Scrabble™ New Zealand

(Name amended AGM 31.05.2025)

Constitution and Rules of Play

Revised after Annual General Meeting 31.05.2026

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Annexe: Rules of Play as at June 2026

1. Name

The name of the Association is Scrabble™ New Zealand, hereinafter referred to as Scrabble NZ.

Amended AGM 31.5.2025

2. Objects

The objects of Scrabble NZ shall be to:

2.1. Encourage all Scrabble players to compete together;

2.2. Promote, encourage and foster the development and growth of Scrabble and Scrabble Clubs in New Zealand;

2.3. Organise and conduct Tournaments and Challenges locally, nationally and, if possible, internationally;

2.4. Liaise with the franchise holders of Scrabble in New Zealand;

2.5. Arrange and conduct suitable social functions as may be decided upon by the duly elected Management Committee.

3. Powers

3.1. Scrabble NZ shall have the power to do all such acts, deeds, matters and things as shall be incidental to or conducive to its objects, including the power to:

3.1.1. Make, amend or rescind rules or regulations not inconsistent with these rules pertaining to the carrying out of all or any of the objects of Scrabble NZ;

3.1.2. Affiliate with any organization whose objects are, in the opinion of Scrabble NZ, similar to, or in sympathy with the objects of Scrabble NZ;

3.1.3. Make such donations or other payments as it may think fit.

4. Membership

Scrabble NZ shall consist of Ordinary Members, Honorary Members, Honorary Vice Presidents and Life Members.

4.1. Ordinary Members

4.1.1. Any Scrabble player shall be eligible for membership as an Ordinary Member. Only members are entitled to vote at meetings.

4.1.2. Any new application for Ordinary Membership may be placed before the Executive Committee at its next meeting following receipt of the application if that person is not a member of a Club. The Secretary may notify the applicant of the result of the application if required.

4.1.3. All independent members and members of registered Clubs shall be required to pay an annual affiliation fee to Scrabble NZ as may be determined from time to time by the Annual General Meeting, after consultation with the management committee. Any new fee set will be applicable for the following financial year. The members of more than one club shall be required to pay their annual affiliation fee only through one Club. This fee should be paid to Club Treasurers who will forward names and fees to Scrabble NZ Treasurer.

4.1.4 The membership affiliation fees will take into account whether the member is affiliated to a Club, or not affiliated to a Club.

4.1.5. All affiliation fees are due and payable on the 1st of January for each ensuing year.

4.1.6 **Financial Year**
The Financial Year of Scrabble NZ shall commence on the first day of January and end on the thirty-first day of December each year.

4.1.7 An Honorary Reviewer shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting and verify by signature all financial statements.

4.1.8. Each new club shall pay a registration fee of $20. No annual fees are payable by Clubs.

4.2. Honorary Members and Vice Presidents

4.2.1. The Management Committee may recommend as an Honorary Member or Honorary Vice President of Scrabble NZ any person of distinction in public life, or in relation to the game of Scrabble, to be elected at the Annual General Meeting.

4.2.2. Any Honorary Member or Honorary Vice President so elected shall be exempt from payment of the annual subscription and shall not be entitled to vote at any meeting of Scrabble NZ but shall otherwise be entitled to all the privileges of Ordinary Membership.

4.3. Life Members

4.3.1. Any member of Scrabble NZ who has, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, rendered exceptional service to the Association, and in recognition of such is recommended by the Executive Committee for election as a Life Member of Scrabble NZ, may be elected a Life Member at the Annual General Meeting of Scrabble NZ.

4.3.2. A Life Member shall be exempt from payment of the annual subscriptions but shall otherwise be entitled to all the privileges of an Ordinary Member.

4.4 Members bound by rules

Every member shall be deemed to consent to and be bound by the Rules and By-laws of the Association.

5. Termination and suspension of membership

5.1. Any Member may, by notice in writing to the Club or Scrabble NZ Secretary, resign his or her membership of Scrabble NZ and shall thereupon cease to be a member of Scrabble NZ.

5.2. Any member whose subscription is unpaid after the last day of the Financial Year in which the same fell due, may, by resolution of the Management Committee, be declared to have ceased to be a member of Scrabble NZ.

5.3. The Executive Committee, taking consideration of a Member's actions, may suspend any Member for a length of time.

5.4. A suspended Member of Scrabble NZ shall at the expiry of his/her suspension period be invited to rejoin Scrabble NZ. Any Member having previously been suspended from Scrabble NZ for any reason shall, if facing further suspension, be suspended for life and may not be reinstated.

5.5. Where a club affiliated to Scrabble NZ suspends or terminates the membership of a club member, an officer of the club shall notify the Secretary of Scrabble NZ of the suspension or termination in writing as soon as practicable.

