

Scrabbabble

The quarterly magazine of Scrabble® South Africa

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Welcome to the first edition of *Scrabbabble!*

It's been several years since Scrabble South Africa has produced a magazine, so we are proud to present the first edition of *Scrabbabble**. It is part of the effort to revive the game in South Africa, especially as in-person tournaments and club play were not possible for almost two years under COVID-19 restrictions.

The pandemic struck just as we were gathering momentum and attracting more new players and we sadly lost some of our stalwarts to COVID-19. We now need to rebuild and attract more people to the game; after all, thousands play Scrabble Go on their cell phones every day, yet club and tournament attendance are low. The Scrabble SA committee is exploring ways to grow the game, and any suggestions are welcome.

In this edition, we have some encouraging words from the president of the Pan-African Scrabble Association (PANASA), the irrepressible Adekoyejo Adegbesan, who is doing wonderful things for the game all around our continent, including the staging of the first African Youth Scrabble Championships and President's Cup in Lagos, Nigeria in August.

There's a delightful piece by Keshi Naidoo who runs a social Scrabble club in Durban called Love Letters, and some reflections on the ups and downs of Scrabble Go by Debbie Dooley. Dr Ike Obidike, one of the country's top players, tells us about his Scrabble journey, and former multiple South African champ Dylan Early reflects on words in New Zealand where he now lives. There's a quiz about toponyms, words derived from the name of a place. And we asked Nigerian Master Segun Durojaiye to reflect on what separates a good from a great player. There are pieces on palindromes and Scrabblegrams* from top wordsmiths, and much more.

Scrabble SA was proud to send three players to WESPAC in Las Vegas – read what Gwen Rea and Dr Ike Obidike thought about the experience. SA sent six players to Lusaka in 2022 for the African Scrabble Championships. Unfortunately, no-one was able to attend the President's Cup and African Youth Scrabble Championships in Lagos in August. But we look forward to ECASA in Gaborone, the African Games in Accra and the ASC in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 2024.

Please send your feedback and article ideas to steven.gruzd@saii.org.za or WhatsApp +27845810777. Spread the words!

Steven Gruzd
Scrabbabble editor

*Any word marked with an asterisk is not playable in Scrabble

Unleashing South Africa's Potential: A Journey to Reconnect with Pan-African Scrabble

Adekoyejo Adegbesan

As a vital piece of the Pan-African Scrabble Association's (PANASA) jigsaw, South Africa holds the key to unlocking the full potential of Scrabble on the continent. However, despite its significance, South Africa Scrabble has struggled to make its mark within the African Scrabble community. This insight as I see it explores the reasons behind South Africa's limited involvement within the African Scrabble community, the importance of prioritising local development, and the need for South Africa to embrace Scrabble as a competitive sport. PANASA applauds the positive strides made by the current Scrabble South Africa executive committee and encourages them to seize the opportunities presented by Mattel's presence in South Africa to propel Scrabble to new heights.

Past challenges and the ASC

South Africa's absence from some past Africa Scrabble Championships (ASC), especially when held outside Southern African countries, has raised questions within the Scrabble community. While attending world championships showcases your commitment to the game, it is essential for South Africa to participate regularly in the Africa Scrabble Championship to strengthen your position and foster unity within PANASA. Notably, South Africa has proudly won the Africa Scrabble Championship – Dr Trevor Hovelmeier in 2002 In Nairobi, Kenya – with Nigeria the only other country to win it, making your absence even more puzzling.

Registering with the local sports ministry

To enhance your presence within the continent, Scrabble South Africa must take the important step of registering with the local government sports ministry. This affiliation will grant you access to vital resources, including financial support for travel to regional tournaments, and contribute to the development of Scrabble at the grassroots level in your country. Without this, participation in future tournaments outside of your country will continue to be at enormous cost to members' pockets. We encourage the efforts of Dr Ike Obidike to ensure registration.

Kickstarting youth Scrabble and community outreach

The future of Scrabble in South Africa lies in embracing the youth. By introducing Scrabble into schools and the townships, Scrabble South Africa can cultivate a new generation of passionate players. Beyond schools, community outreach efforts will further engage players from diverse backgrounds, strengthening the fabric of the Scrabble community.

Transitioning to a competitive sport

While Scrabble has been a cherished social activity, it is time to elevate it to the status of a competitive sport across the country, beyond Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. This shift in perspective will attract more serious players and raise the level of competition within South Africa, contributing to a stronger representation at the ASC and other international events.

Appreciating positive developments

The recent strides made by the current Scrabble South Africa Exco are commendable. The participation of South Africa at ASC 2022 signals a positive change, indicating a growing willingness to connect with the rest of Africa, and hopefully not because Zambia was within proximity. Additionally, the increasing number of local tournaments, particularly spearheaded by Gauteng Scrabble clubs, reflects a dedication to the growth of the game.

Strategies to elevate Scrabble

To convert casual players into expert Scrabble enthusiasts, South Africa must focus on mentorship programmes, advanced training sessions, and the sharing of strategic insights. Encouraging regular practice and organising high-quality tournaments will inspire players to take their skills to the next level.

Leveraging business partnerships

Scrabble South Africa's close association with Mattel, the trademark owners of Scrabble, presents a unique opportunity for the sport's progress. Scrabble South Africa should actively reach out to companies with a vested interest in what our game projects and collaborate on initiatives that will benefit all parties.

Looking ahead

As South Africa's Scrabble team participated at WESPAC (the World English-Speaking Scrabble Players Championship) in 2023 in Las Vegas, we celebrate your determination to compete on the world stage. We urge you to continue representing your nation proudly but also implore you to journey within Africa for Scrabble competitions, strengthening bonds with fellow players across the continent.

South Africa's role within the Pan African Scrabble Association is of utmost importance, and it is time to reclaim your pride of place. By participating actively in the Africa Scrabble Championship, investing in youth development, and embracing Scrabble as a competitive sport, South Africa can lead the way for Scrabble's growth within the country and across the continent. With a unified and ambitious approach, Scrabble South Africa can redefine its position as a powerhouse of African Scrabble.

Adekoyejo Adegbesan is the President of the Pan-African Scrabble Association

Scrabble in Durban through Love Letters

Keshni Naidoo

So why did I choose the name "Love Letters" for my Scrabble group in Durban? Well, I love letters and I love writing love letters too. So it was quite fitting name for our Scrabble Group.



Loveletters founder Keshni Naidoo showing off her new board from the US

We are a group of about 80 ladies who meet on a weekly basis. We support various coffee shops and charity organisations in Durban by using their facility to play a game of Scrabble and supporting the business or charity group. We often have coffee shops reach out to us to come play a game of Scrabble there as well.

Nelson Mandela Day was on 18 July, and Love Letters was very excited for this month. The group of women embarked on three important projects. On 4 July, at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in Durban, we played a game of Scrabble at their coffee shop and donated pet food to the marketing team. On 14 July they played Scrabble at a retirement village with the senior citizens, providing tea and cake as a treat.

On 18 July they went to the Umgeni Bird Park to play a game of Scrabble and support the park, an under-utilised venue that needs public support.

Love Letters Scrabble group enjoys the fellowship and banter of like-minded women. What started off as a game of Scrabble to push through the dark cloud of COVID has now turned into a group of empowerment that enriches lives.

Love Letters would not be able to function without its hosts: Lucille Mathurine, Melanie Wilson, Linda Parry, Tanya Lee Hibbert, Suzanne Therese Witthoft, Fiona Cilliers, Shumail Ashraf, Vida Booyesen, Amanda Beissner, and Keshni Naidoo.

