possible (table sizes, floor diagrams, audio rental, cancellation policy, etc.) written into your contract.
- **Lodging** – Have a list available of nearby lodging and prices if you are not playing at a hotel so your players know their options.
- **Lay of the Land** – What is the event location's address and telephone number? How far is the playing location from the airport, train station or nearby hotels? Shuttle service? Parking rates? Is there Internet access at the hotel or playing site? What restaurants are in the area? Your phone number? Email address?

- **Square Footage** – Players need elbow room while playing and space to walk and talk while awaiting the next round. Make sure that the tournament room can accommodate a turnout somewhat larger than you expect. Allow at least 25-30 square feet per player. When you talk to the venue’s representative, be sure to tell them how many square feet you need—not how many people will be there. Typical non-SCRABBLE events require much less space per person and event planners will underestimate how much space you need.
- **Tables** - Typical banquet tables will have dimensions of 6’ X 30” to 8’ X 36” . Request the larger tables as early as possible. Many hotels will try to put two smaller (“classroom”) tables together (not best for the players). If you are using [Software Self-Lookups](#), make sure that the computers are located in places easily accessible to ALL players.
- **Lighting** – Test all areas of the playing facility to ensure proper lighting. Set up a board and tiles at various locations of the proposed meeting space and check for illumination, glare and other factors that affect vision.
- **Water and Snacks** – You should arrange for a continuous supply of drinking water and/or the availability of coffee, tea, soft drinks and snacks for purchase.
- **Restrooms** – Identify all restrooms, particularly the less obvious ones and inform your players of the locations.
- **Accessible Facilities** – *Always* make sure that the space has the necessary extras for physically challenged players. Federal law requires handicapped access at most facilities, and you should publish that accessibility in your flyers and in your details to be advertised by NASPA.
- **Electrical Outlets** – Check for enough outlets for your directing equipment. If extension cords and/or power strips are needed, ask if there are extra charges or plan to bring your own.
- **Public Address System** – Check for to see if you require one and whether there is an additional charge.
- **Pairings/Results Posting** – Ask if you can attach items to the walls (important for posting pairings/results). Some facilities allow only a certain type of tape or only a limited area for postings; if so, consider borrowing or renting a standing bulletin board.
- **Insurance** - Many of these locations may also require proof of insurance up to a certain amount, so be sure you have the proper coverage. If you need to get insurance, it’s usually cheaper to get an entire year’s coverage for your club (that covers tournaments as well) than to buy coverage for a single event.

Determine Your Entry Fees

Keep in mind the overall expenses that your players are likely to incur to get to and stay at your event, and then select an appropriate entry fee. Check out what other directors charge. Late fees and commuter fees are typically charged for those who wish to register beyond a specific deadline and for those not staying at the host hotel. Consider giving rebates to those who register early. This incentive can help you determine your estimated number of attendees much earlier.

If you wish to attract some of the higher nationally ranked players, you might consider charging a higher entry fee, thus enabling you to award more prize money. Usually a substantial guaranteed prize fund would attract more players. It is common courtesy to let the players know in advance how the fees will be spent.

You might consider scholarships or sponsorships to defray a portion of the entry fee for those students who may not be able to afford a large entry fee. Some directors offer discounts to Youth Players (under 18).

Estimate & Announce a Prize Fund

Estimate how many players will register for your event, and based on those numbers, announce a projected prize fund. When you have an exact count of entries just before the tournament, you can adjust the fund up or down as necessary. **Remember that you must award what you have promised in your promotional literature.**

How much you wish to award in prize money is up to you. We suggest you talk to experienced tournament players as well as other directors to determine what payout structure appealed to the various players. For reference, cross-tables.com contains prize money distribution from past tournaments.

The following table is a listing of additional fees and their purposes. These added dollars can often go towards increasing your prize fund:

Fee type	Amount	Description	Purpose
Late Fee	Usually \$10-20	Applies to all players who pay entry fee after a specified date. Some tournaments even have two entry deadlines	Encourages players to sign up and pay early
Early Entry Bonus	\$10-\$20 or drawing for a larger prize	A variation of the "late fee": Discount for players who pay entry fee by a certain specified date. Sometimes returned as a rebate at check-in or player's name is entered in a drawing for a prize instead of getting cash	Encourages players to sign up and pay early
No Equipment Surcharge	Around \$10	Applies to local players only who do not bring a full game setup	Ensures there are enough game setups for all players—since it is more difficult for traveling players to bring a full set, this puts onus on local players to provide equipment
Commuter Fee (also called "Facility Fee")	\$15-\$50	Applies to all players who do not stay at the tournament-designated hotel (occasionally local players are exempt). Can be charged as an extra fee, or players get a rebate at check-in	Encourages players to stay at the tournament hotel. Since the director has signed a contract with the hotel guaranteeing a minimum number of rooms booked, this helps to ensure the minimum is met so money doesn't have to come out of the prize pool to cover the difference
Late Cancellation Fee	\$5-100% of entry fee	Charged to players who cancel entry too close to the tournament date. Instead of the full entry fee returned, a portion is kept	Discourages players from canceling so close to the tournament that replacement players cannot be found. Also covers expenses that have already been committed

Publicizing Your Event

Once sanctioned, the NASPA website will include your tournament on its tournament calendar. You can also publicize your tournament on cross-tables.com. Other publicity might include: local press, direct mail, direct email and current SCRABBLE-related online discussion forums (see Directors section of NASPA website for links).

Also consider mailing printed flyers to nearby clubs and send email notification to previous attendees to let them know about your event. It is a good idea to send out additional emails a few times before the entry deadlines as a reminder.

Mid-Range Planning

Maintain a List of Players

Keep an updated list of registrants. cross-tables.com provides a tool to track your entrants.

Younger/First Tournament Players

If a player 12 or younger has not yet played under the auspices of a sanctioned director, then you are advised to suggest to the player and his/her parents that s/he needs to play at a club first in order to learn the rules and conventions of tournament play. Despite the fact that there are more and more eager youngsters entering tournaments, it would be in the best interest of all to ensure that children can handle the club environment well before attempting a tournament. This advice is great for adults as well.

Practice Using Your Tournament Software

If you are using [Tournament management software](#), it is critical for you and your team to familiarize yourselves with the program. Set up and run a small test division so you know how to generate pairings, enter game results, print pairings, etc. Be sure you know how to handle special cases like byes, forfeits, and the [Gibson Rule](#).

Gather Equipment

Get all the equipment and supplies you plan to use at the tournament (computer, printer, etc.) and make sure they are compatible and work well together! This little extra work in advance will ensure a smoothly run tournament.

Finalize Tournament Details

John Chew III, a Director of the Year award recipient, has provided a timetable list of items to make yourself ready to run your event. These are listed below. Additional resources may be found on the NASPA website.

