

**The Dictionary:**

In worldwide Scrabble clubs & tournaments the following applies:-

*In the USA & Canada* – the Scrabble patent is distributed by Hasbro and therefore they default to the Meriam-Webster Official Dictionary. *Israel* is included as far as using the Meriam- Webster.

*The Rest of the World* – the Scrabble patent by Hasbro was given to Mattel for distribution outside North America and therefore they default to the Collins Scrabble Dictionary (CSD) at present the 4<sup>th</sup> edition. However, there was a period where the Chambers Dictionary was used and had the publishing rights.

*For International Competitions & Tournaments* – there is an International Official List. Scrabble is the only International contest/sport where swear words are allowed.

**Compare the Pair?:-**

*Meriam-Webster*

- doesn't contain offensive or swear words;
- does contain American slang;
- & some other words Collins does not;
- however for tournament play the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary is augmented to include the 'sanitised' words & expands the list to 190,000 words.

*Collins*

- contains offensive & swear words;
- contains about 90,000 more words than Meriam-Webster;
- contains words of 2-9 letters;
- in tournament play Collins Scrabble Word List of 276,000 words is used;
- there are three versions on the market all with the same cover,
  - a) the 4<sup>th</sup> edition'
  - b) the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition,
  - c) the family friendly version – swear words edited;

**How has a Scrabble Dictionary occurred?**

Back in the early 70's the North American Scrabble Players Association realised there was a need to have a specific Scrabble Dictionary, suited to the game. This is due to the fact, of the existing on offer – no two dictionaries were identical with all the same words. They decided to approach Meriam-Webster publishing for a combined dictionary of the 5 collegiate dictionaries in 1976. It wasn't until 1978 (some suggest publication date in 1976?) that a specific Scrabble Dictionary was published.

Initially, the Meriam-Webster did contain the offensive & swear words but due to one irate lady who objected and created a groundswell of discontent and signatures, the publishers finally relented and deleted them. It seems in America words are more important than the lives of children being slaughtered in schools?

For your average everyday dictionary it takes about 5 years for a word to be included in it by lexicographers. The criteria are that the word has to be in common use and not a transient word or fad word that disappears overnight and should be in common use for a period of time, say, at least 5 years. It seems that most new words are generated by the younger generation. I guess that's why they are called the new generation?

However, the Scrabble Dictionary is regularly updated sometimes every 3 years, and the new inclusions are decided by an International Scrabble Committee. The new words are decided on a number of factors, such as on a need basis to enhance the game and also in consideration of the

different countries/languages involved and the formation of new words that have come into existence/use since the last update. This maybe different to your average dictionary. The last update for the dictionary was 300 words for the dictionary but more for the Official List.

A new Collins Scrabble Dictionary is due for release in May 2019. Spoiler alert – rumour has it the new version may include ‘ze’ ‘ok’ & ‘ew’ in it.

The lexicographers of the average citizen dictionary drop words it deems out-of-date and adds new updated words with each new edition, in other words it needs to be relevant for the times. If this wasn't the case, the everyday dictionary would be enormous with words dating back before Shakespeare's time. In Shakespeare's time only about 50-60,000 words were in use/existence, no wonder he/his cohorts decided to invent new words.

The Scrabble Dictionary is different, in that it endeavours to keep old words and add new words. The reason, well, if you learn a list of words and someone decides to drop some of them, wouldn't you be slightly disgruntled. Remember this is how champions succeed by learning lists. I'll give you a case in point. In North America they decided to drop ‘**da**’ from the Meriam-Webster, John Chew an official of the North American Scrabble Association received death threats & obscene emails for ten years before they relented & re-instated ‘**da**’ to the dictionary. That's how serious some players take their Scrabble. By the way, there's some debate in Scrabble circles about changing the value of the letter ‘Q’ because we now have ‘Q’ words without the ‘u’. I'd like to see how that goes down.

In my working life the Oxford Dictionary was the only default dictionary for government and ministerial documents; now I'm playing Scrabble I've adapted to the CSD because that dictionary is specific to the game. Just the same for any other occupation, for example, if you're in medicine with the huge medical dictionary or the botanical dictionary or the humongous pharmaceutical dictionary or pesticide & herbicide dictionary (the Merck) or scientific dictionary etc. By the way, when I was working 20 years ago they adding 5,000 chemicals to these dictionary every week, who knows what that figure is now?

I hope you appreciate the merit of the CSD & thankful that we have such a tool. For the unhappy amongst us, I hope this convinces you to use the CSD and clarify why you need to use it. It should be noted that North American experts/champions are now seeing the potential of the Collins due to the extra wealth of words contained therein. In addition, the CSD has an extensive list of specialty words not found in your average dictionary, so you're at a disadvantage if you're not using it.

Many languages use sets of 102 tiles, since the original distribution of hundred of one hundred tiles was later augmented with two blank tiles. For example, the French.

In Atwoodville Connecticut USA it is illegal to play a game of Scrabble while waiting for a politician to speak. Gee, I love those Yanks, over here we just get drunk & fall asleep.

“I'll have a Collins bartender, shaken but not stirred” -James Bond OO-oH

Game on!

Keith Bancroft – Convener