

Rules for Friendly (non-tournament) Scrabble

Blank Substitution

If there is a blank on the board, and a player holds the letter that the blank represented when it was played, then at the beginning of his turn, he may substitute the letter and take the blank. However, he must then re-play the blank during his same turn. One or more blanks may be substituted during a single turn.

Free Trades

To reduce the element of luck, and make the game more fun as well, a player may (but is not required to) freely trade one or more tiles to eliminate all of the following from his rack:

- Two pair
- Three of the same letter
- Less than two vowels
- Less than two consonants

The blank is ignored when deciding whether this rule may be applied. The Y may be called either a vowel or a consonant, to the player's advantage. If more than one tile is allowed to be traded, these tiles must all be selected *before* trading. Further, any tile received in the trade may be rejected if it would restore one of the above conditions to your rack. If you try all the remaining tiles without curing the original condition permitting the draw, then you must keep the original tiles you had.

For example, say your rack contains: AADDLOP. You may freely trade either an A or a D, and if the new tile happens to be an A, D, L, O or P, you can redraw until you get some other letter or a blank tile.

Assume you have: AAAITUY. Your best strategy is probably to consider the Y a vowel (giving you six vowels) and select the U to be traded. Then you still have three A's so you can trade one of them as well. Hence, you would exchange the U and A for two new tiles. (Note that you could not trade two A's because removing one leaves no tradable condition.) If one of new tiles is an A, I, T or Y, you can redraw; but note that if you draw another U you must keep it.

Free Challenges & the Dictionary

The loss-of-turn penalty for invalid challenged words, or for challenges of valid words, seems too harsh and makes the game less enjoyable. Therefore, if a dubious word is played by one player, it is freely checked by another player, and if invalid it is withdrawn and the same player tries again.

Similarly, if a player wants to play something that he or she thinks should be a word, the player may look it up in the Scrabble Dictionary to see whether it is valid. This saves the other player from unnecessary work, since it's the player who hopes that JAILOR is a word who has to do the work of confirming it.

Although it's OK to consult the dictionary at will, it's not OK to browse the dictionary looking for every possible word to play. A hard-and-fast rule is not needed: it's simply a matter of courtesy, such as not staring at your cellphone while your friend wants to converse.