At Least Two Months Before (Three or More Recommended)

At this point, you should have:

- ✓ Chosen a date checking for conflict with local events, religious holidays
- ✓ Registered your tournament with NASPA
- ✓ Booked your venue and inspected it to make sure it is suitable

- ✓ Decided on a schedule (how many 65-minute rounds, how many 7- or 8-round days, start times, breaks)
- ✓ Chosen a tournament structure (Round-Robin, Swiss or other)
- ✓ Decided how much entry fees will be, and what percentage will be returned as prizes
- ✓ Printed and distributed tournament flyers
- ✓ Recruited your key team members (co-directors, data entry)
- ✓ Set up a listing for your tournament on cross-tables.com, including a link to a flyer or your tournament website.
- ✓ Set up a tournament website, including a copy of your flyer and a list of registrants. A tournament website is not a must, but a lot of players find it convenient, and it may prevent you from repeatedly answering some common questions.

One Month Before

At this point, you should have:

- ✓ Recruited all of your team
- ✓ Sourced a word judge laptop and software (at least one per 100 players, plus a spare)
- ✓ Had at least one planning meeting with your team to make sure that everyone knows what they are doing
- ✓ Decided on color-coding for divisions to facilitate paperwork
- ✓ Decided on a catering menu, if you are providing meals or refreshments
- ✓ Drawn up a draft budget
- ✓ Drawn up a tentative prize structure

One Week Before

At this point, you should have:

- ✓ Bought any nonperishable catering supplies. Please note: For obvious reasons, many hotels will not allow food from outside of the hotel
- ✓ Thought it best to require cash or credit card (e.g., PayPal) after this date (particularly if you allow entries at the door)
- ✓ Purchased any non-cash prizes
- ✓ Obtained all the other supplies that you will need for the event
- ✓ Confirmed with your venue and have an after-hours and emergency contact phone number for your liaison
- ✓ Alerted local media
- ✓ Announced that registration is closed except possibly to a player willing to come as an alternate to even the field or a division.
- ✓ Secured any money for cash (non-check) prizes you wish to award
- ✓ Finalized the prize structure

- ✓ Tested your computer(s) & printer(s) with the tournament pairings software

One Day Before

At this point, you should have:

- ✓ Double-checked everything in this checklist
- ✓ Moved anything that you can to the venue, if the site is secure
- ✓ Reread the [Official Tournament Rules](#)
- ✓ Set up tournament data files (preprint pairings assuming all players check in)
- ✓ Chosen your wardrobe: your most comfortable shoes and layers of clothing to deal with air conditioning or excessive heat and alternately sitting at a computer for long periods and running the length of a tournament room
- ✓ Checked for any local circumstances that might affect the ability of players to reach your tournament site: inclement weather, road closures, parades, transit strikes
- ✓ Caught up on your sleep

Precompute Pairings for the First Few Rounds

If you are holding a tournament where players are required to preregister, it is a good idea to generate and print pairings for the first round (more if possible) before the tournament. You should not post the pairings until you have confirmed that all your players are in attendance, but once done, this allows you to start games promptly. It is also a good backup in case you have power or computer problems.

Many directors post only the pairings for the first round and then post pairings for subsequent rounds once the first games have commenced. This reduces congestion at the pairings posting area and gets the first game started more quickly. If possible, post the pairings outside of the playing area, so that ongoing games have minimal distractions.

If you are using [software](#) to administer your tournament (see table on page 50), the pairings can be printed directly from the computer and then posted.

If you are not using software, Round Robin pairings may be easily displayed using the appropriate table on page 34. Simply copy the table and post to the wall. Give each player in each division a number from one to X ($x = \#$ of players in the division) and the table will tell them exactly who they play each round. It is also a good idea to number each division.

For example, with 6 divisions of 16 players each, there will be 6 #1s. To distinguish them, label the players in DIV. 1 from 101 to 116, DIV. 2 would have 201-216, or A1-A16, B1-B16, or other division designation system. Later, as you prepare to send the results to NASPA, drop the 1st digits and follow directions described in "**After the Tournament... Send results to NASPA**" on page 30.

At the Tournament

One Hour Before

At this point, you should have:

- The venue completely set up for the tournament:
 - Signage and wall-charts posted
 - Word judge computers set up
 - Tables and chairs in place
 - Team table (and computers) laid out
 - Table numbers placed on tables
 - Tally slips, blank designation slips, results slips, and challenge slips placed on the tables
 - A few sets of [Official Tournament Rules](#) available
 - Keep your starting times prominently posted on the players' scorecards or at the doors
 - Pairings posted outside the playing room, so players in between games will be less of a disturbance to those still playing.

As soon as practical, post your prize structure. It is your choice as to whether you opt to post your tournament income and expenses.

- Be ready to start tournament check-in:
 - Nametags & scorecards laid out in alphabetical order ready for players to pick up
 - Cash box setup
 - NASPA renewal forms available
 - Computers on and working
 - Labels available so players can mark their equipment if necessary
 - Have available "10 things for Newcomers to Know" (on NASPA website)
 - Coffee available for early arrivals

For a recommended list of [tournament supplies](#), look in the Appendix on page 49.

On-Site Player Check-In

It is good to allow an hour for check-in for every hundred registrants, longer if you allow walk-ins. The registrars should check people off their registration lists and collect any fees owed. They should ask players to pick up their nametag and scorecard. As soon as all the players for each division are present, the pairings officer should be informed.

Check and Collect Memberships

You should check the membership status during the week before the tournament and collect any necessary membership fees at registration. Announce clearly in your advertising that rated players must be NASPA members. You may check player membership at the NASPA online [membership database](#). It is wise to require checks or money orders for NASPA memberships. Be sure you collect enough to cover your costs to mail-in the memberships.

Unrated First-Time Players: First-time players who are not yet rated may opt for the introductory membership (half price for 6 months) or must become full members of NASPA.

Unrated Experienced Players: Occasionally, someone who has played in tournaments in other countries may want to enter your tournament. You should ask what their rating is in their home country, then contact the NASPA Tournament Committee to see if they can approximate a North American rating for the player predicated upon known information about the player so

you can comfortably place that player in the proper division. These players must also join NASPA, but may take advantage of the 6-month introductory membership if they choose.

Rated Players: NASPA requires that all players who are rated keep their NASPA membership current in order to play in sanctioned tournaments. You will be responsible for collecting this fee if you want the tournament rated. Check to make sure you have each player's name spelled exactly as it is listed on the NASPA website as well as their current NASPA Membership number.

Double Check Your Divisions and Pairings

After check-in, you may need to quickly adjust your divisions and pairings for any no-shows or additional players (i.e., alternate or standby players you have).

Now you can post/announce the pairings.

Opening Ceremony

Thank the players for coming

Introduce your team and thank them publicly

Remind players of the schedule and where it is posted

Ensure all players have the necessary equipment; if you have not announced it in your advertising, make it a point that equipment should not be moved between rounds

Keep your announcements to a minimum. Try to make them at the beginning of a session rather than at the end.

Middle of the Tournament

Now that the tournament has started, you will primarily be dealing with director's calls, computer/data work and administration.

You may wish to have division helpers (local club players that are playing) keep the playing tables furnished with blank/challenge/tally slips. Check to see if the tables need to be refreshed with new slips before each session.