5.6. If a membership is terminated or suspended by a club, that member's rights and privileges as a member of Scrabble NZ will be terminated, or will be suspended for the period of the club's suspension

5.7. If in the opinion of Scrabble NZ's Executive Committee after taking the facts of the case into consideration, the circumstances of the membership's termination or suspension warrant it, the Executive Committee shall notify all other clubs of the termination or suspension.

6. Executive Committee

6.1. The administration, management and control of the affairs of Scrabble NZ, for the everyday running of Scrabble NZ, shall be vested in an Executive Committee consisting of the following officers:

6.1.1. President.

6.1.2. Vice President.

6.1.3. Secretary.

6.1.4. Treasurer.

6.1.5. Web master.

6.2. The officers shall be elected from the registered members at each Annual General Meeting and shall hold office until the next succeeding Annual General Meeting when they shall retire but shall be eligible for re-election. Proxy votes are allowed for the election of executive officers.

6.3. Nominations for the Executive Committee must be made in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the AGM. Where less than two nominations for any executive position have been received, nominations may also be received from the floor.

6.4 The Executive Committee may exercise all powers and do all acts and things that have been decided by the Management Committee which are not expressly directed or required to be done by Scrabble NZ in General Meeting.

6.5 The Executive Committee may from time to time appoint such Standing or Special Committee or Sub-Committee as it thinks fit, and may delegate to such a Committee any of the powers and duties of the Executive Committee.

6.6 The Executive Committee shall furnish to each Annual General Meeting of Scrabble NZ a report on the affairs of Scrabble NZ during the preceding financial year, together with a Statement of Income and Expenditure, and a Balance Sheet disclosing the financial position of Scrabble NZ.

6.7 In case any vacancy shall occur in an Executive Office, the Management Committee may appoint any members of Scrabble NZ to fill such vacancy, and the member so appointed shall hold office until the next succeeding Annual General Meeting of Scrabble NZ.

6.8 Scrabble NZ will pay the entry fee of members of the Executive Committee to any one Open Tournament in New Zealand (at the player's option) in any one calendar year. The Executive Committee may nominate any other players to receive this benefit.

6.9 The Executive Officers can attend special committee meetings of all clubs on invitation only.

7. Management Committee

7.1 The Management Committee shall consist of the Executive Committee plus one voting member from each registered Club plus all current independent members. A quorum for a Management Committee meeting shall be a minimum of two Executive Officers, plus one voting member from each of four registered clubs and at least two independent members. Proxy votes are allowed.

7.2 The vote of the voting member from each registered club will be weighted to include all affiliated members of that club at the date of the management meeting. All other votes of eligible participants at the meeting will be counted as single votes. The chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote.

7.3 The Management Committee shall be called to meet in a convenient central place when the Executive Committee feel it is necessary. Usually it will be held in conjunction with a tournament. If any extraordinary or non-routine business is to be referred to a management meeting by the Executive Committee then notice of such business will be circulated to Clubs, and members not affiliated to Clubs, not less than four weeks before the meeting, unless the business arises later, when as much notice as practicable will be given.

8. Trustees

All Scrabble NZ property shall be vested in the Executive for the time being who shall, by virtue of their office, be trustees thereof for the Association.

9. General Meeting

9.1. The Annual General Meeting of Scrabble NZ shall be held on the King's Birthday weekend in each succeeding year, at the time and place to be fixed by the Management Committee, for the purpose of receiving and accepting the Annual Report and Accounts, electing officers, for considering and, if approved, altering any of the Rules, and transacting such other business as may be specified in the notice convening the meeting.
Amended AGM 3/6/23

9.2. Any Member desiring to bring any special business before the Annual General Meeting shall give notice to the Secretary in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the meeting.

9.3. Notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given to each Club, or to each member not affiliated to a Club, not less than twenty-one (21) clear days before the date appointed for the meeting.

9.4. The Secretary shall, at the direction of the Management Committee, or upon the requisition in writing signed by two (2) members of at least three (3) registered Clubs, convene a Special General Meeting to transact such business as shall be specified in the notice convening the meeting. Notice in writing of such Special General Meeting shall be given as in 11.3.

9.5. At any General Meeting, ten (10) Ordinary Members personally present, together with at least one (1) member of the Executive Committee, shall constitute a quorum, and if no quorum shall be present thirty (30) minutes after the time for which the meeting has been convened, the meeting shall be adjourned.

9.6. At any General Meeting, the President, or in his or her absence, the Vice President or some member of Scrabble NZ elected by the meeting shall be Chairperson. The Chairperson shall, in all cases, have a deliberative vote and, in cases of equal voting, shall have a casting vote.

9.7. At any General Meeting Ordinary Members of Scrabble NZ shall have one vote which may be given personally or by proxy on resolutions which have been put in writing as in 11.2. Every resolution shall in the first place be determined on the voices, but if a poll is demanded shall be decided on a show of hands. A secret ballot shall be held at the discretion of the President.