We are so thankful to Scrabble SA for donating five new Scrabble boards to our club. We are going to use this for more fundraising initiatives so that we can purchase updated dictionaries. If anyone in the Durban area would like to attend, please contact me on 083 468 8929 or email Keshni Naidoo keshni910@gmail.com. Join our Love Letters Scrabble Group Facebook group.

Keshni Naidoo is a social worker and teacher from Durban. Her father first taught her to play Scrabble when she was seven.

Ends in V

Steven Gruzd

Just a handful of six-, seven- and eight-letter words end in V. Here they are:

6 Letters

IMPROV (E,S)	Improvisational comedy
MAGLEV (S)	(Short for) magnetic levitating train
MOSHAV	A cooperative settlement of small farms in Israel (PI MOSHAVIM)
SATNAV(S)	(Colloquial) satellite navigation

7 Letters

ISOGRIV (S)	A map line indicating equal grid variation
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8 Letters

HALIEROV	A former monetary unit of Slovakia
LISTSERV (S)	(Tradename) an internet mailing service
MAZELTOV	(Yiddish) congratulations (interjection)
STOTINOV	A monetary unit of Slovenia, worth one hundred of a tolar
TOLARJEV	The standard monetary unit of Slovenia

My Scrabble Story

Dr Ike Obidike

In 1991, my brother returned home one evening clutching a slim box. He was quite excited about it, but I was concerned. Money was tight and I wouldn't let the colourful design of a box con me. He was a medical intern in southeastern Nigeria and I was about to become a chemical engineer. Naturally, I inquired about the cost. When he told me, I was upset. Didn't we have enough games and novels to keep us busy? Why waste precious money on a game? The box was a Scrabble set.

After he opened the box and I saw the tiles, I quickly calmed down. I loved words. He taught me the game, and I took to it immediately, enjoying it even more than my brother did. I didn't play much Scrabble again until eight years later when I arrived in South Africa. An advert in the local newspaper drew me to the Johannesburg Scrabble Club and I joined in August 1999. They were playing in Paterson Park Recreation Centre, in Norwood and the late Lynn Roff ran things. I was warmly welcomed, and I started learning the two- and three-letter words. By 2007, I was ranked fifth in South Africa and itching to go to the World Scrabble Championship. But then, life has its own script.

In April 2007, South Africa's top 10 players gathered at Diana Mason's beautiful home in Bedfordview for the Masters competition. I had prepared hard for it and was ready to shoot further up the rankings. I was confident. After the first day, I won just one of my nine games. As I drove Lanre Oyekunle home later that evening, he remarked that something was not right with me. I nodded in the affirmative because I felt jumpy, anxious. I felt troubled. I was not even bothered by the competition anymore. Something deeper was eating me up and I had no clue what it was. I would soon find out.

At five AM the next day, 17 April 2007, I got a call from Tambo Memorial Hospital where my fiancée was hospitalised. She passed on at 12:30 AM. My world imploded. I did not return to complete the competition and subsequently abandoned Scrabble. For the next 10 years, I rarely played. When I did, the outcome was the least of my concern. I did not have the energy anymore. In playing, I was trying to rekindle the spark, just to elicit any kind of stimulus. I rarely played in competitions. The occasional appearances at the club were good enough for me. I slipped in the ratings, hovering around the teens. But it didn't matter.

In 2012, I found myself living in London and finishing my debut novel, *Shifting Sands*. Hopefully, a new city and culture would re-energise my interest towards a Scrabble rebuild. I joined the London Scrabble League, locking horns with Elie Dangoor and the rest. It didn't. My performance was average. Many deemed my efforts respectable; I knew I was poor. After six months, I returned to South Africa, and back into the Scrabble desert. I believed that without love and its accompanying energy, nothing should be attempted. I had a love for Scrabble, but the energy was missing.

When I started my PhD in chemical engineering in 2016, I began going to the club again. As I was getting motivated again, the COVID-19 lockdown chased us indoors. During the lockdown, our charismatic chairperson Lynn Roff passed on. I, with the assistance of Rajen Pillay and Gill Nomis, took up the challenge of finding a home for our club. In February 2022, we settled into Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue in Killarney, and I set about building my game once again. In March 2013, after a 16-year hiatus, I joined nine other players for the SA Masters competition. I came fifth and I am ranked seventh in South Africa presently.

The WESPA (World English-Speaking Scrabble Players' Association) Championships was set for July 2023. Disinterest and affordability issues from higher-ranked players paved the way for me to throw my hat into the ring. In the company of Steven Gruzd, unarguably the team leader and attending his umpteenth championship, accompanied by another debutant, Gwen Rea, I departed for Las Vegas, the glitzy and internationally renowned resort city, known primarily for its gambling, shopping, fine dining, entertainment, and nightlife. I was able to catch some fun after the event. As the Nigerians say, "I can't come and go and kill myself!"

Kiwi as

Dylan Early



Moving to New Zealand has been an interesting adventure in every sense. It's very similar to South Africa but also very different, if you'll permit the apparent contradiction. Despite being predominantly English, the two de jure official languages are *te reo Māori* ('the Māori language' – reo means language) and *NZ Sign Language*. English is the lingua franca, though, and generally recognised as the de facto official language. Much like its fauna and flora, Kiwi English has trodden a unique evolutionary path and proudly boasts several quirky variations that I've come to love.

While parked outside a local backpackers waiting for a friend, I peeped through the foyer windows and noticed a word-cloud mural of Kiwi-isms ripe for the picking and worth sharing with my South African Scrabble WHANAU (roughly pronounce FAR-NO, means extended family). All of these words are common parlance and exist in CSW19, unless indicated with an asterisk.

SWANNIE – Also **SWANNY**. Swann dri* (anagram is WINNARDS) is a tradename for a range of popular New Zealand outdoor clothing, and also used informally to refer to their long, heavy bush shirt. I'm embarrassed to say, even my dog has a SWANNIE for the cold, wet weather.

STUBBIE – Normally in the plural. STUBBIES are shorts, much like SA rugby shorts.

SINGLET – New Zealand term for a tank-top. STUBBIES and a SINGLET is the standard dress-code for most occasions. Add a pair of jandals* and you'll be ready for the red carpet.

TUATARA – A 200-million-year-old species of reptile, native to New Zealand, often rumoured to have a third eye on top of its head. Also, one of NZ's most popular beers.

BEERSIES – New Zealand slang for beers. Does not exist in the singular, for good reason. If you're invited to BEERSIES after work, you know you've made a friend.

PAVLOVA - A popular meringue-based dessert, the invention of which is subject to debate and has been a topic of contention between Australia and New Zealand. Both countries claim to be the birthplace of the PAVLOVA.

MANUKA – A tree native to New Zealand. MANUKA honey is very expensive and highly sought after for its supposed health benefits.

BOOAI – Also: BOOAY, BOOHAI. New Zealand slang for a remote place. If you're "up the booai", you are thoroughly lost.

TARAKIHI – Also TERAHIHI and known as the JACKASS MORWONG. A fish commonly found in New Zealand. It's delicious and when it's on the menu, you'd better take advantage.

HUI – Maori word for a gathering. When we're enjoying a HUI at work and chatting with colleagues, my boss often comes along and says, "Alright guys, more DO-EY and less HUI."

TUI – A remarkable bird, about the size of a MYNAH, which has two voiceboxes and no conductor. It's prolific in my neighbourhood and makes a terrible racket all day.

HAEREMAI – Maori word for welcome. You hear it on the trains and buses every day.

IWI – A Maori tribe. This word is hugely significant in New Zealand and is often heard on the news. IWI normally meet at a MARAE.

PAKEHA – Maori word for a NONNATIVE of New Zealand.

