

10 Ways to Become an Instant Scrabble® Game Expert

There's no doubt about it — it takes a stellar vocabulary and super strategies to become a Scrabble expert. Looking for instant results? These tips from seasoned Scrabble players could help you rule the board!

1. TWO- AND THREE-LETTER WORDS

Learn the 2-letter and 3-letter words. They are the building blocks of expert play and can boost your average score by as much as 50 points per game.

2. SECRET OF THE "S"

Use an S to form two words at once. Pluralize one word while forming another at the same time. Hint: Use your S wisely. Don't add it unless you can earn at least 8 points by doing so.

3. SHUFFLE TILES

Shuffle the tiles on your rack frequently. Look for some common ways that letters go together. Some of these are BR, CH, CL; DLE, ED, ENT, EST, FUL, GHT, ING, NK, KLE, MIS, ISM, IUM, MB, MP, ND, NT, PR, PL, RE, STR, TH, UN, IVE and OUS. As you form these combinations, it may surprise you how words will often appear on your rack when you least expect them.

4. BONUS SQUARES

Always look for ways to play across premium squares. Check especially for premium squares next to vowels.

5. CONSIDER YOUR NEXT PLAY

Make your play with an eye toward your next play. You can do so simply by saving some good tiles on your rack. Your best odds of having a great next rack is to save some combination of the letters "AEILNRST" (hint: think "starline"), ideally saving either the same number of vowels and consonants, or just one extra consonant.

6. BINGO'S

Always look for bingo's (using all 7 tiles at once). Optimism and know-how will mean more 50-point bonuses. Learn common word beginnings and endings and know how to place them on your rack.

7. Q WITHOUT U

Learn the Q-without-U words. The *Official SCRABBLE Players Dictionary* (third edition) lists these: QAT(S), QAID(S), QOPH(S), FAQIR(S), QANAT(S), TRANQ(S), QINDAR(S), QINTAR(S), QWERTY(S), SHEQEL, QINDARKA and SHEQALIM.

8. LOOK FOR HOOKS

"Hooks" are single letters that you can add to existing words that form other words. We've already mentioned the "S hook," but also look for words you could end with a Y, E, R or D. Example: HAND(Y), PLAN(E), TAME(D, R).

9. CHOICE OF PLAYS

After you find a good play, if you have time, look for a better one. Always try to give yourself a choice of plays. By exercising your decision-making abilities, you'll likely develop keener strategic skills.

10. ATTITUDE

Keep in mind that anyone can beat anyone else with a certain amount of luck. Also remember that everyone draws poor combinations of tiles at times, so when you do, take pleasure in making the best play you can. Finally, don't dwell on your mistakes. Everyone makes them, so go easy on yourself and just enjoy playing!

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