9.8. Any resolution passed at a duly constituted General Meeting of Scrabble NZ shall be conclusive and binding upon all members of Scrabble NZ.

10. Alteration of the Rules

10.1. No addition to and alteration, amendment, or revision of the Constitution and Rules of Scrabble NZ shall be made except by a two-thirds majority of votes resolved from those entitled to vote in person or by proxy at an Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting called for the purpose, the notice of which meeting shall contain particulars of the addition, alteration, deletion, amendment or revision to be proposed.

10.2. No addition to or alteration of the non-profit aims/objects clause (Clause 2), personal benefit clause (Clause 21), payments to members clause (Clause 20) or the winding-up clause (Clause 22) shall be approved without the approval of Inland Revenue. The provisions and effect of this clause shall not be removed from this document and shall be included and implied into any document replacing this document.

11. Tournaments

11.1. Only Scrabble players who are members of Scrabble NZ are eligible to enter official tournaments. Official tournaments may be organized and run by the Scrabble NZ, by registered clubs, and by individual members of Scrabble NZ. For any official tournament not run under the auspices of Scrabble NZ or a registered club, any monetary profit from the tournament shall be either given to the Scrabble NZ or to a registered club. The organiser(s) may specify use for the donated profit. Overseas players who are members of a national Scrabble organisation may enter such tournaments at the discretion of the tournament organiser.

12. Ratings

12.1. A rating system will be maintained for all players competing in Official Tournaments. The system will be based on the performance of each player in relation to his/her opponents in each Tournament. The system will be implemented and maintained by a Ratings Manager, to be appointed by the Executive.

12.2. The system will be updated after each Tournament based on the results forwarded by the Tournament Organiser. Current rating lists will be distributed at regular intervals and supplied to Tournament Organisers as required.

12.3. From the current ratings a ranking list will be prepared and published with each issue of Scrabble NZ magazine *'Forwords'*. The player with the highest rating shall be ranked No 1 and other players shall be ranked in descending order of rating values.

12.4. To qualify for inclusion in the Official Ranking List a player must have competed in at least forty (40) tournament games in the preceding twenty-four (24) months. If unforeseen circumstances prevent the holding of scrabble tournaments in NZ for a period of time, 24 months may be increased so as to avoid including the time in which the holding of tournaments was prevented.

12.5. Where two or more players achieve the same rating, they shall be listed in the same order as on the immediately previous ratings list (i.e. they will be ranked according to what their ratings were the last time their ratings differed). If two or more new players achieve the same provisional rating from their first tournament, they shall be listed in the order that they entered the tournament.

13. Rules of play at tournaments

13.1. The current Rules of Play are those annexed to this Constitution.

13.2. The Executive Committee shall appoint a Rules Committee. Members of the Rules Committee shall be Scrabble NZ members and there shall be no fewer than 2 people on the committee at all times.

13.3. Any member who wishes to propose a change to the Rules of play shall put the change to the Rules Committee for consideration.

13.4. All changes to the Rules of play shall be put by the Rules Committee to a Management Meeting to be voted and shall take effect from the date agreed at that meeting.

14. Annual Championship

14.1. The Annual Championship shall be held on King's Birthday weekend every year.
Amended AGM 3/6/23

14.2. The venue for the Annual Championship shall be decided at the Annual General Meeting.

14.3 The timing, number of games and format for the Annual Championship shall be decided at a management meeting at least four (4) months in advance of the Championship date.

15. Masters Tournament

15.1. A Masters tournament is to be held at Easter every year.

15.2. The Tournament is to be hosted, run and adjudicated by a Club agreed upon at the previous Annual General Meeting.

15.3. The Tournament shall include the top 24 available players on the Scrabble NZ rankings list on 31st January in the calendar year of the Masters.
Amended AGM 31/5/2025

15.4. Games will be played over a period of three days. The number of games will be 23 maximum.

15.5. The Masters Tournament will be played as a Round Robin event.

15.6. Balanced starts will be used in the Masters Tournament – the method used to be determined by the tournament committee.

16. Postponement

If unforeseen circumstances prevent the NZ Masters or Annual Championship or AGM from going ahead at the time specified in the rules, the Executive Committee may determine an alternative time in the same calendar year. The association will not be liable for any travel or accommodation costs incurred if an event hosted by the association is unable to take place on the specified weekend.

17. International invitational events

17.1. New Zealand representatives for any international invitational events, e.g. World Scrabble Championship, Trans-Tasman Challenge, shall be selected in accordance with criteria determined at a Management Meeting.