KAURI – Also KAURY. A majestic tree native to New Zealand. KAURI are a TAONGA (treasure) of New Zealand. It's our version of the Californian redwood.

JAJA – Slang for "just another <insert gawlix> Auckland". Auckland is New Zealand's biggest city and most tourists are from Auckland, earning them the moniker of JAJA. Much like South African vaalies* (anagram is AVAILES). Wait until the woke police find out they missed an expurgation opportunity. By contrast, the rest of NZ are called RONZ or RONZERS, but this term is hardly ever used.

JANDALS* -- New Zealand flip-flops. It used to be allowed in Scrabble but was removed in one of the recent dictionary updates. This is the most famous nonword in New Zealand. If you want to provoke a Kiwi Scrabbler, ask them if JANDAL* is a word. We still cry about it over our TUATARAS.

These are just some terms that epitomise New Zealand. CSW19 has included 375 Kiwi words and I look forward to sharing many more with you.

As for the title of this article New Zealanders make extensive use of the half-simile. "Kiwi as" is a typical expression. It means very much like New Zealand. Kiwis will say "sweet

as", meaning "sweet", or "happy as", meaning "happy". Not sure why they never finish the simile. Perhaps they're just too lazy to come up with a creative comparison. It used to drive me nuts but I've gotten used to it. It's a curious linguistic fact and I'd be interested to know if any other countries do the same thing. I chose words that are very much part of everyday life.

Dylan Early is an IT project manager and lives in Wellington, New Zealand with his wife and three children. When he's not playing Scrabble, he spends his time walking the dog, mountain biking and watching Joseph Herscher videos on YouTube. He has been playing competitive Scrabble for 30 years and has won national championships in both SA and NZ.

Palindromes

Steven Fraser

When I was asked to write a palindrome for Scrabbabble, I thought it would be fun to depict a Scrabble game incorporating words from South Africa.

A GAME OF TWO HALVES (palindrome)

Now it's a contest, now I drowse on. I model it:

MUTI, BILTONG? No... SOLO, LOG? No...

SPINTO, BORED (am I?!). So... GOLD? No...

YEBO, GOGO, ZYGOLOGY, ZO.

Go, go! Beyond LOGOS, I made ROBOT, NIP, SONGOLOLO,

SONG (not LIBITUM). Tile dominoes! Word I won't set? No.

CAST...I won!

I love the sound of SONGOLOLO, and couldn't resist ZYGOLOGY because of the -GOLO- and GOGO echoes and because it's just an intriguing word. (As I'm sure readers will know, zygology is both the science of zygotes, and of fastening things together.)

Palindromes get easier with practice. I used to start with a central word and crawl outwards without much plan. Nowadays I have a ready vocabulary in my head which allows me to write short ones quite quickly. For longer ones, I'm more systematic. After choosing a theme I'll brainstorm related words, list suitable ones, then try and knit them

together. I might compose in my head (while driving!), on my phone or computer, or with pen and paper if things are getting complicated.

Sometimes an idea emerges from a single word. Here's a short one that I wrote after noticing that CYCLE could concatenate with MOTEL and HOTEL, both of which conveniently contain the required prepositions. It was then only a short step to the following. The title was a nice bonus pun.

PSYCHLE

Moody motel–

Cycle to hotel,

Cycle to motel,

Cyle to hotel,

Cycle to my doom.

As a child, words were my preferred playthings, but I didn't get into palindromes until my early twenties, after a friend showed me 'Satan, oscillate my metallic sonatas'. I loved the way it conjured a surreal idea in five words, with 'oscillate' and 'metallic' knitting together in a surprising way. Here is a recent variation with added ocelots.

Stole coy metallic soothsayer gall: a grey ash to oscillate my ocelots.

One of the joys of palindromes is that they can act like a random thought generator, forcing strange new ideas and images. Although, perhaps with the rise of AI and ChatGPT, metallic soothsayers will soon be a reality!

During my first palindroming period, I also became fascinated with Japanese culture and started learning the language. I was unemployed at the time and looking for an interesting challenge. This eventually led to a period teaching English in Japan, then to my current career as a Japanese translator, working mainly in the fields of medicine and life sciences. Artificial intelligence is beginning to encroach on the translation industry, so I may have to go full-time as a palindromist!

I mostly write short/medium length palindromes (about 10-50 words), in the form of poems or micro-stories. A good short palindrome is not necessarily easier to write: every word has to count, whereas longer ones can get away with one or two non-optimal words and looser syntax. 'A man, a plan, a canal– Panama' is the classic example of short palindromic perfection. I wrote the following one along a similar pattern. I like the darkly comic scenario (what is the bagel doing there?!):

Leg, a bagel, one Xanax. An axe, no leg, a bagel.

Additional constraints are fun. Palindromic limericks are particularly tricky. Once the rhymes are planned, there's not much wiggle room. (Lines 1 and 5 are mirrors, and line 2 has to rhyme with 1 and 5 while also containing the reverse rhymes of lines 3 and 4!). Here's one that plays with the 'Panama' classic:

A man, a plan, a con too far?
A beer from raw, wet seep. A bar!
Go grab a pee
stew, warm or free.
Bar afoot, no canal Panama.

I recently discovered a Twitter community of wordplay enthusiasts. This has encouraged me to increase my output and hopefully my quality. I now tweet a palindrome almost every day. I have also discovered the joy of Scrabblegrams (short texts using all 100 scrabble tiles) through David Cohen, the master of the art. I've made a few myself, and my most difficult challenge so far has been to create a palindromic double Scrabblegram. I've composed four, each exhausting! Here is the beginning and end of one, to give a flavour:

AN ASTRONAUT GOES NATIVE ON TATOOINE

Set on a sand aerodynamic,
I game on a craft new, 'IQ',
aim UFO, sleek X.
I felt so Jedi.
[...]
I hide, jostle, fix keels of umiaq.
I went far. Canoe magic!
I (many) do read NASA notes.

Constructing a story that moves forward in time and yet has its own second half running backwards through it feels a bit like magic. This is probably one of the hardest and most satisfying aspects of palindroming.*

There are nine words valid in Scrabble that begin with SF:

SFERICS	SFUMATO	SFUMATOS	SFORZATI
SFORZATO	SFORZATOS	SFORZANDI	SFORZANDO
SFORZANDOS			

Lessons from Las Vegas!

Dr Ike Obidike

Some of my interesting games at WESPAC 2023

The sweltering heat of Las Vegas hit me immediately I alighted at Harry Reid International Airport on the night of 20 July 2023 and made my way to Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino, my lodge for the duration of the competition. Gwen Rea, my other South African rep, had arrived earlier that day and we played three games that night as we regaled each other of our race to beat time and make the tournament. Below are some the games I played which I found quite interesting.

Game 5: Christian Mensah (Rating: 1814)



This was my fifth game and I had lost the three of the previous four. Desperation was setting in and I wanted to win this game. Sadly, I had the armory to accomplish it, but I failed dismally.

Christian was a quiet, seemingly unassuming player. While others announced their scores, he whispered his. It's easy to like his demeanour but it could as well be intimidating...like he is a crouching tiger, waiting to pounce. His rating seemed to point to that possibility. For the first time, I was apprehensive.

On my second move, I put down SQUARED for 106 which made Christian sit up. It was the only time he showed any form of animation. He responded with AGRYZE (60) which cut my lead to 45 pts. Hooking the S of COLONES to GEMINI for GEMINIS* got thrown out, just like the phony OVERPUTS*. By this time, I had lost confidence and my game management skill suffered.

Lost: 362 – 459

LESSON LEARNT: Focus on the game and not on your opponent's rating. Anyone can beat anyone!

