

C<sub>3</sub>O<sub>1</sub>F<sub>4</sub>F<sub>4</sub>S<sub>1</sub>

S<sub>1</sub>C<sub>3</sub>R<sub>1</sub>A<sub>1</sub>B<sub>3</sub>B<sub>3</sub>L<sub>1</sub>E<sub>1</sub>

C<sub>3</sub>L<sub>1</sub>U<sub>1</sub>B<sub>3</sub>

NEWSLETTER # 5

23-01-2019

*Globally 30,000 Scrabble games are started every hour.*

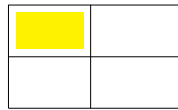
### THE BOARD:

The idea of Scrabble is to to cojoin existing words with new ones. As this becomes progressively more difficult as the game goes on, more words are gathered the further you are from the centre starting point on the board. So double letter points are nearest the middle, then double words, then triple letters. Triple words are furthest from the centre.

“Your mission, IMF Force, should you decide to accept it, is to get to the triple word score as fast as possible. This message will self destruct in 10 seconds.” I’ll ponder that one.

However, this is not the way Alfred Butts invented the game. Originally, played on the floor or table (without a board) using 9 letters on a rack (‘rack’ sourced from architrave fittings), he soon seen the error of his ways as to how difficult that would be. He then introduced a board, the entrance point was at the top left hand corner & reduced the letters to 7. When James Brunot took over, he tweaked a few things, including placement of bonus squares, starting in the middle, changing the name to Scrabble.

Alfred would try-out his different incarnations on his wife, Nina. Legend has it that she played ‘**Quixote**’ (Bingo) for 128 points on the first move. “I Should Be So Lucky”, sorry Kylie (Minogue).



**THE DEAD ZONE** – Besides being the title of a Stephen King novel, it applies to the top left hand quadrant of the board & certain areas of the board while in play. The problem – for English speaking people is they read left to right and naturally tend to want to form or place words on the board in that orientation. So placement at the beginning and consideration during the game & not blocking that area is crucial, especially for Bingo production, and by not limiting yourself to the other three sectors, which may lead to a stalemate.

**THE ‘H’ PATTERN** – On inspection you will notice the four Double Word Scores (DWS) closest to the centre square form a ‘H’ pattern through the centre square. And the distance between the DWS is seven squares between each (Bingo). Outside of this is another ‘H’ pattern which incorporates a Double Letter Square (DLS) that entices players to gravitate to, upon the first move. Obviously (**obvs**), these two patterns open up a lot of possibilities for the second move player. I’m just saying.

**THE DICTIONARY** – Lists up to 9 letter words even though the board is 15x15 squares. This is because you are unlikely to use words any longer, unless you are in the top ‘**echelon**’ (anagram- ‘**chelone**’ -Bingo!) of players.

- ◆ ETAOINSRHLDC are found in around 80% of words in the English language.
- ◆ More than half of all words end with: E,T,D or S.

### FIRST MOVE:

- The player who goes first has a 54% chance of winning the game.
- It is estimated that the first player has a 10 point advantage on the first move.
- Be careful of the ‘H’ zones.
- Consider the Dead Zone, for progression of the game. Orientate to the left, if possible.
- Learn 5 letter words with high scoring first & last letters, but will open up a ‘H’ pattern.
- 5 letter words will also assist in the end game.
- There is a 12.63% chance of a Bingo. That is, if you recognise it. Most likely Bingos using Collins is ‘**otarine/notaire**’ followed by ‘**etaerio**’. Using the Meriam the most probable are **aneroïd, aileron, atonies, elation/toenail** or **erasion**.
- You only have a maximum play of 7 letters, no chance of a triple word play.

- If you put a play in the wrong placement you may open up a 'Benjamin' (as known in French and called a 'snapback' in English) play for your opponent. A Benjamin is where your opponent can add an affix to your played word for a triple word or double word score; usually applied to the first of the second player. Named after Scrabble champ Benjamin Hannuna; '**benjamin**' is a valid Scrabble word meaning a gum resin, also spelt '**benzoin**'.
- Avoid putting a vowel near a DLS. This may give your opponent a chance to double score with a high scoring power tile; high probability your opponent has a power tile, if you don't.
  - \*The problem – **za ja ka ax** - Your opponent can double score both ways;
  - zo jo ko ox** - that is; horizontally & vertically.
  - qi ki xi** - As you can see the 'a', 'o' & 'i' present the most dilemma.
  - ze ky ex** - The 'k' is included, you can score 20 pts added both ways.
  - xu** - The 'u' presents the risk of a 'q' also being used.

### THE SECOND MOVE:

- Chance of a high scoring power tile play, on the DLS.
- Two chances of a Benjamin, but not a Bingo, by adding prefix or suffix.
- Chance of a Bingo to the triple word square, by adding suffix & prefix to first word, if opponent has played a two letter word.
- Chance of a Bingo across the opponents word, in the cross + formation.
- Chance of a Bingo from the triple to the opponents word.
- Chance of a Bingo in the 'H' patterns, if opponent puts a 4 or 5 letter words to these areas.
- If you have no vowels, your opponent may make a play with vowels.
- Extra time to consider your play.
- Chasing your opponents score.
- You may have to consider the Dead Zone, if your opponent has not done so.

### ANAGRAMMING EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to get the neurons firing in a useful direction and can be done anywhere. First pick a couple of consonants, making at least one of them a mid point tile (BCFHKMPVWY) is a good start but avoid 'S' or JQXZ. For example, let's choose D and P. Without writing anything down or having tiles in front of you to shuffle, try to think of words that include D & P and any two vowels, that is four letter words-two vowels, two consonants. If you feel unsure of some of your answers check them after you're done. What you're doing here, starting with shorter, simpler words, is teaching yourself to turn around groups of letters in your mind.

Start with AA, AE, AI, AO, AU, EE, EI, EO, EU, II, IO, IU, OO, OU, UU.

Reasons –

- *First* - doing the exercise in your head frees you to practice your skills even in situations where you don't have tiles or writing materials.
- *Second* - and more important, anagramming in your head is an important Scrabble skill.
- *Third* - is the exercise with various letter combinations, you're building your feel for words & their structures and systematising that ability means that you can call on it during games.
- *Fourth* - the act of cycling mentally through letters and combinations of letters can help you in other ways: for example, when you have a blank on your rack, you want to be able to go confidently and quickly through the alphabet, imaging the blank as every different letter of the alphabet and being able to find what the blank allows you to play. Rehearsing the act of mental cycling makes that process feel natural, over time, and this skill will serve you well whether you're considering Bingos with a blank or just finding the best shorter word you can play in a important or high-scoring spot on the board. You need to get your Scrabble brain into this cycling habit, and little informal exercises like this cultivate that habit.
- *Fifth* – and importantly, you are making neuron connections to combat Dementia.

If this alphagram landed on your rack would you recognise it? - **IJLNOQU** -.

Keith Bancroft- Convener