17.2. The selection criteria will be published on the Scrabble NZ website and updated when changed.

17.3. In the situation where an offer is made to Scrabble NZ to send a NZ representative to an international tournament and there has not been time for the criteria to represent NZ to be determined, the Executive will make the decision as to whether to send a representative and whom to send.

18. Sponsorship

Scrabble New Zealand will not accept sponsorship or funding from companies that are directly involved in the manufacture of tobacco products, alcohol, or recreational drugs; the production of fossil fuels, the production or sale of weapons, or who run establishments involved in commercial gambling, such as casinos or gambling websites. This prohibition does not preclude accepting funding from entities that run charitable lotteries or raffles, nor does it preclude SNZ from running such lotteries, raffles, or other internal funding schemes itself.
Added to Constitution 01.06.2026 at 2026 AGM

19. Payments to Members

19.1. No member of Scrabble NZ or any person associated with a member shall participate in or materially influence any decision made by Scrabble NZ in respect of the payment to or on behalf of that member or associated person of any income, benefit, or advantage whatsoever.

19.2. Any such income paid shall be reasonable and relative to that which would be paid in an arm's length transaction (being the open market value). The provisions and effect of this clause shall not be removed from this document, and shall be included and implied into any document replacing this document.

20. Personal Benefit

Notwithstanding anything expressed or implied in these Rules, the activities of Scrabble NZ shall not be carried on for the personal pecuniary profit or benefit of any member or individual or associated person.

21. Winding Up

Upon winding up or dissolution of Scrabble NZ and the settlement of all debts and liabilities, any remaining cash or other assets shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of Scrabble NZ, but shall be given or transferred to a charitable organisation or charitable purpose within New Zealand.

Scrabble NZ Constitution

Annexe: Rules of Play as amended at Management Meeting January 2026

The following Rules of Play are applicable to all tournaments and Interclub Challenges organised by Clubs affiliated to Scrabble NZ.

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7. Leaving the playing area during a game
8. End of Game
9. Byes

10. Forfeits

11. Results

12. Ethical Behaviour

1. Official Words

1.1. The only allowed dictionary and word list is Collins Official Scrabble Words 2024 (CSW2024). *Amended 25.1.2025*

1.2. Additional adjudication aids such as word lists and computers may be used at the discretion of tournament organisers, who shall be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of such additional aids.

1.3. No word lists or dictionaries may be consulted during a game. Any challenges will be decided by an adjudicator or by self-adjudication by both players using a computer software programme with the appropriate lexicon loaded. Tournament organisers must ensure that the correct lexicon is loaded and that all players understand how to use the program in the case of self-adjudication.

2. Grading

2.1. Where there are more than one group of players in a Tournament then the placement of players into grades will be determined by current ratings.

2.2. Where players without New Zealand ratings (new players or Overseas players) are entered for a Tournament then the Tournament Organiser has discretion as to placement.

2.3. Where a player either:

i) Has played at least one rated game in New Zealand, but fewer than 30 (i.e. they have a provisional New Zealand rating); or

ii) Has not played a rated game in New Zealand for at least two years (i.e. they have a historic New Zealand rating but no longer appear in the Ratings list); the player and Tournament Organiser may agree that the player should be placed in a higher or lower grade than indicated by their provisional or historic rating. Any player thus re-graded will be rated as if they are a new player who has been placed in that grade.
Effective from 1 January 2022 and Amended Management Meeting 29/1/22)

3. Timing

3.1. Timers must be used in all official Scrabble NZ tournaments.

3.2. Each player is allowed twenty-five (25) minutes to complete all plays before incurring time penalties. It is the responsibility of players to ensure clocks are set properly. Players are responsible for ensuring that their clock is stopped when it should be.

3.3. There is no limit on time per turn.

3.4. Timers in order of preference

3.4.1 Digital timer clocks

3.4.2 Smart device digital timers. The device should be set so that it cannot make distracting sounds or vibrations. Smart devices may only be used if both players agree to its use.
All digital timers must continue to show the extra time used once the specified time limit is exceeded and must have a display that is clear and easily read from both sides of the table.

3.4.3 Analogue chess clocks.

Amended Management meeting 5/6/2022

4. Attendance

4.1. Should any player not compete in a game for which he/she is scheduled, for any reason, he/she shall forfeit the game (refer to Rule 10.).

4.2. If a player is late to start the game that player's clock shall be started at the adjudicator's call to start the game and will run until the player arrives or twenty-five (25) minutes expires. When the player arrives, the clocks are neutralised and the preliminaries and the first play are commenced. A player arriving late must start with whatever time is left on his/her clock.

4.3. Where a player who has entered a tournament withdraws less than 24 hours before the scheduled start time the tournament organiser shall determine whether to adjust the draw or allocate a bye in the grade concerned.