Game 8: Jason Broersma (Rating: 1608)



This was the last game of the first day and I wanted to go to my hotel room with the joy of a win to lull me to a good night's sleep. I went behind early but was undeterred. My determination yielded three bingos – IMMOLATE, TRIBUTES and SEALANT, and a healthy 120-point lead. Incidentally, the first T of TRIBUTES offered Jason the opportunity of a 9-timer (ANOINTED), pulverising my lead and edging slightly ahead! I remained undaunted, battling on. He remained tactical, playing DITZ and nursing the last Y which eventually offered him the opportunity to play AVIARY/DITZY. Both moves hurt deeply. I kept close to him, hoping to do last minute damage but when he got his second blank, I knew my chances

were slight. He scored and blocked, anticipating my closing move and ending the game with a 30-point lead. I left the venue wondering what further lessons I would learn on the second day.

Lost: 395 – 425

LESSON LEARNT: When the opportunity presents itself, set yourself up for a prospective reward.

Game 11: Gwen Rea (Rating: 1339)

From the start, I felt that I would play Gwen sometime during this tournament and my imagination manifested on the second day. Both of us had not been doing very well and the sad consolation was that SA would a win. We even took a picture before we started!



Halfway into the game, I was ahead, and Gwen was trying to catch up. She tried the audacious HYANINE* and AUXINIC* which attracted the anticipated challenges and the consequent removal. She had played SINCERE against my DILATOR and working hard for another bingo. The second blank in her

possession promised it and she needed it to erase my +50 lead and win. But in the forest, every hunter is also hunted. I eventually got all the weapons I needed and went out with SILAGES and a 164-pt win.



This was my highest winning differential in this tournament but could not celebrate it. I felt like a man whose wife gave birth after decades of marriage and was being congratulated but knew he was impotent!

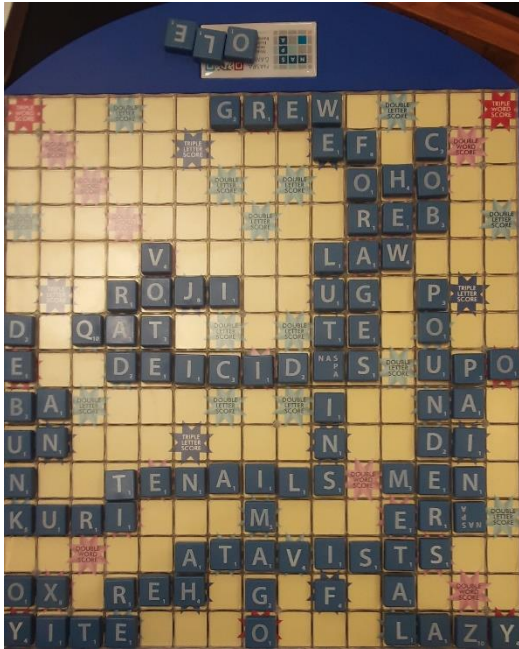
Won: 484 – 320

LESSON LEARNT: Never be desperate. The blank is not a game winner, just an enabler for a high score.

All the words that end in -CAR. All take an S plural (except ANTICAR and SICCAR).

4:	SCAR		5:	ESCAR	OSCAR	VICAR
6:	BOXCAR	CALCAR	CIRCAR	LASCAR	SICCAR	SIRCAR
	SOUCAR	SOWCAR	TRICAR	TROCAR		
7:	ANTICAR	AUTOCAR	FLATCAR	FORECAR	GYROCAR	HANDCAR
	MAILCAR	MINICAR	RAILCAR	SIDECAR	TRAMCAR	TWISCAR
8:	CYCLECAR	HORSECAR	MICROCAR	MOTORCAR	MULTICAR	PEDALCAR
	RICERCAR	STOCKCAR	SUBVICAR	SUPERCAR	TURBOCAR	
9:	HOPPERCAR	STREETCAR				

Game 12: Waseem Khatri (Rating: 1881)



When from Pakistan Waseem sat across from me, he looked like he was on a demolition mission. My opening move, DEICIDE, which was unsuccessfully challenged was an early warning to him. Unfazed, he countered with FORAGES. Back-to-back bingos – TENAILS and ATAVISTS – built him a 95-pt lead. I answered with POUNDERS and prepared for an endgame dogfight. As was my doom all day, he got the second blank and scored well, enough to steal a narrow win.

Earlier, when he back-hooked the S of FORAGES to DEICIDE (DEICIDES), I challenged both words. I was unsuccessful and he added 10 points to his score. I questioned it and invited a tournament arbitrator! He came and duly informed me that the penalty is 5-points PER WORD challenged, not 5-points per challenge like we do in SA! I was crushed.

Waseem eventually beat me by 1 point.

Lost: 458 – 459

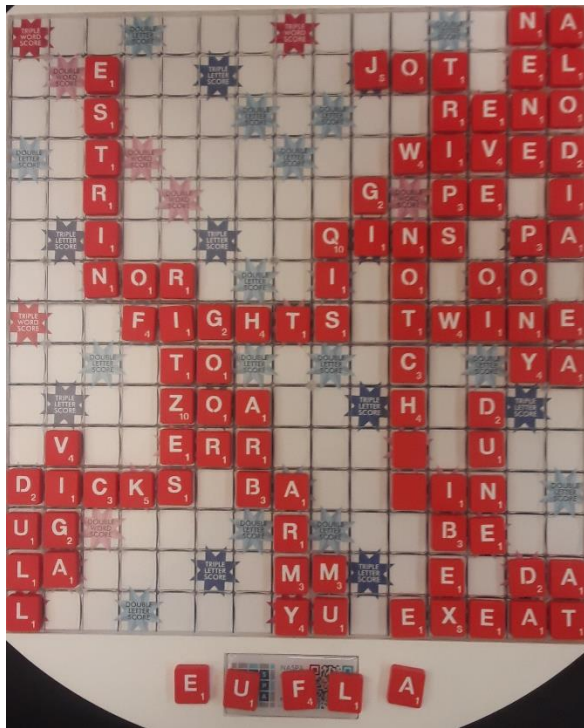
LESSON LEARNT: Know the rules of the game!

Some interesting anagrams

<https://wordsmith.org/anagram/hof.html>

New York Times	Monkeys write
Indomitableness	Endless ambition
Statue of Liberty	Built to stay free
A domesticated animal	Docile, as a man tamed it
Mother-in-law	Woman Hitler
Father-in-law	Near halfwit

Game 28: Zbigniew Wieckowski (Rating: 1464)



Polish Zbigniew branded himself a niceish, carefree guy and dressed the part. That image was to be erased quickly even before our game started. I learnt later that he was the same with some other opponents.

He had the bag in the air as if to start and I kept asking him to give me the bag to start. He said that he was demonstrating to me that once I took a tile from the bag, he would start the clock. I reminded him that I knew that rule and I didn't start playing competitive Scrabble yesterday. He retorted that he understood but I interjected that he did not understand because if he did, he wouldn't pull that antic. So, our game started with this friendly exchange!

His first word was FIGHT, a premonition of what our game would be! He drew his tiles like they were hot pebbles and thumped the bag on the table with a chumping sound as if electric current ran through it. I ignored him and focused on the game. I made note to caution him if he did not stop soon enough.

After a healthy early lead, he found himself trying to catch up and the bag was emptying fast. The realisation that he might lose calmed him.

When I realised that we were onto a dogfight, I tried fishing for O-U-T to play OUTFIGHT. I had the O and U and preserved them but could not get the T, and there were 2 Ts out there. At a time, I asked God if I would have to suffer in every game to win. Can't I just win breezily!?