Director calls are critical, and it is important to get the issue correct. You should have several copies of the [Official Tournament Rules](#) in the playing room, and refer to it for any questionable situation. If there are situations which are not mentioned in the rules book, confer with, if possible, other certified directors who may be at your tournament.

End of Tournament

The primary work at the end of the tournament is to collect properly filled out scorecards and determine the prizewinners. To determine special prize category winners, a method you can use is to attach sheets to the wall where players post their high game scores, high plays, etc. for prizes you wish to award (these prizes are not mandatory). Some computer programs can also generate these for you if you plan in advance.

Ask committee members and volunteers to assist you in packing up all the event materials. You can sort it later.

Make sure to close out the room properly and collect all your supplies. It is always wise to have your event contact come check the room before you leave, so there are no misunderstandings about how it is left.

You may leave lost and found articles with the hotel or take them with you and see if anyone claims them.

After the Tournament

Send Results to NASPA

Generate Tournament Data for NASPA

NASPA expects results to be submitted electronically and in a specific format. Programs "TourneyMan", "TMENU", and "tsh", will create files in the correct format. Specifics about how to generate the data in the correct format is posted in the Appendix: Tournament Data Submission Formats on page 51.

Information about these programs is available on the NASPA website on the [Directors Page](#). Using an appropriate tournament pairing program to run your tournament eliminates your need to manually generate tournament results for submission. The programs do it for you if the results have been entered accurately.

Submit Data

Once your results file is ready, it must be submitted at the NASPA website.

Pay Participation Fees

The cost to rate a tournament is the "Participation Fee" of **\$.50 per player per game** (byes and forfeit games are not subject to charge). See the NASPA website for how to pay the Participation Fees.

Results must be returned no later than 2 weeks after the last day of your event, otherwise an additional \$.25 will be added per person.

Until your results are fully rated and verified by NASPA, keep all your original tally slips and paperwork as a backup. If you have the originals, you can reconstruct the results by hand even in the event of the most catastrophic computer failure.

Post Results to Players

In addition to sending results to NASPA, you might want to send final results to your players and post them to the online discussion groups.

Additional tournament-related material, such as photos, anecdotes, and possible records or special plays can be emailed or mailed to NASPA. Label all photos clearly with names and dates and note they cannot be returned. Digital photos should be in a high DPI format.

Generally, tournament results submitted to NASPA will be rated within a few days and will show up on the NASPA website soon thereafter. They will also appear on cross-tables.com.

Pay Outstanding Bills

Now it is time to close out your financial obligations. Many venues require a credit card on file for booking and will charge you after your event ends. There may also be surcharges, taxes, and gratuities. This should be in your contract paperwork, so double-check to be sure. Please note that you should already be aware of most of these from your negotiations. If there is any doubt, request a detailed statement from your catering company or from the venue.

If you employed paid assistants at your tournament, they should be paid immediately after the event is over.

Make sure all tournament prizewinners received their appropriate award. Promptly mail any awards that for some reason were not presented the day of the event.

Compute Final Balance Sheet for Tournament Expenses/Prizes

Some events post an accounting statement for players to peruse at the tournament site. This allows players to see how their fees were used. Even if you choose not to do this, check your budget against the actual expenses you accrued.

Ideally, this should be done each month (from announcing the tournament to the actual tournament) to catch any spiraling expenses as early as possible.

Conduct a Postmortem with Your Team

It is over! And it is never too early to start planning for the next event. After a National Championship, NASPA always asks their team to submit 5 suggestions for improving the event. Often the suggestions are minor details, but really make a difference. Sometimes suggestions are impossible to implement because of budget restrictions or locations.

The first step toward making this happen is to go over what you have already done and learn from the experience. Try to set up a meeting with your tournament committee or team a week or so after the event is over. This gives everyone a chance to recuperate while at the same time everything is still fresh in their minds. While this is not an all-inclusive list, some possible items to address are:

General impressions. Was the event a success? If not, what can be done to make the next one a success?

High and low points. What went right and wrong at the tournament? For those things that went wrong, how were they handled during the event and how can they be improved next time?

Actual versus expected attendance. Did another event – not necessarily related to SCRABBLE – affect your attendance? Did you have many more players than you expected? Was your playing area too large or too small for the crowd you drew? If this was not your first event, did attendance increase or decrease, and why?

Income and expenses vs. budget. How much was spent? How much money came in? Was there a profit, and if so, what should be done with it? How did these numbers compare with what was budgeted?

Venue. Was the playing room presented as promised by your contract? Was the room comfortable? Were there any issues not related to your event (a parade going by, rioting on the streets, a bachelor party in the same hotel), that had an impact on the venue, and how it was perceived by your players? Were the charges in line with your contract?

Appendices

Pairing Systems and Pairing Tables

The following are all acceptable pairing methods for NASPA events. Each has its benefits so familiarize yourself with each of them and read the section on Pairings for an explanation of how to choose which pairing methods to use in your tournament.

Round-Robin Pairings

The key factor in Round-Robin (RR) tournament pairings is that all players play every other player within their division or in some cases almost every other player.

1. In a ten-round tournament, if there are ten or fewer players in a division, they can each play every other player once or twice. Twelve people can play a Round Robin of 11 rounds in two days. Six or eight people can play a Round Robin of 5 or 7 rounds in one day.
2. You may divide a large group of players into smaller groups, putting the highest rated players into the top group, the next highest rated players in the next group, and so on until the lowest rated and/or unrated players are in the last group.

Example: The Gatlinburg/Pigeon Forge, TN, tournament has often been paired Round-Robin fashion in groups of 20, 22 or 24 players, with substantial prizes in each group. The format has worked well, especially for the 18-24 rounds of this particular tournament. In order to pair the entire event, the director only has to assign each player a number and post the Round-Robin pairing schedule for all to see. Both the experts and novices are usually satisfied playing others with similar ratings.

Alert: If you want to use Round Robin pairings, but you have too many players in the division, there is a good compromise that has been used in the Smoky Mountain tournament. They may have 24 players in a division and only 18 rounds. The directors make sure that while they use a 24-player Round-Robin schedule, they only use 18 of the scheduled rounds. However, all of the top 7-8 rated players wind up playing each other during the event. This ensures that the most likely winners do not finish the tournament with, for example, a 15-3 record having not played most of the top 6 players. Another special case is handled by the **John Green System** on page 39.

*Note, however, that incomplete Round Robins have drawn criticism because they don't guarantee that the eventual prize contenders have played each other, or played comparable opponents. So, consider using **Swiss Pairings** (described on page 43) in those situations.*

Round-by-Round Pairings by player number.

Example: In Rd. 1, #1 plays #4 and #2 plays #3.