4.4. Where a player who has entered a tournament withdraws less than 24 hours before the scheduled start time the tournament organiser shall determine whether to adjust the draw, allocate a bye in the grade concerned or to apply Rule 4.1. In making such determination the tournament organiser shall consider the reason for the withdrawal, any notice of withdrawal given by the player and the length of any notice period. The player shall have the right to appeal the tournament organiser's decision to a Judicial Committee within 48 hours of being notified.

5. Preliminaries

Before each game begins, it is the responsibility of both players to:

5.1. Determine that there are correct tiles. For the first game of the Tournament tiles may be set out on a tile distribution sheet or directly on to the board in any format that clearly shows tiles are present. For all subsequent games tiles are to be arranged on the board in any format that clearly shows tiles are present. (e.g.10x10, 4 blocks of 5x5). The tiles are then transferred to the bag. All bags should be approximately seventeen (17) by thirty-four (34) centimetres in dimensions.

5.2. Establish who goes first by drawing one tile each from the bag. The nearest to 'A' goes first (a blank beats an 'A'). If identical tiles are drawn, then further tiles are drawn until the first player is identified. Once the first player is identified, the second player should return all tiles to the bag prior to the first player drawing any tiles for his/her turn.

5.3. Notwithstanding Rule 5.2 any club hosting a tournament has the discretion to apply balanced starts, where the starting player is determined in advance to ensure an even distribution of starts for each player in each grade. The National Championships and Masters Championship must have balanced starts.

5.4. Enter the players' names on the Score sheets, ensuring that they are identical and that the player going first is listed in the lefthand column.

5.5. Ensure that clocks are set correctly.

6. Play

6.1. Drawing tiles

6.1.1 The player going first draws seven tiles, and places them on his/her rack. The first player's clock is started when the first player has at least one tile on his/her rack or there are at least three tiles showing face up which the first player can see.

6.1.2. When drawing tiles the proper procedure is to hold the bag above the table so that the contents are not visible, show an open palm, and draw the required number of tiles from the bag and place them face down in front of the player. They should then be transferred to the rack upon confirmation that the correct number has been drawn.

6.1.3. When more than the required number of replacement tiles have been drawn, the following procedure is to be applied:

6.1.3.1. If the player has not yet placed any replacement tiles on his/her rack, the opponent shall pick as many tiles as are overdrawn from those lying face down on the table and return them to the bag.

6.1.3.2. If the player has commenced to place replacement tiles on his/her rack then all that player's tiles shall be combined, either on the player's rack or face down on the table, and the opponent shall pick from those tiles as many as are overdrawn plus one. After looking at those tiles the opponent shall select one tile to be replaced on the player's rack and return the remaining tiles to the bag.

6.1.3.3. If either player has seen the tile(s) to be returned to the bag, the other player is entitled to see them also.

6.1.3.4. Where a player finds that an opponent has more than seven tiles on his/her rack then the opponent shall turn his/her rack to the player and the player shall choose which tile(s) to return to the bag.

6.1.3.5. Clocks will be neutralised from the time of discovery of the extra tile(s) until the extra tile(s) are returned to the bag. It is the responsibility of the player whose clock is running to neutralise the clock and the responsibility of the player waiting for his opponent to move to restart the clock.

6.2. Playing a blank

6.2.1. When playing a blank the player must declare what letter it represents. The blank shall continue to represent the declared letter for the remainder of the game. The player playing a blank will write the letter that the blank represents on the result sheet that will be used for the game and will ensure that the other player has sighted it. In any case where one or both players are vision impaired the clock will be neutralised and an adjudicator will be called to ensure that the blank is correctly recorded and understood by both players.

6.2.2. A player who plays a blank must declare it as in the rule above, BEFORE pressing the timer. If a player ends the turn without correctly declaring a blank, the opponent may immediately restart that player's timer and demand that the blank be properly declared. Pressing of the timer by the opponent in this instance does not count as a passed turn.

6.3. End of turn procedure

6.3.1. Position the tiles to be played on the board.

6.3.2. Declare the score for the turn. At this stage, the player may still adjust the move in any way.

6.3.3. Start the opponent's clock. The move can no longer be adjusted in any way.

6.3.4. Record the score for the turn and the cumulative score in the normal space on his or her score sheet.

6.3.5. Each player shall record the score on his/her score sheet.

6.3.6. Replenish the rack from the bag.

6.3.7. A player who omits to press the timer while making a turn completes that turn as soon as he/she starts to draw replacement tiles.

6.4. Tile tracking

Tile tracking in all forms is optional.

6.5. Flash drawing

6.5.1. If the player fails to record scores as required by Rule 6.3.4 before drawing a replacement tile, or if the player pre-writes the scores, he or she has flash-drawn. The opponent is not considered to have accepted the turn and may challenge even after a replacement tile is drawn.

