

Guide to Setting Up a Scrabble Club In New Zealand

There are currently 14 Scrabble clubs in New Zealand affiliated to the New Zealand Association of Scrabble Players (NZASP), the only official Scrabble organisation in the country. There is a full list of clubs on our website with contact details and meeting times. The Association is keen to see more clubs operating and more people playing Scrabble. If you are thinking of establishing a new club in your area, we wish you every success and would like to help you in any way that we can. If you have any questions, please contact us – there is a list of contacts at the end of this guide.

Getting started

An effective way to start up a club is to produce a flyer, which can be surprisingly effective, even in the digital age, and distribute it to local sports and recreational clubs, display it on supermarket noticeboards, in libraries, cinemas, cafes, information centres, Citizens Advice Bureau, bookshops, Post Shops, dairies and other shops, railway stations, bus stops – in fact anywhere people frequent. Your local newspaper may also have a midweek edition with a free listing of all Clubs or a What's On page, so make good use of that to spread the word. Keep a list of phone numbers and email addresses of anyone expressing interest and set up a group email list you can use to keep people up to date while you are building the numbers to start a club. If you can find a free venue like the local library or rest home, that is often a good start until you have enough regulars to pay the rent elsewhere.

Equipment

Boards are preferably the rotating kind with ridges between the squares in order to stop the tiles moving about. However, these are not always easy to source and can be expensive, in which case just use what you have. Usually they need to be ordered online from overseas. Sometimes clubs buy their own equipment, other times they depend on members bringing their own to club days.

Clocks are compulsory for tournaments, optional for club days. These are similar to chess clocks and count down from 25 minutes to zero for each player in a game. It is a good idea to get members used to using these, especially if they have plans to play in tournaments.

The best tiles available are called "Protiles" and are available online, or through Suzanne Liddall, Webmaster (contact details below). Other tiles are perfectly acceptable but can often wear to illegibility in time.

Tile bags need to be approx. 17 x 34 cm in dimension (this helps avoid being able to see into the bag). Home-made versions are the norm, usually with a drawstring or ties.

Dictionaries and Word Lists are available online (PaperPlus online, the Book Depository, or Fishpond) and also at bookstores. The current lexicon for New Zealand is CSW2019. Be aware there are multiple other versions out there, particularly for the USA. Check the date and version carefully before purchase.

New Zealand Association of Scrabble Players

The structure of the NZASP is that we have an executive committee of five – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Webmaster. We have 299 members. Members belong to the association either through an affiliated club, or as an independent. Currently the annual sub for club members is \$10 per person and for Independents it is \$16. When a club is formed it pays a one off fee of \$20 to join the association. Clubs collect the annual \$10 fee and forward to NZASP. The Financial Year runs from January to December and subs are due at the beginning of the year. Clubs may also charge their members an annual fee on their own behalf. For example Whangarei Club charges a total of \$15 - \$10 for the Association and \$5 for Whangarei.

Clubs in NZ typically run a weekly club meeting, often comprising 3 games and taking approximately 3 hours. Games are one-on-one, i.e. two-player games. Meeting times vary according to each club: morning, afternoon or evening. Venues include Bridge Club rooms, libraries, community centres, RSA club rooms, halls, pubs and private homes. If there is a Ryman retirement village or rest home in your area, check whether they have a suitable venue, as they support NZ Scrabble in many ways. Bridge clubs are popular as they are conveniently set up with the right size tables for 2 players and have good parking and kitchen facilities. Most venues charge rent which would normally range from \$30 to \$50 for an afternoon. Clubs usually charge members a weekly attendance fee which covers the rent, say \$2 or \$3 a time. However, there is no prescribed format a club must follow – it is entirely up to each club to make arrangements to suit its members. The Association does expect a club to hold regular meetings that are accessible to any of the general public who have an interest in joining. Details of club meeting times and venues are published on the NZASP website (nzscrabble.org.nz) and in the Association magazine ("Forwards").

Tournaments

Many clubs also hold an annual tournament that is open to all members of the Association. A list of these is also on the website. It is not compulsory to hold such a tournament – some clubs hold two or more a year, others do not hold any. Organising a tournament involves quite a bit of effort and is probably something a club would work up to after being in operation for a year or two. Any member of any club, or any independent, may play at a club tournament. Once a year a National tournament is held over Queen's Birthday Weekend, which is open to all members. Other tournaments held include the annual Masters Tournament (for the highest rated players) and also inter-club tourneys. These last are organised between the clubs involved, e.g.: Rotorua and Tauranga.

Becoming affiliated to NZASP means accepting the Association's constitution and rules. These are available on the website. The word source for all clubs is currently CSW2019 (Collins Scrabble Words 2019). When buying dictionaries and word lists, be careful to check the source and date as there are many available, e.g.: a CSW2019 version subtitled "for all the family" which has been censored to remove a number of "offensive" words. NZASP does not accept this source.

Ratings

NZASP maintains a ratings database for all players. All club and National tournaments are "rated". Players earn a rating based on their performance at tournaments. Ratings range from 0 to approx. 2400.

NZASP publishes a quarterly magazine for members, called "Forwards". Members can subscribe to the magazine if they wish, either as an electronic version (\$5 per annum) or hard copy (\$20 if posted care of the club). Past issues are available on the website.

NZASP run a group on Slack for easier communication between members. News, ideas, tournament info etc can be shared here. See the website for details of how to join up.

NZASP can provide two and three letter word lists. There are also lists online, like tips on how to improve your game or detailed lists available from the Australian Scrabble Association website. These are particularly useful for new players coming to grips with some of the more unusual words that are allowed.

Contacts and Resources

NZASP website: <https://scrabble.org.nz>

FAQs: <https://scrabble.org.nz/clubs-in-nz/frequently-asked-questions>

<https://scrabble.org.nz/resources/16-tips-to-boost-your-scrabble-game>

Slack - name of group is NZ Scrabble, Email Clare to add you to Slack: scrabble.clare@gmail.com

Australian Scrabble website: scrabble.org.au

Tiles: protiles.net or contact Suzanne Liddall at suezannenz@gmail.com

Boards and Clocks: genetimer.com (due to cease at end of 2021), Amazon, eBay and other sites are other overseas sources, but the high cost of shipping usually more than doubles the cost of the equipment and delays are common. TradeMe occasionally has a rotating board on offer, (including some from Low Vision NZ featuring larger tiles that include Braille dots but are suitable for all users, listed at \$110 in Oct 2021).

NZASP committee: contact the Secretary Liz Fagerlund at scrabbliz@kinect.co.nz or the Treasurer Cicely Bruce at treasurer.nzasp@gmail.com

Forwards magazine – current editor is Val Mills at valmillsnz@gmail.com