4 Players

Plyr. #	Rd.	1	2	3
#1:		4,	3,	2
#2:		3,	4,	1
#3:		2,	1,	4
#4:		1,	2,	3

6 Players

<u>Plyr.#</u>	<u>Rd.</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
#1:		6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:		5,	3,	6,	4,	1
#3:		4,	2,	5,	1,	6
#4:		3,	6,	1,	2,	5
#5:		2,	1,	3,	6,	4
#6:		1,	4,	2,	5,	3

8 Players

<u>Plyr.#</u>	<u>Rd.</u>	<u>1,</u>	<u>2,</u>	<u>3,</u>	<u>4,</u>	<u>5,</u>	<u>6,</u>	<u>7</u>
#1:		8,	7,	6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:		7,	5,	3,	8,	6,	4,	1
#3:		6,	4,	2,	7,	5,	1,	8
#4:		5,	3,	8,	6,	1,	2,	7
#5:		4,	2,	7,	1,	3,	8,	6
#6:		3,	8,	1,	4,	2,	7,	5
#7:		2,	1,	5,	3,	8,	6,	4
#8:		1,	6,	4,	2,	7,	5,	3

10 Players

<u>Plyr.# / Rd.</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
#1:	10,	9,	8,	7,	6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:	9,	7,	5,	3,	10,	8,	6,	4,	1
#3:	8,	6,	4,	2,	9,	7,	5,	1,	10
#4:	7,	5,	3,	10,	8,	6,	1,	2,	9
#5:	6,	4,	2,	9,	7,	1,	3,	10,	8
#6:	5,	3,	10,	8,	1,	4,	2,	9,	7
#7:	4,	2,	9,	1,	5,	3,	10,	8,	6
#8:	3,	10,	1,	6,	4,	2,	9,	7,	5
#9:	2,	1,	7,	5,	3,	10,	8,	6,	4
#10:	1,	8,	6,	4,	2,	9,	7,	5,	3

12 Players

<u>Plyr. # Rd.</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
#1:	12,	11,	10,	9,	8,	7,	6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	1
#3:	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	7,	5,	1,	12
#4:	9,	7,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8,	6,	1,	2,	11
#5:	8,	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	7,	1,	3,	12,	10
#6:	7,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8,	1,	4,	2,	11,	9
#7:	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	1,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8
#8:	5,	3,	12,	10,	1,	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	7
#9:	4,	2,	11,	1,	7,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8,	6
#10:	3,	12,	1,	8,	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	7,	5
#11:	2,	1,	9,	7,	5,	3,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4
#12:	1,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3

14 Players

<u>Plyr.#Rd.</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>
#1:	14,	13,	12,	11,	10,	9,	8,	7,	6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	1
#3:	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	1,	14
#4:	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	1,	2,	13
#5:	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	7,	1,	3,	14,	12
#6:	9,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8,	1,	4,	2,	13,	11
#7:	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	1,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10
#8:	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	1,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9
#9:	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	1,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8
#10:	5,	3,	14,	12,	1,	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	7
#11:	4,	2,	13,	1,	9,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6
#12:	3,	14,	1,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5
#13:	2,	1,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4
#14:	1,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3

16 Players

<u>Plyr.#</u>	<u>Rd.1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>
#1:	16,	15,	14,	13,	12,	11,	10,	9,	8,	7,	6,	5,	4,	3,	2
#2:	15,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	1
#3:	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	1,	16
#4:	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	1,	2,	15
#5:	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	7,	1,	3,	16,	14
#6:	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8,	1,	4,	2,	15,	13
#7:	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	1,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12
#8:	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	1,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11
#9:	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	1,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10
#10:	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	1,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9
#11:	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	1,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8
#12:	5,	3,	16,	14,	1,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	7
#13:	4,	2,	15,	1,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6
#14:	3,	16,	1,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5
#15:	2,	1,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3,	16,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4
#16:	1,	14,	12,	10,	8,	6,	4,	2,	15,	13,	11,	9,	7,	5,	3

Clark System (R-R) A specific way to generate the Round-Robin Pairings

The preceding schedules of play were calculated using a system suggested by Ken Clark, of Seattle, WA. The advantage of this system is that it can be used to easily and quickly generate round robin pairings for any even numbered group.

The player numbers are written out in two lines (the first half left to right and the bottom half right to left), and the top line of numbers is paired against the bottom line of numbers. For each successive round, keep #1 stationary while moving everyone else clockwise around the circle.

See the table below for an example with just 16 players. Notice that player #1 remains in the same position, as the other players rotate clockwise.

Round 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Round 2	1	16	2	3	4	5	6	7
	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Round 3	1	15	16	2	3	4	5	6
	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7

To calculate pairings for groups of more than 16 players ($X = \text{\#of players}$) simply start with the first round as:

1	2	3	$X/2$
X	$X-1$	$X-2$	$X/2 + 1$

The above indicates that #1 plays # X , #2 plays # $X-1$...# $X/2$ plays # $X/2+1$.

For each successive round, keep #1 stationary while moving everyone else clockwise around the circle.

Look at tables starting on page 34 for a complete listing of Round Robin pairings for up to 16 players.

John Green System (RR/KOH) A special case for 7 players in a 6-game tournament

Normally in odd divisions with more players than rounds, BYEs are assigned to the bottom seeds. Thus none of the top players who are likely to end up "In The Money Hunt" in later rounds will have had BYEs. This breaks down in seven player divisions playing five Round Robin rounds and one King of the Hill (KOTH) round where six of the seven players will receive a BYE. If the first five BYEs are given to the five lowest seed players then the sixth BYE will be given to one of the top two seeds both of whom are likely to be "In The Money Hunt." Assigning a BYE to one of these two players is likely to affect who wins prizes and which prizes they win.

In 1998 John Green introduced the following innovation: The first five BYEs were assigned to the top five seeds. The sixth BYE was assigned to whichever of the bottom two seeds had the poorer record through the first five rounds. The assumptions were that neither of the bottom two seeds would be "In The Money Hunt," and that who wins what prizes were unlikely to be affected by assignment of the sixth BYE.

A full seven round Round Robin schedule by Berger Table pairings is:

Rd 1:	1-BYE	2-7	3-6	4-5
Rd 2:	1-2	3-BYE	4-7	5-6
Rd 3:	1-3	2-4	5-BYE	6-7
Rd 4:	1-4	2-6	3-5	7-BYE
Rd 5:	1-5	2-BYE	3-7	4-6
Rd 6:	1-6	2-3	4-BYE	5-7
Rd 7:	1-7	2-5	3-4	6-BYE

But, since we are pairing ONLY a five round RR we must eliminate two of the above rounds. Standard Pairings would eliminate the ones that give BYEs to the first seed (Round 1) and to the second seed (Round 5). In John Green System Pairings the rounds to be eliminated are the ones that give BYEs to the sixth seed (Round 7) and to the seventh seed (Round 4).

Note that this assures that if there are two unrated players, the two of them combined are guaranteed to play 11 games between them vs. only 10 with Standard Pairings (preferable because having unrated players play more games will give more accuracy to their initial ratings).

Note that this also assures that both of the top two seeds will receive a BYE. This might surprise the top seed who is not used to getting a BYE.

The five rounds from the above Berger Table pairings used in the John Green System are:

Rd 1	1-BYE	2-7	3-6	4-5
Rd 2	1-2	3-BYE	4-7	5-6
Rd 3	1-3	2-4	5-BYE	6-7
Rd 4	1-5	2-BYE	3-7	4-6
Rd 5	1-6	2-3	4-BYE	5-7

The sixth round, being KOTH, is not shown.