6.5.2. Flash-drawing constitutes unethical behaviour.

6.5.3. If a turn is successfully challenged after a flash-draw, then:

6.5.3.1. If no flash-drawn tile has touched the player's rack, all flash-drawn tiles are revealed to both players and returned to the bag,

6.5.3.2. If a flash-drawn tile has touched the player's rack, the player is overdrawn by the number of tiles drawn in the flash-draw, and Rule 6.1.3. applies.

6.6. Dispute over score

If there is a dispute in respect of the score for the turn, clocks will be neutralised until the dispute is resolved. It is the responsibility of the player whose clock is running to neutralise the clock and the responsibility of the player waiting for his/her opponent to move to restart the clock.

6.7. Exchanging tiles

6.7 Players may exchange one to seven tiles in lieu of a turn providing that there are at least seven tiles left in the bag. The procedure for changing is as follows:

6.7.1. Declare the intent to change and the number of tiles to be changed.

6.7.2. Place the tiles to be changed face down on the table. At this point the opponent's clock may be restarted.

6.7.3. Pick the same number of tiles from the bag and place these face down on the table separate from those to be changed.

6.7.4. Upon confirmation that the numbers are correct place the replaced tiles back in the bag.

6.7.5. Place the replacement tiles on the rack.

6.7.6. If during the exchange it is found that too many replacement tiles have been drawn, the procedure detailed in Rule 6.1.3 shall be followed.

6.8. Passing

Players may pass any number of times in a game. The opponent's clock is started as soon as the intention to pass is declared.

6.9. Incorrect number of tiles, tiles mixed between sets or tiles remain in bag

In the case where, for any reason, and at any time during a game, it is determined that there are either an incorrect number of tiles, or tiles have been mixed between two sets of players, or tiles remain in the bag following the completion of the game, no attempt will be made to rectify the situation until the completion of the affected game(s). Play will continue with the remaining tiles in the respective bags. No adjustment will be made to either game's final score, or to any individual player's final score. Following the completion of the affected games the players involved will be responsible for sorting out the mixed tiles and creating 10 by 10 squares on both of the boards.

6.10. Tile discovered out of the bag

If any tiles are discovered outside the bag at any time during a game and before the result sheet has been signed, then:

6.10.1. Both players see the tiles and the tiles are returned to the bag;

6.10.2. Any tiles that may have been removed from players' racks in the belief that the game was over are replaced; and one of the following steps is taken:

6.10.3. If both players have seven tiles on their racks, play resumes as usual;

6.10.4. If only one player has seven tiles, that player's opponent should draw from the bag;

6.10.5. If neither player has seven tiles, the players ascertain who should have drawn replacement tiles earliest and that player draws from the bag. If only one player has tiles after this is done, the game is over and the result recalculated as necessary.

6.10.6. Under no circumstances may any moves be replayed.

6.11. Tile discovered In the bag

If any tiles are discovered in the bag which players had thought to be empty, before the result sheet has been signed, then:

6.11.1. Both players must see the tiles;

6.11.2. Any tiles that may have been removed from players' racks in the belief that the game was over are replaced; and

6.11.3. The players ascertain who should have drawn replacement tiles earliest and that player adds the tiles to his or her rack.

6.11.4. If both players still have tiles after this process, play resumes. If only one player has tiles, the game is over and the result recalculated as necessary.

6.11.5. Under no circumstances may any moves be replayed.

6.12. Accepting and challenging turns

A player may challenge ANY or ALL words formed in a turn. The procedure to do so is as follows:

6.12.1. Accepting the turn:

6.12.1.1. A Challenge may not be declared until the player's turn has ended (refer 6.3).

6.12.1.2. Once a player presses the timer, the opponent may:

6.12.1.2.1. Issue an immediate challenge.

6.12.1.2.2. Call 'hold'.

6.12.1.2.3. Choose to accept the turn without calling 'hold' or issuing a challenge.

6.12.1.3. The opponent accepts the turn if he or she neither calls 'hold', nor issues a challenge before the player removes a replacement tile from the bag.

6.12.1.4. Accepting a turn waives the right to challenge that turn.

6.12.1.5. Writing by the opponent does not affect acceptance of a turn.

6.12.1.6. Unambiguous words such as 'accept' or 'okay' must be used to release a hold.

6.12.2. Challenging a turn

6.12.2.1. The challenger verbally expresses an unambiguous intention to challenge. The player declaration to challenge cannot be withdrawn. The player may not draw any tiles from the bag. The challenger neutralises the clock at this point.

6.12.2.2. If more than one word in a turn is challenged, this must be executed as one challenge, after all challenged words have been entered. Words in a turn cannot be challenged individually as this may have the consequence of confirming a particular word as correct or not correct.