I did not get the T but managed to win with a +26 differential. In our post-game chat (Yes, we had a friendly chat afterwards), he said that he was waiting for me to add OUT to FIGHT, and he would bingo. I informed him that playing OUTFIGHT was my dream, but the absence of T denied me. So, God wanted me to win by keeping me OUT of the FIGHT not to OUTFIGHT the debonair Zbig!

Won: 372 – 346

LESSON LEARNT: Never make assumptions and never let your emotions get the better of you.

Game 30: Euclid Hui (Rating: 0)



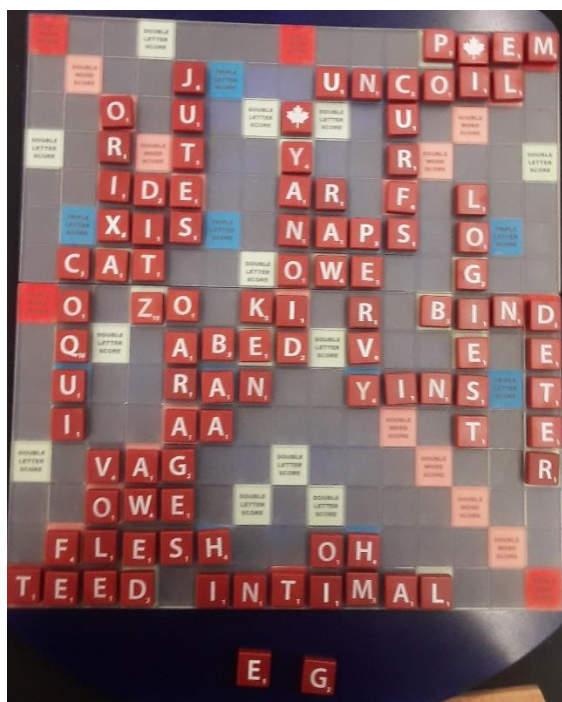
All through this game, Euclid and I swapped leads in a close game. He went scot-free with JIZES* though I called “Hold” but did not challenge. As with dogfights, the climax manifested at the end of hostilities.

We were both building for an exit bingo, hooking an R onto AIA being the realistically open place. Thus, we both preserved our Rs. He arrived there first, playing GLITTER. Meanwhile, I just picked the blank and played BORATES, front-hooking the A to GLITTER to make AGLITTER. He challenged futilely and the game ended shortly after.

Won: 372 – 346

LESSONS LEARNT: Challenge whichever word you deem odd, and pre-empt your opponent and plan ahead.

Game 32: Roger Cullman (Rating: 1429)



Roger was all cheer and smiles when he joined me at the table. He looked familiar but I knew he was a stranger to me. When he introduced himself as Steven’s third cousin, I didn’t know whether to be happy or scared. For me it was like...another Gruzd to contend with again!

He started with CYANOID and led until I overtook him with OARAGES and shortly after, ORIXA and INTIMAL. He challenged all three words.

He proved a standard Scrabble player – sharp, ready, fast, and cheerful. I enjoyed the game, and much more that I routed a Gruzd!

Won: 448 – 440

LESSON LEARNT: Be prepared and play to the standard of a professional – fast, focused and challenge when you smell a phony!

Final comment

After a gruelling four days of top-level scrabble, I had won just 14 of my 32 games (44%) with a -22 differential and taking the 100th position out of 135 players. I had targeted winning 16 games (50%). A positive way to look at it is that I am the 100th best player in the world! But the realisation that 99 players were better than me is sobering. I lost most of my games by low scores and won same way. And I learnt about some common tactics which most of the players displayed. I will explain them when I write about the technical aspect of the game as I saw it during the tournament.

All in all, I enjoyed the tournament very much. The organisation was near-perfect - the results were submitted electronically on your cellphone, like the pairings. The organisers sucked on the hospitality stakes, though. We were only offered water for refreshment. Couldn't my \$350 registration fee afford me a cup of coffee? I felt insulted.

I left Las Vegas having made new friends from every part of the world, including my home country, Nigeria. It was sad that Wellington Jighere did not play the grand finale having led all the way. I felt that with adequate logistical preparation by the Nigeria leader, he would have won it at a canter. He will definitely win the world championship again. Might even be in the next edition!

Gwen's lens on WESPAC

Gwen Rea

From far and wide, and for some of us, further and wider than imaginable, we almost sold our souls to get to Las Vegas, Nevada, United States of America for the bi-annual World English Scrabble Players Association Championships (Wespac).

After 21 years of dreaming and hoping to attend World Scrabble Championships, I have completed my ultimate bucket list here in Las Vegas, July 2023, with my compatriots, Steven Gruzd and Ike Obidike. It took years of practice, studying and playing this intriguing, addictive and brain-enhancing mind sport, called Scrabble. How I made it, can only be described as a miracle, no, in fact a couple of miracles.

A near impossibility for me, strictly speaking, as my rating is way down the line compared to several other better players from South Africa. Funding for the event was another challenge, especially with the exchange rate of almost R20 to one \$ US. Visa issuing was a total nightmare and I got mine two days before departure. Nerve racking ordeals along the way, but hey, miracles do happen.

Here I am, thinking I'm a good Scrabbler, but these guys are next level. What an honour it is to behold such brilliance displayed by all 31 countries represented at this prestigious event, celebrating 75 years of the invention of Scrabble.

The organisation of the event was exceptional indeed, smooth running and intelligent technology at its best, entering scores online via a barcoded lanyard for each player. Time schedules were all kept to the tee.

A comfortable and classy venue, the WESPAC event held at the posh Westgate hotel and casino resort, could not have been better. With 46°C weather in Nevada, air-conditioning was an added blessing in a large hall with comfortable chairs and well-spaced and marked tables. Kudos and sincere thanks to John Chew, Judy Cole and the entire organising team. You can truly be so proud.

Thanks to Scrabble South Africa and all who have supported me to get to Vegas. I can happily say this is the closest I can get to heaven. Mission accomplished.

Thanks to all back home. I had the time of my life. What an honour it has been. How super to have your support. On a positive note, I did gain 62 international rating points. The camaraderie was the highlight. Losing any game was never a disappointment to me. As for Steven and Ike, wow, they accompany memories of a lifetime. They've been BBFs.

One winner, 135 champions

Nigeria, USA and Australia were always up there, but David Eldar from Australia eventually took home the honour of 2023 WESPAC champion and \$10,000.

Done and dusted, I can only be reminded that there can only be one winner. That winner is not me and not 133 other, hopeful nutty participants. Not that I thought I had a snowball's hope in hell, I could not even feel humiliated by punishment so severe and unimaginably painful of losses too regular to explain. Therefore, all I could do was make friends and enjoy each honorable moment of just being there. Of observing the sheer brilliance of plays so unforgettable.

The anagram of EGILNRSW is not SWERLING* or SWINGLER* - it's NEWSGIRL!

Seasonal sevens

Steven Gruzd

With snow in Johannesburg in July, it made me think about the four seasons, and how good each one would be as a stem for seven-letter words. Here they are:

SUMMER + ?

B	BUMMERS	(Disappointments)
C	CUMMERS	((Scots) women or girls)
	SCUMMER	(A shallow ladle or sieve for removing scum floating on a liquid)
G	GUMMERS	(Ones that gum)
H	HUMMERS	(Those that hum)
I	IMMURES	(Encloses behind walls)
	MUMSIER	(More old-fashioned)
	RUMMIES	(Card games)
K	SKUMMER	((Archaic) to void excrement)
L	SLUMMER	(One who slums)
M	MUMMERS	(Takes part in mumming activities (theatre plays))
P	MUMPERS	(Beggars)
R	RUMMERS	((Dutch) large drinking glasses, also ROEMERS)
S	SUMMERS	(Passes the warmest season of the year)
T	RUMMEST	(Oddest)
Y	SUMMERY	(Characteristic of summer)

AUTUMN + ?