Snake Pairings

If you want to pair RR, but have too many players in a division, then an appropriate compromise is the Snake Pairings System. For instance, if you have 36 players for a 14 round tourney, using the Snake pairings will give all of the players a fair chance.

For the first 11 rounds, the 36 players are divided by rating into three smaller groups of 12 players each in the following "snakelike" fashion. #1 represents the highest-rated player, #2 the 2nd highest-rated player, etc.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
1	2	3
6	5	4
7	8	9
12	11	10
13	14	15
18	17	16
19	20	21
24	23	22
25	26	27
30	29	28
31	32	33
36	35	34

The purpose of dividing the whole division in this manner is so that each group of 12 has approximately the same average rating.

After your series of Snake Pairings you will likely choose KOTH or Factored Pairings to complete your tournament. See an example of how these pairings systems were used at National Championship tournaments on page 41.

Factored Pairings

Factored Pairings are used toward the end of the tournament, before a final KOTH round. Factored Pairings (FP) are the same as KOTH except that the optimum rank separation of players is some fixed number (the factor) greater than the value of one used in KOTH.

Using **Factored Pairings** (in groups of 4), otherwise written "FP4" in the penultimate round, pairs each group of four players beginning with the leaders of the division as: 1-3, 2-4, 5-7, 6-8.etc. based upon standing at that round. In a tournament, the final three rounds could be FP6 (1-4, 2-5, 3-6) , FP4 (1-3, 2-4...) and KOTH (1-2, 3-4...), with repeat and even multiple repeat pairings allowed for the last round.

Note: Factored Pairings at the end of a tourney make it more exciting for the #3 and #4 players because it gives them a somewhat better chance to end up in the #1 or #2 positions. And likewise, it gives #7 and #8 a better chance to finish 5th or 6th, and so on. The name Factored Pairings came about because the whole division is factored by a number (in this case 4) and then divided into groups with that number (4) of players from the top on down.

A version of FP is used in the NSC in preliminary rounds, with factors gradually decreasing from 20 to 2, to artificially control the rate at which the contender pool shrinks. (At the NSC, pairing is done in groups of four to eight players, three or four rounds at a time.)

Example Pairings from Previous National SCRABBLE Championships

[Note: this method was used for the 2005 NSC and 2006 USSO.]

For the first 11 rounds, the 36 players were divided by rating into three smaller groups of 12 players each in the following "snakelike" fashion. #1 represents the highest-rated player, #2 the 2nd highest-rated player, etc.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
1	2	3
6	5	4
7	8	9
12	11	10
13	14	15
18	17	16
19	20	21
24	23	22
25	26	27
30	29	28
31	32	33
36	35	34

The purpose of dividing the whole division in this manner is so that each group of 12 has approximately the same average rating.

The final three rounds are paired as combinations of King-of-the-Hill (KOTH) for the last round or **Factored Pairings** (in groups of 4), otherwise written "FP4" in the penultimate round, which pairs each group of four players beginning with the leaders of the division as: 1-3, 2-4, 5-7, 6-8.etc. based upon standing at that round. Thus, the final three rounds could be FP6 (1-4, 2-5, 3-6) , FP4 (1-3, 2-4...) and KOTH (1-2, 3-4...), with repeat and even multiple repeat pairings allowed for the last round.

Here is an example: a group of 48 players in one division could be snaked into eight groups of six for the first 5 rounds, followed by two FP4 and one KOTH for a one-day 8 rd. event, all done easily without a computer.

Alternatively, for a longer tournament, a division of 48 players could be snaked into 4 groups of 12 for the first 11 rounds, followed by 3 rounds of FP4 and one or two KOTH.

Or, a group of 24 players could be divided into 3 snake pairing groups for the first 7 rounds followed by 2 FP4 and one KOTH for a 2-day 10-round tourney.

For one-day tournaments, the Pairings Committee also recognizes that Snake Pairings for 18 players (6 per group, 1st 5 rounds) followed by 2 rounds of FP4 and 1 last round of KOTH is, in the long run, almost as effective in determining a deserving winner as Modified Swiss, and much easier to administer by hand.

If you have any questions about this system, particularly if you would like to tailor your event with a specific Snake format not mentioned above, please contact the [Pairings Committee](#) for more information.

Modified-Swiss Pairings

In this system players with similar win/loss records are paired against each other.

Using the most current [Official NASPA Ratings List](#), order the players from the highest rated to the lowest rated. Then, the top half of the group should be paired against the bottom half. For example, with 32 players, #1 vs. #17, #2 vs. #18... #16 vs. #32.

The first rounds should not be paired randomly. All subsequent rounds are paired as follows:

1. All the players are ranked according to their standing in the tournament, with all the players having the same number of wins put in the same grouping to be paired. Thus, in our example (assuming no ties), there should be 16 players with one win, and they are ranked according to their spread, from 1st (high spread) to 16th place (low spread).
2. Now pair the top half against bottom half: 1 vs. 9, 2 vs. 10, 8 vs. 16. For the players with one loss, (16 of them, representing places 17-32) the pairing would be 17 vs. 25, 8 vs. 26...24 vs. 32. Example: After the fifth round, two players have 5 wins, four players have 4 wins, and 6 players have 3 wins. For the sixth round: the two players with 5 wins are paired together; the four players with 4 wins are ranked according to current standings and then #1 vs. #3, #2 vs. #4; the six players with 3 wins are ranked and then #1 vs. #4, #2 vs. #5, #3 vs. #6. And so on with other lower-ranked players.
3. You should always begin by pairing the players in the highest group first. If there are five players with four wins, in order to pair evenly, the next highest player is added to the top group. That would be the top player with 3.5 or 3 wins if there are no ties. And then you would pair 1 vs. 4, 2 vs. 5, 3 vs. 6.

If the players have already played each other (and it's still prior to the last 2 rounds), switch players within the win group if you can until there are no repeat pairings.

4. When there are only 2 rounds to go, many directors adjust the Modified-Swiss Pairings to pair players a second time, occasionally a third time if need be, by automatically pairing as King-of-the-Hill, with #1 vs. #2, #3 vs. #4, etc. This allows the pairings to be made easily and quickly. If you intend to do this, you should announce it prior to the beginning of the tournament.

Note that a slight modification to the pairings for the last two rounds is when you pair the second to last round #1 vs #3, #2 vs 4, #5 vs #7, #6 vs #8...called Factored Pairings (groups of 4), or written FP4, as described on page 41.

Most directors consider it an improvement over two King-of-the-Hills because it gives more players a chance to finish higher up and there is continued pressure on the top players.

Speed Pairings

Speed Pairings were derived from their use at the National SCRABBLE® Championships, where they were used through 2002. Starting with 2004, [Snake Pairings](#) (on page 40) have been used at the NSC/USSO. For divisions with more than 40 players, some directors have added this dimension to the [Modified-Swiss Pairings](#).

For a 10-round tournament with, for example, 40 players in DIV. 1:

Order the players by rating, from the highest to the lowest.

