

N-TILE SCRABBLE RECORDS

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What is the highest score achievable by playing a given number of tiles in a single turn of Scrabble Crossword Game? As far as I know, no one has investigated the records for playing fewer than the maximum of seven tiles. But the majority of turns ordinarily encountered in Scrabble Crossword Game use only three to five tiles, not all seven. So after working on the seven-tile record for a few years, I decided to investigate the records for playing one through six tiles. I soon realized that these records were just as intriguing and strategic as the seven-tile record. Here's a summary of the records I was able to achieve:

Number of Tiles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Points Scored	231	498	978	1247	1497	1729	1794

The word authority for six of the seven records is Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Only the one-tile record uses a different authority, Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language. In the following paragraphs I present the seven records and the strategies used to create them. In the diagrams of the game boards, I use plus-signs to show which letters are played in the record turns, and I use asterisks to indicate blank tiles.

1 Tile: 231 Points with HYDROXYBENZENE(S)

The one-tile record turned out to use a trivial strategy: simply play an S on a triple-word square, pluralizing two very long, high-scoring nouns. Hoping to avoid these trivial S curtailments, I first researched other curtailments and beheadments. (A curtailment is a word like QUART(Z) that remains a word with its last letter removed. Similarly, a beheadment is a word like (B)RAIN-STORM that remains a word with its first letter removed.) But the S was just too formidable. No other letter came close to matching its score. So I set out to maximize the score for playing an S. After searching promising sections of several unabridged dictionaries, I decided that Funk and Wagnalls' HYDROXYBENZENE(S) (43 points) was the highest-scoring curtailment. I teamed it with a 34-pointer to achieve the record shown below. The next best curtailments were: DIAZOHYDROXIDE(S) (40 points, Webster's Second), CZECHOSLOVAKIA(N) (38, Webster's Third), and REOBJECTIVIZE(D) (38, Webster's Second). Later, I discovered HYPEROXYGENIZE(D), worth 44 points, in the Random House Unabridged. (M)ETHOXYCARBONYL was the highest-scoring beheadment (37, Webster's Third).

with the words (P)REACKNOWLEDGE(D), (A)RHYTHM(1)CITY, WIN(D)-JAMMER(S), and JOBBER(N)OWLISM(S). My best find, though, was (X)ANTHOPHYLLITE(S), scoring nearly 500 points.

Words and scores: XANTHOPHYLLITES 33x3x3 = 297, MACQUEREAUX 31x3 = 93, SUBJECTIVIZES 36x3 = 108.

3 Tiles: 978 Points with (S)CRATCH(B)RUSHER(S)

The three-tile record was by far the most challenging and intriguing. Would it be possible to play each of the three tiles on a triple-word square, forming a "triple-triple-triple" fifteen-letter word? I thought it might, but I knew it would be hard to find a suitable fifteen-letter word. The word would have to become two six-letter words when its first, eighth, and last letters were removed. I finally found such a word in Webster's Second: (P)RECOMB(I)NATION(S) (23 points). Words like this are so rare that to date I've found only four more: (T)ROUBLE(S)HOOTER(S) (20 points), (S)NIPPER(S)NAPPER(S) (17, using blank tiles for two of the Ps), (W)HIPPER(S)NAPPER(S) (23), and (S)CRATCH(B)RUSHER(S) (27). The last of these is the record-holder.

M	Y	X	O	P	T	E	R	Y	G	I	U	M		+S
										T	I	C		
												R		
												A		
												T		
												C		
											S	H		
						K		Z	E	B	U			+B
						I					E	R		
						L						U		
						O						S		
						W						H		
						A						E		
						T					E	R		
Q	U	A	D	R	A	T	O	J	U*	G	A	L		+S

Words and scores: SCRATCHBRUSHERS 27x3x3x3 = 729, MYXOPTERYGIUMS 34x3 = 102, ZEBUB 18x3 = 54, QUADRATOJUGALS 31x3 = 93.

4 Tiles: 1247 Points with (M)ETHOXY(C)A(R)BONY(L)

With four tiles to play, it was easier to find a suitable triple-triple-triple fifteen-letter word. While searching my lists of high-scoring curtailments, I quickly found (W)A(P)PENS(C)HAWING(S) (31 points). I didn't improve on this word until I found the 37-point record-holder shown below.

6 or 7 Tiles: 1729, 1794 Points with (O)(X)Y(P)HEN(B)UT(A)(Z)ON(E)

OXYPHENBUTAZONE, the word used in the single-turn record I wrote about in the February 1983 *Word Ways*, can be played with either six or seven tiles. With six, simply play the horizontal A beheadment (A)JINGLE before the final turn, forming the vertical word UTA along the side of the board. Both the six- and seven-tile records use the diagram shown below.

O+		P	A	C	I	F	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	S
X+		E	N	A	T	E	S							
	Y	A		L		A								
P+		R	E	F	O	R	M	A	T	I	V	E		
	H	R								D				
	E	R	G							D				
	N									E				
B+		R	U	S	H	W	O	R	K	S				
	U			W										
	T	I		I		A								
A+		J	I	N	G	L	E							
Z+		O	O	G	A	M	E	T	E					
	O									U				
	N	E								D				
E+		L	O	Q	U	E	N	T	L	Y				

Words and scores: OXYPHENBUTAZONE 54x3x3x3 = 1458, OPACIFICATIONS 23x3 = 69, XENATES 14, PREFORMATIVE 25, BRUSHWORKS 22x3 = 66, (AJINGLE = 15), ZOOGAMETE = 31, ELOQUENTLY 22x3 = 66, ("Bingo" bonus = 50).

All words used in the above Scrabble Crossword Games are allowed by the rules for acceptable words. These rules were outlined in "High-Scoring Scrabble Revised" in the May 1981 *Word Ways*. They require that, in the game's dictionary, all words used be labeled with parts of speech or be inflected forms of words so labeled. For regular inflected forms, however, the rules say players should check the dictionary's explanatory notes. The relevant parts of Webster's Third's explanatory notes were printed in the 1981 article, but Funk and Wagnalls' were not mentioned. For completeness, Funk and Wagnalls states on page lxx that if "the plurals of nouns are not given, they are formed regularly, according to the simplest rules of grammar."

I invite readers to submit improvements to any of the above records and to find more examples of fifteen-letter triple-triple-triples playable with fewer than five tiles. Good hunting!