Q	QUANTUM	((Latin) a minimum quantity)
S	AUTUMNS	(Seasons of the year)
Y	AUTUMNY	(Autumn-like)

WINTER + ?

A	TAWNIER	(More orange-brown)
	TINWARE	(Articles made of tinplate)
H	WRITHEN	((Archaic) twisted, convoluted, also WRYTHEN)
I	TWINIER	(More resembling strong string)
O	NOWTIER	(More bad-tempered)
	TOWNIER	(More belonging to the town)
S	TWINERS	(Twining plants)
	WINTERS	(Passes the coldest season of the year)
T	TWINTER	((Scots) a two-year old sheep or other animal)
	WRENTIT	(A long-tailed North American bird)
	WRITTEN	(Past tense of write)
U	UNWRITE	(To undo the writing of)
Y	WINTERY	(Having the characteristics of winter)

SPRING + ?

A	PARINGS	(Things pared off)
	PARSING	(The syntactic analysis of a sentence)
	RASPING	(Abrasive, n.)
	SPARING	(Frugal)
E	PERSING	((Spencer) piercing)
	PINGERS	(Devices for producing pulses of sound)
	SPRINGE	(To snare with a noose and spring)
I	PRISING	(Raising or forcing with a lever)
	RISPING	(A portion grated off)
	SPIRING	(Raising in a tapering manner)
O	PROIGNS	((Obsolete) preens or prunes)
	PROSING	(Writing in a prosy way)
	ROPINGS	(Acts of roping)
	SPORING	(Producing an asexual reproductive body)
S	SPRINGS	(Leaps upward)
U	PURSING	(Puckering, especially the lips)
Y	PRYINGS	(The act of prying)
	PRYSING	((Spenser) paying for)
	SPRINGY	(Resilient)

In order to remember which letters go with the stems, I asked mnemonic maestri Duncan Keet and Dr Trevor Hovelmeier to develop some:

Duncan's delights

SUMMER + BRIGHT PYRITIC SKYLIT PRISM
AUTUMN +* QueaSY SeQuoia (* means no vowels go with the stem)
WINTER + SHIT! STAY SOUTH
SPRING + EASY EUOI

Trevor's treats

SUMMER + SIMPLISTIC BRIGHT SKY
AUTUMN +* SeQuoia aSSAY (* means no vowels go with the stem)
WINTER + YOU "ATISHOO"
SPRING + YOU SEE OASIS
+ I SEE YOU SEE A SEA

Dave's Scrabblegrams light up X (formerly known as Twitter)

Steven Gruzd

(A version of this article was first published by the *South African Jewish Report* www.sajr.co.za and is used with their kind permission)

What used to be called Twitter (now "X") can be a nasty place. Often, the worst of humanity is on display as users mock, insult, and publicly attack one another online. But there are pockets of light, like the witty, clever, and delightful daily Scrabblegrams* posted by Dr David Cohen from Atlanta, Georgia.

A Scrabblegram* is a poem or piece of prose that uses all 100 letters in a Scrabble set exactly once. This means that each entry will contain exactly nine As, two Bs, two Cs ... one X, two Ys, one Z (and two blanks which can be used as any letters). Cohen told the

SA Jewish Report more about himself and his creative process.

Out Into Mid-Air

S C R A B B L E G R A M



A clown jumps above a trapeze,
Arcs over one-eighty degrees,
Out into mid-air,
Quite unaware
Of his exiting billfold and keys.

Blanks: E, S

“In 1997, Games magazine held a contest called ‘The Tale of the Tiles’ in which the objective was to write a story using each of the 100 Scrabble tiles exactly once,” Cohen said. “I was in graduate school at the time and had a lot of fun creating my entry (on the left here), which was chosen as the grand prize winner.”

“After that contest, I never considered making another until 23 years later, when a wordplay writer wrote an article about Scrabblegrams* [which have quite a rich and interesting history that preceded that Games contest by more than 20 years]. In the article, he honoured my contest entry by naming it as the best example of this unusual form of wordplay to date. A college friend

of mine saw the article, and forwarded it to me. In response, I made my first new one in more than 20 years, called “A quiet, conscious, empty mind.”

The bug then bit Cohen again, and it became an obsession. “Once I started making new ones, I fell in love with the process and made them all the time, whenever I could, for close to two years,” he said. “I’d like to acknowledge my friend, Steve Geller, who was one of the only people I shared these with during the early days, and who has been invaluable as an editor along the way. When the collection reached about 180 entries, I decided it was a good time to share them in the hope that others might enjoy them too. I began posting them daily on Twitter (X) under @dc_scrabblegram from 30 March 2022.”

“From the start, it seemed like a fun idea to connect entries to the date whenever possible ... either the anniversary of a special date [e.g. the original publication date of a famous

A Quiet, Conscious, Empty Mind

S C R A B B L E G R A M



The average fool arrives here blind,
an ego waking up to find,
a quiet, conscious, empty mind.

Now today I realize...

*Relax.
Just be.*

Blanks: E, N

book], or the birthday of a notable person, or a national day [e.g. National Hummingbird Day]. Finding connections to each day's date has become one of my favourite parts of this project," Cohen said.

His ideas come from everywhere. "When I first started making Scrabblegrams,* I enjoyed choosing topics that were 'favourites' for me over the years – favourite books, movies, tv shows, games, or artists," he said. "After that, I expanded the themes to anything else that seemed interesting and inspired genuine enthusiasm, like historic events, science themes, stories from mythology, and much more, including the challenge of additional constraints [such as Scrabblegram haiku, visual constraints like shaping the letters into a diamond or an

hourglass, and others]. Following that, I had a period where I began creating entries that were themselves prose or poetry, or about more abstract or philosophical topics – while continuing to make fun and silly ones too."

The Scrabblegrams take time and labour to make. "Originally, each would take about six to 10 hours to make. Now, nearly three years and more than 370 entries later, they usually take about three to five hours each. A handful have required fewer than two hours, while some of the most difficult ones [often with additional constraints] have taken more than 20 hours to make."

Cohen is an internal medicine physician. He has been working nights exclusively for more than 20 years. "Several years ago, I was able to switch to part-time, which has freed up more time for family and outside interests like Scrabblegramming*. Also, because I'm an extreme night owl and keep that schedule even when I'm not working, I often have some free time each night after everyone else goes to sleep. That's when I've done most of my wordplay these past few years," he said.

"In our family, we're all pretty good about encouraging and celebrating each other's authentic interests in whatever unusual form they take. I always make sure to fulfil all my responsibilities to work and family first, so if I want to spend my free time doing weirdo wordplay, everyone is okay with that. As a dad, I think it's important to continue to engage in enthusiasm-based activities and creative pursuits, even – or maybe especially – as I get older," he said.

"The daily Twitter project has been wonderful for sparking new ideas. Contributors have proposed some great monthly challenge themes, and for many months, the unassigned

dates on the calendar would prompt me to research historic events or national days, and I have often created new entries based on those ideas.”

Dave’s Scrabblegrams has created a unique Twitter community. Fans interact with his posts, and some submit Scrabblegrams of their own. Said Cohen, “I love the positivity and creativity. I genuinely appreciate the comments. They often make my day. The group is playful, fun, and quirky. Every day I’m inspired by the creativity of this kind-hearted and supportive community, including the Scrabblegrams they’ve been making. With the 100 Scrabble tiles, you can say almost anything, but not easily. It’s a nearly perfect balance of letters to play with.”