Then divide the players into 4 groups, so that the top group has the top 10 highest-rated players, the second group has the next 10 highest rated players, etc.

Then drawing from each group, pair the first three rounds by pairing #1, 11, 21, 31 together, #2, 12, 22, 32 together and so on until #10, 20, 30, 40 are together. Each player now plays every other player in his/her group of four. Contestant Scorecards need not be collected until after the third round. In order to post the individual game results some directors collect a "Results Slip" that shows the individual game results for one round.

The fourth, fifth and sixth rounds can also be paired using the Speed Pairing method. However, before dividing the players into four groups, first divide them into two halves, the top and bottom, with the top half including those players who are in the top half of the tournament standings at this point in the event (do NOT divide the group by rating). Now you are ready to divide each half into four groups, again using the tournament standings to divide the players. *Example:* If there are 48 players in the division, then first divide them into 2 halves of 24 players each. Taking the top 24 1st: the players who are in 1st through 6th place are in the top group, 7th through 12th are in the second group, etc. The pairings would then be #1, #7, #13 and #19; #2, #8, #14, #20, etc. This has the effect of forcing the top players to play other top players, and the bottom players will play amongst themselves.

For the 7th and 8th rounds, Speed Pairings may also be used. However, this time, the division should be divided into groups of 12 players each (based on tournament standing as in (4) above). Then #1, 4, 7, 10 will be one group, #2, 5, 8, 11 is another group and #3, 6, 9, 12 will be a third group and so on for the next group of 12 players. The last group may be fewer than 12 players, so you will have to adjust the pairings somewhat.

After the groups are defined (as above in #5), the 7th round has the two players in each group with the best tournament win/loss record playing together. The 8th round has the two individual winners in each group from the 7th round playing together. *Example:* Round 7 has #1, #4, #7, and #10 in one group. #1 and #4 have the best win/loss records among the four players, so #1 plays #4 and #7 vs. #10. #4 wins and #10 wins. So, in Round 8, it's #4 vs. #10 and #1 vs. #7.

Rounds 9 and 10 may be paired either KOTH, or FP4 in round 9 and KOTH in the final round. If the number of players in a division is not divisible by four, the last group formed will be a group of 5, 6 or 7 players. You will have to define for that group who has the bye and who plays who for each round. Remember that byes are scored as a win with a +50pt spread, and that any player should have, at most, one bye in a tournament, if possible.

Portland Swiss Pairing System

In some Portland, Oregon, SCRABBLE game tournaments, a combination of three different pairing systems are used facilitated by tmenu, a computer program developed by NSA 2001 Co-Director-of-the-Year R.A. Fontes.

1. Grouped Round Robin
2. Portland Swiss
3. King-of-the-Hill

Initial rounds are paired using a grouped Round Robin. This is the same as Speed Pairings, except that where standard Speed Pairing uses groups of 4 for a three-round set, Portland Swiss groups are usually larger. The ideal size for a group would be 8 players, thus providing a set of 7 games in the round robin.

The goal is to have the number of games in the set approach the number of games in the first day. *For example*, if there were 32 players in a division, you start with the highest-rated player as #1, the second highest as #2...#3...#4. Then we would continue numbering #5 as #1, #6 as #2, #7 as number #3 and #8 as number 4, #1...#2...#3...#4 through the entire division. All players within each of the 4 numbered groups would play each other in a 7-round Round Robin. The first group would consist of #1, #5, #9, #13, #17, #21, #25 and #29. In other words, all #1's would be in one group; all #2's in another group, etc.

The middle rounds are paired using the Portland-Swiss system. It is a performance-based system featuring the following:

1. The standings as of round (X-2) are used to pair round X, NOT round X-1.
2. The size of a player group equals the number of Swiss rounds to be played.
3. No rematches permitted during the Swiss rounds.

In other words, if you need to pair five rounds in this fashion, they are paired in order FP10 (1-6, 2-7, 3-8, 4-9, 5-10...), FP8 (1-5, 2-6, 3-7, 4-8...), FP6 (1-4, 2-5, 3-6...), FP4(1-3, 2-4...), K-H (1-2, 3-4, 5-6...)

For example, assume that you need to pair round 14 in a 20 game tournament with a King-of-the-Hill round in each group. The players are paired based on standings as of round 12. Since there are 5 Swiss rounds to be played (rounds 14-18), the division is divided into groups of 5 (i.e. 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, etc.) #1 of group 1 is paired with #1 of group 2 (player #6). If these two players have played each other previously in the tournament, #1 of the first group is matched with the player closest to #6 who has not played #1. In this case, the match may end up with #5, #7, #13 or any other player except #6. The program continues to change pairings, where necessary, to avoid rematches.

The final round(s) is/are paired using a pure King-of-the-Hill system, and pairings are done using a locally developed IBM MSDOS computer program, called TMenu. Fontes says: "The software is available, as is, without charge, except for the \$1.00 to cover the cost of the diskette, accompanying cursory instructions and postage. Limited telephone support is available."

Advantages of Portland Swiss

1. Since it pairs using results from Round X-2 to pair Round X, matches are posted during round X-1. Players know the identities of their opponents without delays, and there is no congestion around the postings.
2. The group sizes gradually and consistently get smaller, while players gradually work toward playing those with similar performance records. This builds excitement.

Because there are no rematches during Portland Swiss rounds, some players end up playing others with performances significantly better or worse than the "ideal" match during a given round. This is more likely to happen to a player in the middle of the division than to one at the top.

3. The lack of rematches may add interest and enjoyment.

King-of-the-Hill Pairings

This system pairs the #1 rated player against the #2 rated player, #3 vs. #4 and so on for the first round. Thereafter, the tournament standings always determine the pairing: #1 vs. #2, #3 vs. #4, etc. It is best to be careful when using this method that contestants do not play each other more than once, until the last two rounds. You may have to adjust the pairing somewhat in the later rounds to accommodate this format.

This method works well for events with large divisions, because it is very easy and quick to do. Should you wish to use it, it is important to advertise this method, because it is less frequently used, and some players dislike it as it has the top players slugging it out right from the beginning.

Originally, the National School SCRABBLE® Championship was paired King-of-the-Hill. However, with the advent of computer assistance, KOTH has become more frequently useful only at the end of a tournament, when the top players are battling it out for the top prizes. It is estimated that as many as 75-80% of all tournaments use the KOTH for the last one or two rounds, including many R-R events. But, almost none use KOTH in the early rounds.

THE GIBSON RULE

What is the Gibson Rule?

In recent years the NSA has sponsored several tournaments with large prize funds. In some cases first prize may be as much as \$50,000. At the 1995 Super Stars SCRABBLE® Championship, David Gibson clinched first place with more than one round to play. At that point the question arose: Should David be allowed to continue to play other top-placing players and potentially determine who finishes 2nd or 3rd? An on-the-spot decision was made to allow those players vying for the other prize money places to compete amongst themselves. Thus the Gibson Rule was born.

Using the Gibson Rule, the player who has clinched the top spot will be paired against the player who is currently in the highest position that cannot win a top prize.

