

A NEW WORD GAME

ENOCH HAGA
Livermore, California

Editor's Note: Word Ways readers may be interested in advance notice of a board game privately marketed by Enoch Haga, 983 Venus Way, Livermore CA 94550-6345. Should you wish to purchase the tiles and board used in the game, please get in touch with him for information on price and availability.

WORDwhamiTM is a board game of word strategy, tactics and vocabulary - designed to challenge your mind, mine your vocabulary, and test your aggressiveness. The game is designed for two to four (or more opponents), or for one person playing alone.

The objective of play is to obtain maximum points, usually by forming the longest possible word on each play. The score may be increased by forming words that read differently forward and backward, touching or crossing words previously played with letters in your word so as to form more new words, and by avoiding words that make it easy for others to score by adding suffixes and prefixes.

Rules of Play

1. Players agree upon any play or game limits and the authority.
2. One player, the scorekeeper, verifies plays and challenges. Errors not corrected before the next play stand.
3. Each player draws 12 letter pieces and replenishes after each play. Pieces may be hidden or left face up on the table during play, as each player chooses.
4. Beginning with the scorekeeper, play begins by placing a word anywhere on the board. Any word may be used except proper nouns (names of specific persons, places or things), contractions such as "don't" or "can't", hyphenated words, and abbreviations. If no special dictionary is adopted as the authority, then all players must agree on the admissibility of each play. After the player announces the score to the scorekeeper, play passes to the next player on the left.
5. Any player may challenge the last play before the next play is completed. Upon challenge, all play must stop until the dictionary or rules are consulted and the issue resolved. Whoever loses a challenge forfeits play to the challenging player. Any unchallenged play stands.
6. Players may add to and/or cross words already played (but are not required to do so); letters already down can not be changed. An asterisk (star) is a wild letter which may be used just once per word (but not to add to words already down in which an asterisk has already been used, or to form plu-

rales). Only one word may be formed on a single play. Words are of two basic types: straight (laid down horizontally or vertically - across or up and down) or diagonal (all straight lines touched must form words). Any word may be formed to

		T		T O	
B I N		I		I U	
		N		F T	

read forward and/or backward. If playing on the diagonal, all straight lines touched must form words. If playing on the straight, diagonals touched need not form new words.

7. Any player who cannot form a word must exchange all letters and pass.

Scoring

1. Words are scored by multiplying the number of letters in the word by itself: 2-letter words score 4, 3-letter words score 9, and so on. Asterisks count as letters.
2. Each new and different word resulting from a single play, whether straight or diagonal, whether red forward or backward (or both), counts separately to form player's total score.

Equipment

1. A playing board consisting of 900 squares in a 30x30 grid.
2. A set of 400 tiles: 350 letters and 50 blanks marked with asterisks. The number of pieces for each letter is based upon its frequency in the English language: 42 E; 31 T; 28 O,A; 24 N; 22 S,I,R; 16 H; 14 L,D; 12 C; 10 U; 8 M,G,Y,P; 6 F,W,B; 4 V; 3 K; 2 X,J,Q,Z.
3. Any medium to large-size dictionary agreed upon in advance.

Limits

1. Each play, including the use of the dictionary, may be limited to a specified period of time such as two or three minutes. A player going over the limit loses his turn.
2. Each game may be limited to a specified numerical score or to a specific duration of time. A game can proceed until no further words can be formed by any player, either because of lack of tiles to draw or opportunities to play on the board.
3. Each game may be limited to the terminology of a specific subject or topic, or to words found in specialized (or foreign) dictionaries.

If you play this game, please tell me your reactions to it, as well as your time of play, number of players, and scores. How might the game be improved by modifications of the rules? What strategies did you find most useful?