When I contacted Dave to tell him we were launching a new Scrabble magazine in South Africa, I asked him to write us a special Scrabblegram .And here it is!

View your invitation, look and see
a magazine of lexicality.
I'd cue up tiles, spread the "word"
from Gqeberha to Johannesburg!
(Blanks: H, O)

Here is my own effort on my birthday this year:

Steven Gruzd is fifty-one.
A half century plus one
I’m quite a good dad, a jovial relation.
A Scrabble expert.
I weigh more, I know.
(Blanks F,L)

Cohen’s full collection can be seen at www.davesscrabblegrams.com, and you can join in the daily fun by following @dc_scrabblegram on Twitter.

In the zone. Here are all the words playable in Scrabble that end in -ZONE. All take an S.					
5:	OZONE	6: BIZONE	ENZONE	EVZONE	REZONE
7:	CALZONE WARZONE	CANZONE	ECOZONE	ENDZONE	SUBZONE TRIZONE
8:	CABEZONE	DOWNZONE	EUROZONE	HALAZONE	
9 and longer:	INTERZONE	ESTRAMAZONE	SEMICARBAZONE		
	SULFINPYRAZONE	PHENYLBUTAZONE	AMINOPHENAZONE		
	SULPHINPYRAZONE	OXYPHENBUTAZONE			

Scrabble alive and well in the Free State

Duncan Keet

Heilbron Scrabble Club in the Free State Province was established in 2009 by Molapisi Motsumi and Molifi Lethebe at a school in the area. The plan was to recruit more Scrabble players from the area.

Club co-founder, Molapisi, said that they were just playing for fun and recruited players like Joe Leqholoane, Tsholofelo (Louisa), Jeanette Morotolo, Paulina Mbethe, Sono Leqheku, Potlaki Motsoeneng, and the late Mthethwa Mkhohliso. They continued playing informally until 2010 when they got introduced to competitive Scrabble in Benoni. It is here where they met Garth van Vliet from Scrabble SA. He adopted them and came to run Scrabble coaching clinics in Heilbron.

Garth (who now lives in Australia) remembers going to Heilbron – about 140 km south of Johannesburg – on a few occasions in those early years to run some coaching clinics. He invited them to a Scrabble tournament in Johannesburg where the players became exposed to competitive Scrabble.

Karen Richards, an Australian Scrabble player living in South Africa at the time, somehow became involved with the club. She was Chairperson of WESPA Youth Scrabble. In 2011 two Heilbron players, Joe and Tsholofelo, went to play in an international youth scrabble tournament in Thailand. Karen Richards was instrumental in getting the two of them combat-ready for the event, as well as raising funds to get them to the tournament.

Molapisi notes that their playing methods were not up to scratch as they were playing four players to one board. This was not ideal preparation for tournament scrabble. He says that the Benoni tourney was an eye opener to them. The club grew as they recruited more members like Thabo Tsotetsi, Gift Tsotetsi, Late Bomba Khethe, Vusi Sibeko and many more.

He goes on to say that they started doing clinics and recruited more players. Currently they are still challenged in terms of insufficient Scrabble equipment. They try to attend as many tournaments as possible. On 17 June 2023 they attended a Scrabble tournament in Gauteng where four more Scrabble boards were donated to Heilbron Scrabble club. They also attended the Pretoria Scrabble tourney where their best player, Sono Leqheku once again got first prize in division B. They are indeed improving!

Their intention is to spread Scrabble in all districts across the Free State. Sometimes they feature at local soccer tournaments by doing displays to popularise the game.

Heilbron Scrabble Club wishes to thank Andrew Goldberg and Steven Gruzd for always holding their hands, Garth for his undying support and the anonymous funders that have made it possible for them to attend Scrabble tournaments played in Gauteng this year.

Tangled toponyms

Steven Gruzd

When we all started playing Scrabble, we were told that proper nouns – including placenames like cities and countries – were not playable, unless, of course, they have another meaning and are therefore listed in the dictionary. Words named after places are called toponyms.

Here are two quizzes related to valid names of cities, or their anagrams.

1. What's the anagram? (The place name is NOT valid but its anagrams are)

1. ALGIERS* (2 words)
2. ANTWERP*
3. BELFAST*
4. CHELSEA*
5. DARWIN*
6. ENGLAND*
7. FREETOWN*
8. GRENOBLE*
9. HAVANA*
10. HOBART* (2 words)
11. KINGSTON*
12. LUANDA*
13. MADRID*
14. NAIROBI*
15. NICOSIA*
16. PALESTINE* (3 words)
17. PRAGUE*
18. PRETORIA*
19. SEVILLE*
20. STANLEY*

Answers on the last page

2. Anagram is a city (valid in Scrabble)

1. A BRAT*
2. ALOE WORT*
3. ANT SCHEMER*
4. BRAG HUM*
5. CENTRE WISH*
6. CHEER HIS*
7. CLONE REF*
8. ERIC MILK*
9. FOX ROD*
10. GAIN HASH*
11. GILL NEWTON*
12. IS A CALL*
13. KAK BONG*
14. LESS RUBS*
15. NIBLER*
16. NOT OBS*
17. REAL MILES*
18. LOST RIB*
19. THAT MANNA*
20. WAS RAW*

Answers on the last page

Strategy session

Segun Durojaye

What I know, you know. But, to what depth? The transition from being a rookie to a serial podiuming Champ is couched in that innocuous question.

The wordlists are pretty the same. Gone are the days when you needed to make them. Now, you don't have to break a sweat to print 100 pages of study bits; be they three-, four-, five-, six-, seven- or eight-letter words. Their hooks and inflections are readily available out there. The overabundance of knowledge has narrowed the gap. You don't have to be scholarly to have the finest study materials. All you need is a good Android app, and they are all free.

Having a decent study list is only the beginning. You will not win a championship in Nigeria simply because you pack a few exotic words. It will not happen so soon. Whatever it is you have just gobbled, be assured, 20 other Masters have had them in their arsenal for years. They may seem distant to recall, but, be assured, you will not earn free challenge points for such words. So, you have to go the extra mile of knowing the back and front hooks. The Benjamin extensions are compulsory. [A BENJAMIN is the name for a word that takes numerous letters before or after it, like BENJ and AMIN – Ed]. HYOID is a sweet word. It will be your duty to know the front and back extensions (OMOHYOID and HYOIDEAN, HYOIDAL) in addition to knowing it as a noun.

Words are the bricks of the game. You have to have the words. So, invest time and diligence in acquiring those blocks. Acquire them in an orderly manner. Don't clog your head with too much raw data. You will find recalling them difficult.

In doing that, I advise that you understand the basic rules of building those blocks.

English words are built on morphemes, the commonest being nouns with the ubiquitous -s plural forms, followed by verbs with their -ed,-ing inflections and then adjectives. Knowing the word group of a word is a good way of knowing its extensions.

Unfortunately, English is not a straightforward language. So, you will need to study the exceptions and the exemptions to the exceptions.

Signing off without reminding that three- and four-letter words will mess you up regularly would be unjust. Your only armour against such slips of judgment is to read them as many times as they will sicken you. When they become boringly sickening, there is only one thing to do: read them again and all their inflections.

Strategy will come. But, read first.

Segun Durojaye is a two-time Nigerian Grandmaster and winner of several Scrabble Championships. He is on the board of the Nigeria Scrabble Federation as the Players' Representative.