6.13. Self-Adjudication at an External Device

6.13.1. The player issuing the challenge clearly informs the opponent which word or words are being challenged;

6.13.2. To minimise errors, it is advised that either player writes the word/s down on a challenge slip.

6.13.3. Both players cover their tiles or turn any tiles on their racks face down and proceed to the adjudication device.

6.13.4. The player issuing the challenge types the word or words to be challenged into the adjudication programme.

6.13.5. The opponent verifies that the word or words are correctly typed and executes the adjudication command.

6.13.6. The timer may not be restarted after a self-adjudicated challenge until both players are seated, tiles are uncovered or back on racks and any incorrect word is removed from the board.

6.14. Self Adjudication via Smart Device:

6.14.1. The challenger clearly informs the opponent which word/s are being challenged.

6.14.2. The challenger types in the word/s being challenged into the adjudication programme.

6.14.3. The opponent verifies that the word/s are correctly typed and then gives verbal consent for the challenger to execute the adjudication command.

6.14.4. Note that the use of a smart device for self-adjudication must be agreed to by both players. The following requirements with regard to smart device adjudication are mandatory:

6.14.4.1. It is preferable for players to agree to the use of a smart device before beginning the game.

6.14.4.2. The minimum screen size must be at least 3.5 inches (89 millimetres) measured diagonally.

6.14.4.3. The device must be set so that it cannot make distracting sounds or vibrations.

6.14.4.4. The device must be used in adjudication mode and may not be used in other modes.

6.14.4.5. While in use, the screen must remain visible to both players.

6.14.4.6. The device’s adjudication programme must be capable of accepting multiple words to be challenged at a time.

6.14.4.7. The device’s adjudication programme must use the official word list (as per Rule 1.1) as its lexicon.

6.14.5. The timer may not be restarted after a self-adjudicated challenge until both players are seated, tiles are uncovered or back on racks and any incorrect word is removed from the board.

6.15. Adjudication by an adjudicator

6.15.1. The challenger writes the word or words being challenged clearly in capital letters on a challenge slip and underlines them, adds the table number, raises his/her hand and calls ‘challenge’ to the adjudicator.

6.15.2. The decision of the Adjudicator will be indicated on the challenge slip. The Adjudicator MUST NOT give any indication to either player that any particular word is wrong or right but adjudicate on the turn as a whole.

6.15.3. The decision of the Adjudicator may be appealed once only to a Referee.

6.16. Successful challenge

If the challenge is successful, i.e. the turn played is incorrect, the tiles played in the turn are removed from the board, the player then misses a turn. This will be indicated on the score sheet and the player restarts the challenger's clock.

6.17. Unsuccessful challenge

If the challenge is unsuccessful, i.e. the turn played is correct, the challenger does not miss a turn; however, the player receives 5 points for each word challenged in addition to his/her turn score. The player restarts the challenger's clock.

6.18. Incorrect adjudication

In the case where a challenge is later found to have been incorrectly adjudicated no adjustment may be made to the scores of either player.

7. Leaving the playing area during a game

7.1. Players must obtain the Tournament Director's permission to leave the playing area during a game.

7.2. If permission is obtained, the Tournament Director will supervise the following procedure:

7.2.1. The player wishing to leave must complete a turn except for drawing replacement tiles, the player may then leave the playing area. While the player is absent the opponent may complete a turn except for drawing tiles.

7.2.2. The opponent then neutralizes the clock. The Tournament Director will rule on restarting the clock or the game being forfeited if the player is absent for an extended time or unable to return to complete the game.

7.2.3. In the event of an emergency, players may leave the playing area without obtaining permission. The opponent must alert the Tournament Director immediately if this occurs.

7.2.4. Supervision of either player is at the discretion of the Tournament Director. Either player may request but may not compel supervision.

8. End of Game

8.1. Play continues in turn until:

8.1.1. Either one player plays the remaining tiles on his/her rack and there are no tiles in the bag,

8.1.2. Or neither player can make a valid play.

8.1.3. Six consecutive zero scores end the game. Once there are fewer than 7 tiles in the bag, the game ends after the six consecutive turns scoring zero.

8.1.4. If for some reason a player has difficulty counting tiles left in the bag towards the end of the game, they may ask their opponent to count the remaining tiles. Their opponent is not obligated to perform a tile count and will not be penalised if their count turns out to be inaccurate. During a requested tile count by the opponent, the requesting player's clock will continue to run. If the player would prefer a neutral person to count the tiles, or their opponent is not willing to count the tiles, the player may ask the adjudicator, or another person agreed upon by both players while the requesting player's clock is still running, to count the tiles. Upon such agreement, or when the player calls the adjudicator, the clock will be neutralised until the count is completed. A player may only request a tile count once during the game. *Amended 31.05.2026*

8.2. A player attempting to play out must neutralise the timer, rather than starting the opponent's timer. The opponent must then either: accept the turn by revealing his or her unplayed tiles; call 'hold'; or challenge the turn.