When the stakes are great, as in the Super Stars Championship, it would be inappropriate for the winner to continue to play others who are trying to finish 2nd, 3rd or 4th ...etc. However, at local tournaments, where the stakes are usually much lower, there is still an incentive for the potential "Gibsonized" player to try his best to win---to gain rating points. Therefore, it is left to the discretion of the director to use or not use the Gibson Rule at his/her event. You should advertise its use or nonuse ahead of time.

Note: Tournaments paired as a true and complete Round Robin may not be able to use the Gibson rule without changing the advertised pairing system.

The NSA/NASPA has used the Gibson Rule at the National SCRABBLE® Championship since 1996.

How to Determine Whether a Player has Clinched First (or Other Top Spots)

When a player can lose ALL of their remaining games and still retain 1st place by at least one win no matter which other players win all of their remaining games, then that player has clinched 1st place. Example: If Player A has 14 wins and 2 losses, and the 2nd place player, Player B, has 11 wins and 5 losses, with only two remaining rounds to play, then Player A could still lose both remaining games and finish at 14-4, whereas Player B, at best, could finish 13-5. Therefore, after Rd. 16, Player A may be "Gibsonized" for the remainder of the tournament.

Note: Example: Player A, in first place, is only 2 games ahead of Player B, in second place, with 2 rounds to go. If Player A is more than 1200 spread points ahead of Player B, then it is unreasonable to believe that Player B can make up all of those points in two games, even if B wins the next two games and A loses those two games. B would have to beat A by over 300pt. EACH GAME. However, such instances can occur, particularly at the lower levels of play. It is for that reason that we recommend that, at your local tournament, spread not be a factor in determining a "Gibsonized" player.

Caveat: At the National SCRABBLE® Championship, and only in DIV. 1, we do set smaller limits: spreads of 500pt., 800pt. and 900pt. are defined as being able to catch up in spread after 1, 2 or 3 rounds, respectively, when the number of wins may be equal after the last round. As of this writing, in all the tournaments ever held, no one has overcome 900pts. in the last 3 rounds, 800pt. in the last two rounds or 500 pt. in one round at the end of a tournament to overtake the leader of an Expert Division.

[How to Determine who a Gibsonized Player Should Play](#)

Let us say that you are giving prizes to the top four finishers. There is one round to go and the player in first is two games ahead of the field. **Your task is to determine as well as possible the highest placed player who CANNOT finish as high as 4th.** Let us also say that the 2nd, 3rd and 4th place players now have 13, 13 and 12 wins. [Disregard spread in your calculation.](#) The player you are looking for is the player who has the highest spread among all those players who have 10 wins. This player may win his last game and finish with 11 wins, but s/he cannot finish with 12 wins, thereby assuring that s/he can NOT finish 4th. This would be the player paired with the Gibsonized player.

Internet Resources for Club and Tournament Directors

Always check the [NASPA website](#) for updates and resources. The NASPA website maintains an area specifically for club and tournament directors: the [Directors Page](#).

There is also an online group (naspa-tcd) where sanctioned directors discuss questions and thoughts with other directors, including hearing what they have to say about all facets of organizing and running sanctioned NASPA tournaments. Check the [NASPA website](#) for how to join.

Resources for Tournament Directors

Tournament Materials

For your convenience, many of the forms used at NASPA Clubs and Tournaments are available in Adobe PDF format in the Director Resource section of the [NASPA website](#). You are encouraged to download and print them out and share copies to club members.

As of this printing, available forms include (in alpha order):

- 20-Game Contestant Scorecard (CSC)
- 31-Game Contestant Scorecard (CSC)
- Blank Designation and Challenge Slips (8 per page)
- Board Diagram, letter-size, suitable for use as an overhead transparency
- Club Changes Form
- Incident Report Form
- NASPA Tournament Rules
- Score sheet
- Tournament Sanctioning Form

Sample Tournament Supply List

Black Markers

Challenge & Blank designation Slips

Charts for drawings

Entrant's List

Extra tiles, clocks, racks

Hospitality kit: antacids, bandages, pain relievers, aspirin, emery board, needle & thread, safety pins

Income/Expense balance sheet for the tournament

Laptop(s)/computer(s)

Long List(s)

Masking tape. Painter's tape is best for walls—but make sure the venue allows you to put tape on the walls] and/or thumbtacks

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (MW11)

Newcomer Handout

NASPA *Official Tournament Rules*

OWL2

Pairing charts

Pencil sharpener

Pens & pencils

Player scorecards

Preprinted pairings

Printer, extra toner and paper

Prize money and other prizes

Prize structure

Reserved/Available slips (Some people put a "reserved" sign at their table –particularly during the endgame when they leave the table for an adjudication, and it could appear that their game is finished.)

Results slips (color-coded by division, optionally)

Score sheets

Scotch tape

Snacks

Special drawing prizes (games & books)

Stapler

Table numbers/labels (division names)

Wall charts for High Play

Wall charts for special categories (local theme, etc.)

Wall charts-other

Tournament Software

Always refer to the NASPA website [Directors Page](#) for the most up to date information. The information shown below was current as of July 2009.

Software Self-Lookup (SSL)

The table below shows SSL programs that have been evaluated by the NASPA Technology Committee and approved for use in Club and/or Tournament settings:

	Zyzyva	WHAT	WordJudge	LeXpert
Where to Get It	www.zyzyva.net	www.wolfberg.net	www.metagrams.com	*no longer available
Club Use?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Tournament Use?	YES	YES	YES	NO
Notes	Official SSL program for the 2008 US SCRABBLE Open. Also contains anagram/study tools	Free Demo version has SSL.	Official SSL program for 2005 NSC.	Some user interface issues can be problematic in a tournament setting. Also contains anagram/study tools
Requirements	Windows, Linux, or Mac OS X 10.3.9+	Windows.	Requires bootable floppy drive.	Windows, Windows CE

Note that even if you provide SSL, there may still be those players who will need manual adjudications due to physical limitations. Make sure that you have a person designated to handle manual adjudications who has passed the Word Judge Test (available on the NASPA website).

Pairing/Tournament Software

The table below briefly highlights the available tournament software used to assist with pairings and tournament game results. Check the Tournament Director's Section of the NASPA website for up-to-date information and links to the software.

	TMENU	tsh	TourneyMan
Author	RA Fontes	John Chew	Jeff Widergren
Platform	DOS 5 or higher, runs on Windows 3.1, 95, or 98, or XP in DOS mode. Requires DOS-compatible printer.	Windows, Mac	Windows
Source	Contact Fontes at rfontes@q.com	Contact John Chew (see Contacts on page 5)	www.SCRABBLE-assoc.com/TourneyMan
Pairing Methods	RR, Portland Swiss, KOTH, Teams	RR, Swiss, KOTH, Snake, Factored, Chew	RR, KOTH, Portland Swiss, Snake
User interface	Text menu	Command line	Graphical menu

Tournament Data Submission Formats

Note: when you submit your data, be sure to spell each player's name EXACTLY as it is listed with NASPA (including any initials)

Basic Format

The file must be a plain text file, and the format is as follows, with explanation below:

```
1 SMITH SARAH/423: W45 B L8 T5 W7 L9 W2 W3 L6 W10
2 TILES TERRY/-124: W5 L3 L7 W9 L6 L10 L2 L4 W1 L14
.
.
45 XYLEM XAVIER/179: L1 L34 L12 W19 L16 W29 W33 W40 W31 L28
```

Each player is on a separate line. It is helpful to turn off the word-wrapping feature of your text editor to ensure each player is on a single line.