The ups and downs of Scrabble Go

Debbie Dooley

While EA [Electronic Arts] held the license to the online version of Scrabble, it remained true to the familiar board game we all grew up with. Three years ago (April 2020) the franchise was sold to games company Scopely. They promptly replaced the popular, familiar mobile application with – and bear with me here, the numbers don't lie – an even more popular version called Scrabble Go. The complaints started immediately from the Scrabble community, but they were drowned out by the fact that the game received 10 million downloads in its first month after launching, with an average of 2.5 million players logging on daily to play.

Scopely's new design retained the grid of bonus squares but the familiar colours were gone, along with all those virtual friends, cultivated over years of online play. Understandably, fans and addicts were heartbroken. The once-dignified word game was dead – and in its place was a mash up of treasure chests with virtual jewels as game currency, monthly themes and targets, timed challenges and power-ups (which allow you to change letters without missing a turn or get a hint on your best play). These extras are all accessed from flashy animated icons that perpetually pop and burst and blink notifications at you. It also prohibitively expensive to pay for no advertisements, which appear after every move made.

Some other game modes in Scrabble Go include Duels, Tumbler Classic and Rush Classic. Points scored in all modes tie into trophies, rankings, bonuses and unlocking new tiles. Whether you consider them unnecessary distractions or that these features add value and depth to the game, it is a fact that the app was designed to grab and keep the attention of younger players. And as online games go, Scrabble Go as a word game has educational benefits over games that are pure entertainment, doesn't it?

Once you start playing Scrabble Go you may find a flood of game requests. Don't be fooled into thinking these are real people. In fact, unless you connect your profile to Facebook, game requests are likely to be from bot profiles. I made the remark to a fellow male club member that most of my game requests are from hunky white males of a certain age – often in uniform – and that in real time I would be pleased to meet even one Scrabble player who fits that profile. He replied that – as a male – he only gets game requests from sexy women with great cleavage, so it appears they are using time-tested (but sad and outdated) tactics to attract you to accept a game request on Scrabble Go. PS in case you can't tell by other means, if there is a "cloud" around the avatar, it's a bot.

But all is not lost. My favorite feature of the new app is the click-on-word for definition. I can also click-on-player to see my previous stats against him or her. I have also had cause to block a few players in the past, mostly because – it would seem – certain men mistake

the game for a dating app. If you are thinking that has anything to do with my profile picture you would be incorrect; my octogenarian Scrabble Go friend has the very same problem.

We are just going to have to accept that our much-loved version has gone offline forever. But the light at the end of the tunnel for me was being forced to find a version of Scrabble that gave me the fix that only the classic game can – and I rediscovered my love for on-the-board Scrabble. This may sound like a vintage idea, but if you haven't given it a try yet, you should.

Going back to the app, there is a way to play the app that will make it more bearable. Start by getting rid of the boosts. To play a Classic Scrabble game:

1. Tap on Start New Game on the home screen.
2. Choose Play Scrabble.
3. Scroll down until you find Scrabble Classic and tap to select it.
4. Tap on Match Me for a random opponent or choose from the list of available players.

This solved some of my problems, but it didn't eliminate the game requests from Scrabble-with-boosts players, so I wasn't completely satisfied. Fortunately, the developers have now given classic players a way to play permanently in classic mode. (Be warned, you will be resigned from all non-classic games when you make the change).

This is how to do it

1. Tap on your Profile Picture in the top-left corner from the Home lobby.
2. Tap on the Profile Settings icon in the top-right corner.
3. Tap on the Mode Settings and select the mode you prefer.

If you do not see the Mode Settings option (without going into it too much detail, its dependent on the device you have downloaded to and whether you are connected via Facebook or Apple or directly) you can contact customer support from your Profile Settings to request permanent migration to the Classic Scrabble mode. I had to do it this way, and it was resolved after a couple of messages back and forth. The rest, as they say, is history. I now enjoy a (mostly) uninterrupted stream of Scrabble Classic games with *real* people and but for the colour of the board, the little cloud of sadness that descended into my life when EA left the room is dissipating.

Debbie Dooley is a “skrik-vir-niks” and game-for-everything 54-year-old business analyst. She joined the Johannesburg Scrabble community in February 2020.

Scrabble in Cameroon

Christian Shofola

For over ten years, Scrabble has been played in Cameroon in Central Africa, but French-language Scrabble has been predominant. The Cameroon Scrabble Federation (FECASCRAB) has an enrollment of over 300 players in French Scrabble. Cameroon being a bilingual country, with English and French as its official languages, triggered the Minister of Sports and Physical Education to wonder why Cameroon was thriving in French Scrabble and nothing was said about the game in English language, given that the game is originally an English game that has been translated to other languages including French. In 2015, the President of the Cameroon Scrabble Federation started to look out for English-speaking Scrabble enthusiasts that could drive the game in Cameroon. Then he met a passionate player, Dr Niba Fontoh, who was elected as the second vice president of FECASCRAB to take up the task of growing English Scrabble in Cameroon.

In 2017, an English tournament was attached to the French national championship. The English tourney registered 8 players. In 2018 and 2019, it registered 12 players and in 2020, its last edition, it registered 16 players. After which COVID-19 set in and tournaments were suspended. Despite the suspension, the passionate Scrabble players had developed bonds and knew where to find each other to play for leisure. This has continued to date to ensure the growth of the game in English. Proof of this was the participation of the 2020 champion, Christian Shofola, at the African Scrabble Championship in Lusaka, Zambia, in October 2022. This participation enabled Cameroon to have a feel in the international playground and inspired many more players to aspire to be champions to participate at international tournaments.

Cameroon also made its way into WESPA and PANASA and pledged to participate in all English scrabble tournaments organised by both bodies. To increase the English Scrabble



enrollment in Cameroon, Shofola, under the supervision of the Cameroon Scrabble Federation in 2023 initiated a training program for secondary schools in the capital city (Yaounde) where English scrabble clubs are set up in schools and he trains the club members at least once a week on the dos and don'ts of Scrabble. This initiative has been greatly appreciated by the pilot schools that were engaged for these clubs. Also, the vice champion, John Nforba, in a bid to increase the enrollment of English scrabble players, started the Scrabble for Peace initiative in the crisis-stricken North West Region

of Cameroon, to use Scrabble to occupy the minds of youths, to keep them away from wayward activities and to grow the culture of peace among the youth. The first Scrabble for Peace tournament was organised in January 2023 with 14 players. This initiative too has been greatly applauded by the government of Cameroon.

Now in a bid to grow the English scrabble in Cameroon, we are in the process of legalising an association exclusively for English players. This will help train more players through constant practice of the game and thus increase the growth of the game in Cameroon. This will equally help grow the enrollment of Cameroonians in both national and international competitions.



Christian Shofola is the current English Scrabble Champion in Cameroon



1. RABAT
2. WATERLOO
3. MANCHESTER
4. HAMBURG
5. WINCHESTER
6. CHESHIRE
7. FLORENCE
8. LIMERICK
9. OXFORD
10. SHANGHAI
11. WELLINGTON
12. CALLAIS
13. BANGKOK
14. BRUSSELS
15. BERLIN
16. BOSTON
17. MARSEILLE
18. BRISTOL
19. MANHATTAN
20. WARSAW

1. GLAIRES, GRAILES
2. ENWRAPT
3. FABLETS
4. LEACHES
5. INWARD
6. ENDLANG
7. FOREWENT
8. BELONGER
9. VAHANA
10. ATHROB, BROTHA
11. STONKING
12. LANDAU
13. DIRDAM
14. ROBINIA
15. ASINICO
16. ANTISLEEF, PENALTIES,
17. GAUPER
18. PRIORATE
19. VIELLES
20. STANYEL