8.2.1 Right to restart the timer. If a player has attempted to play out, and the opponent fails to accept the turn within approximately five seconds, then the player is entitled to restart the opponent's timer while awaiting the opponent's action. If an opponent's timer is so started, the opponent must neutralise the time after deciding either to accept the turn or to challenge.

8.3. The score of the player who goes out will be increased by double the sum of the value of the tiles remaining on the opponent¹s rack. If both players have tiles left the value of the tiles held by each is deducted from their respective score.

8.4. If a player has used more than the twenty-five (25) minute playing time on his/her clock, then that player's score will be reduced by ten points for every minute overtime or part thereof.

8.5. The player with the higher adjusted score is the winner. In the event of both players having the same adjusted score then each will be credited with one-half win.

8.6. Totals for each player are carried to the bottom of the score sheet. Both players must ensure that their score sheets agree. The results slip is to be filled in with the required information, checked and signed by both players.

8.7. The tiles are then arranged on the board in accordance with Rule 5.1 ready for the next game.

8.8. The winning player will ensure that the results slip is handed to the Scorer.

9. Byes

9.1. When there is an uneven number of players in a grade, the player without an opponent in each round will receive a bye.

9.2. When players in a grade receive an unequal number of byes, the bye shall count as a win, with the player's average score, +50 spread points and average bonus words for the Tournament added to the player's aggregate score, spread points and bonus words.

9.3. Wins awarded from byes shall not be counted in ratings calculations.

10. Forfeits

10.1. Players shall forfeit games in the following circumstances:

10.1.1. Failure to compete in a scheduled game.

10.1.2. Where player must leave a game in progress and both players are not able to finish that game at an arranged time later.

10.1.3. Where Scrabble NZ Executive Committee so determines (refer to Rule 12.4).

10.2. The forfeited game shall count as a win to the scheduled opponent, with the player's average game score, +50 spread points and average bonus words for the Tournament added to the player's aggregate score, spread points and bonus words.

10.3. The forfeited game shall count as a loss against the scheduled opponent for the player who forfeits, and no points or bonus words for that round and -50 spread points.

10.4. Forfeited games shall not be counted in ratings calculations.

10.5. Where games are forfeited under Rule 10.1, Scrabble NZ Executive Committee may also exclude the player from the Rankings for up to year from the date of the tournament.

11. Results

11.1. Tournament and/or grade placings are determined by the number of wins. In the event of a tie then the total spread for all games for each player will be used to resolve the tie.

11.2. In Teams' events the winner will be decided on the combined wins and spread of the team members in the same manner as Rule 11.1.

11.3. Tournament Organisers are required to forward results of the Tournament to the Website Co-ordinator, the Ratings Manager and the Magazine Layout Editor as soon as possible following completion of the tournament and must retain all result slips until the results and new ratings have been published on the website.

11.4. The content of the results forwarded must include grade, player's full name, club, number of wins, total spread, average points per game. Where a grade or grades are not played as round robins, a copy of the draw for the grade must be included.

12. Ethical Behaviour

12.1. Smoking is not allowed in the Playing Area.

12.2. Please do not talk needlessly to your opponent, or make comments, or use distracting mannerisms, during play.

12.3. Any transaction, i.e. changing of tiles, renewing the tiles on the rack after a turn, putting overdrawn tiles back in the bag, should always be done above the table where the transaction can be seen openly. Refer to Rule 6.1.2.

12.4. A player who is sure that his or her opponent is transgressing the Rules of Play at Tournaments should make this known to the opponent and the adjudicator at the time. The tournament organiser should refer the complaint to Scrabble NZ Executive Committee to be dealt with urgently. Scrabble NZ Executive Committee may call upon the two people concerned and any other witnesses. Scrabble NZ Executive Committee will make a final decision on any matter thus reported.

12.5. Players finishing their game early are asked to leave the Playing Area if they wish to talk.

12.6. An observer may watch the plays of a player providing the following conditions are met:

12.6.1. Both players must agree to the presence of the observer.

12.6.2. The observer must sit behind the player being observed.

12.6.3. The observer may not return to the game should he/she leave part way through.

12.6.4. The observer must not be in a position to observe both player's racks.

12.6.5. No communication may take place between the observer and either of the players.

12.6.6. The positioning of the observer must not impede other players.

12.7. Players must sit opposite each other at the table unless mutually agreed that they sit side on.

12.8. Players are asked to keep the Playing Area free of all bags, books and extraneous items. Players who have finished their game and wish to refer to books must do so outside the Playing Area.

12.9. If there is no rule that covers a particular situation, then normal courteous behaviour should prevail. Where agreement cannot be reached between players the Adjudicator's decision shall be sought and will be final.