The first field on the line is the player's number, starting with 1, followed by a single space. Each line, and therefore each player, is numbered consecutively.

The second field is the player's name as listed with NASPA, last name first, with no punctuation separating the names, and followed by a forward slash (slants from lower left to upper right, usually found in the last row of your keyboard). There must not be a space between the name and the slash.

To ensure accurate record keeping, it is very important that the name you use matches the name recorded with NASPA. If a player decides to play under a different name for whatever reason (marriage, divorce, nickname, etc.), NASPA needs to know this intent. This should be done separately from submitting your tournament data. If there is any doubt which name is being used by NASPA, the monthly tournament-rating file will have the correct information..

The third field is the player's cumulative spread, with a minus sign for negative spreads (but no plus sign for positive spreads), followed by a colon and a space.

There must not be a space after the slash, before or after the spread, before or after the minus sign (if you use one), or before the colon – however, there is a single space after the colon.

The rest of the line is filled with individual game results for that player. Each result is indicated by a W, L, T, or B to represent win, loss, tie, or bye, followed immediately by the opponent's player number with no spaces in between. W3 indicates the player played against player number 3 and won. Likewise, L3 indicates the player played against player 3 and lost, and T3 means the player played against player 3 and tied. Please note that for byes, since there is no ratings computation or opponent, there will be no player number. Results are separated by a single space. You can crosscheck your work by looking at each game result on each line and making sure there is a matching game on the opponent's line. In the example above, Sarah Smith (player #1) played against player #45 and won in round 1. By looking at line 45, you can see that Xavier Xylem played against player #1 (Sarah Smith) and lost in round 1.

Basic Format & Scores

A few modifications to the basic format exist as well. The first allows you to include game scores with the results.

Here is an example: W3-345

In this case, the player won against player #3 and scored 345 points. The score is represented by a single dash after the opponent's player number followed immediately by the score with no spaces in between. Note, however, that there will still be a single space between individual games. In the case of byes, no score need be included since no game actually took place, so a B is all that is required.

This format will eventually replace the current one, and it allows NASPA to build a database of players' scores. At some point in the future NASPA intends to have detailed score statistics on its website (both for individual players and in aggregate), so it is important to start using this new format as soon as possible.

A more detailed example showing of data with scores:

```
1 FLINTSTONE WILMA/784: W19-414 L18-316 L17-401 W15-522 W14-457
2 GALE DOROTHY/780: W18-475 W15-453 W13-464 L11-375 W9-454
3 RUBBLE BARNEY/655: L17-405 L14-413 W12-494 W10-449 L8-397
```

tsh Format

One format is the '.t' file format used by John Chew's free tournament management software, *tsh*. (In fact, *tsh* users can just use the built-in "SUBMIT" command and not concern themselves with the details of the rest of this description.) This format can record information such as who played first or second in each round. Here is an annotated example of a '.t' file:

```
#division A
#rating check off
```

Chew, John 1800 3 0 2 3 0 2; 300 50 350 300 50 300; other data
 Edley, Joe 2000 0 3 1 0 3 1; 50 300 350 0 300 400
 Butts, Alfred 500 2 2 0 2 2 0; 400 400 50 400 400 50
 #division B
 Doe, John 1500 3 0 2 3 0 2; 300 50 350 300 50 300
 Doe, Jane 1400 0 3 1 0 3 1; 50 300 350 50 300 400
 Doe, Kate 1300 2 2 0 2 2 0; 400 400 50 400 400 50
 #division C
 Sherman, Joel 2000 3 0 2 3 0 2; 300 50 350 300 50 300
 Wapnick, Joel 2000 0 3 1 0 3 1; 50 300 350 50 300 400
 Horn, Joel 1800 2 2 0 2 2 0; 400 400 50 400 400 50

If there is data for more than one division in the data file, each new division should begin with a line that consists of '#division', a space, and the division name.

If the input ratings in the data file do not match the currently posted NASPA ratings, adding the line '#ratingcheck off' will suppress error messages.

The player data for each division must appear on consecutive lines. Spaces must be inserted where described below, and additional spaces may be added between syntactic elements for clarity or aesthetics. Each line begins with a player's last name, a comma, a space, the player's first name, a space, and the player's input rating (or 0 for previously unrated players). After this come a list of pairing numbers indicating who the player played in each round, from the first round to the last. A pairing number of 0 indicates that the player had an unrated bye or forfeit; a pairing number of n means that the player's opponent was the nth player listed in the division. After the pairing numbers come a semicolon and the player's scores in each round, again from the first to the last. If a player had a bye or forfeit, the score should be the player's spread for that round, typically +50 or -50. Some applications may add application-specific data after another semicolon.

Only one file should be submitted to NASPA. Multiple divisions can be included in a single file with no problem. To do this, players can be numbered straight through the file. If you have four divisions of sixteen players each, Division 1 would be 1-16, Division 2 would be 17-32, Division 3 would be 33-48, and Division 4 would be 49-64.

Alternatively, if your players are numbered starting with 1 in each division and you do not want to renumber everyone, you can indicate this in your results file as follows (spread and results are omitted here for clarity):

1 ROBERTS JULIA
 2 WILLIS BRUCE
 .
 .
 16 FORD HARRISON
 +16
 1 FIELDS SALLY
 2 REEVES KEANU
 3 GARNER JENNIFER
 .
 .
 24 STREEP MERYL
 +40

1 HOFFMAN DUSTIN
2 DUNAWAY FAYE
3 EASTWOOD CLINT
.
.
30 WINFREY OPRAH

The +16 indicates that sixteen players are above that point in the file, and numbering will restart at 1 on the next line. Likewise, the +40 later indicates that forty players are above that point in the file.

Document History

- Release date: **Fall 2009**
Revised for transition from NSA to NASPA
Changed “the NSA” to “NASPA” most places.
Added tournament category “Team Challenge and Championships”
Moved tournament data submission format details to appendix
Removed many appendix sections (placed on NASPA website)
Fixed document to use Styles everywhere.
Numerous editing changes, corrected errors in RR and Snake pairing tables.
Clarified time and distance separation guidelines to avoid tournament conflicts.
Updated pagination.
- Release date: 15 August 2008
Minor formatting changes including addition of title page, table of contents, correction of page references, fix typos.
Changes of note: corrected ORT/LCT table to clarify NSA membership/rating requirements.
- Release date: 16 June 2008
Major Rewrite of the entire manual, including reorganizing sections, adding new material, and creation of appendices.
Changes of note: Required notification time to NSA for ORT reduced from 12 weeks to 8 weeks.