

## Scrabble Slam!

- by Ramón Bannister



**Product:** [Scrabble Slam!](#)<sup>1</sup> a card game by Parker Brothers®, a division of Hasbro®.

**Retail Price:** \$6.99

**Rating:** Double-take

### Brief Product Description

Scrabble Slam is a card game loosely based on the all-time greatest-word-game-ever, Scrabble™. Designed to be more fast-paced, players change the existing four-letter word in the

middle of the table. The object is to get rid of all your cards, one-by-one, to win the game. There is no scoring in this game, so it's much simpler than many other games.

### Example

Someone begins by thinking of any acceptable four-letter word. The letters of the word are placed on the table out of the deck of cards provided. After the word is chosen and spelled out, the rest of the cards are passed out. When everyone is ready, someone yells "GO!" and so begins the race to get rid of your cards. So, if "past" is the word on the table, someone can change it to "mast" and yells out the new word. Then, another player, or the same player, changes it again by changing one letter in the word.

### Review

Again, I tried this game with that part of my family that ALWAYS finds at least one rule that is unclear. However, the directions for this game were surprisingly straightforward, with one exception that I will explain later. The real problem was that one of them had a bad back, so they decided to change the rules because they were concerned that the fast-paced action-packed play would make the person's back worse. I'm including this information to give you a warning: DO NOT CHANGE THE RULES! Suffice it to say that even the persons who changed the rules found the game quite slow and pointless. But again, they changed the rules to suit the person with the bad back.

One slow round later, they decided to play the way it's supposed to be played – FAST! So, we loosened our fingers and intensified our concentration. We put the first word down and after someone said "GO!" we began changing the word. The pace was very quick. Someone changes the word and a split second later someone else changes the word again. There are often moments of pause, about 1-3 seconds, while everybody comes to their senses again and continues slapping those cards down and yelling out the words. Then, someone suddenly says, "HOLD IT! TIMEOUT! What word is that?"

This is one point in the game that coincides with Scrabble. If someone puts a word down that another person questions, the word is challenged. The people with whom I play always ask for a definition. However, even after hearing the definition, nine times out of ten they still don't believe it's a legitimate word. That's because people often make up a definition to an invented word. Sometimes, though rarely,

the person gets away with it. Admittedly, I also sometimes make up words that don't exist; but I learned from the best!

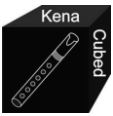
Here's where it gets fuzzy. When someone challenges a word, which dictionary do you use to prove its authenticity? The instructions say that the regular Scrabble rules for acceptable words apply. They also say you can "consult a dictionary if necessary to resolve the dispute." These directions can be interpreted in at least 2 ways. Either you have to use the official Scrabble dictionary, or you can use any English dictionary. We reviewed the Scrabble rules from an old board, which say that any English dictionary can be used. Two of us responded by pointing out that "official Scrabble tournaments use the Scrabble dictionary!"

Why was this an issue? Well, it turned out that someone put a word down that we disputed. That word was "peed." The person defined it as "the past tense of 'to pee.'" You can already note the humor in all of this: such a vigorous dispute over such a commonly used word. You can say that this side of my family takes its word games seriously, but with an air of lightheartedness. Still, we had a dispute to resolve. Sensing that we were about to lose, I noted that the Scrabble directions were old. "But this is an old version of Scrabble. So, the instructions are old too," I announced! Then came the rebuttle, "We're old too, and this is an old house. (So, that makes sense.)" The house was built in the 1880s, and my initial thought was, "Can't argue w/ that." With my hope dying I repeated, "Official Scrabble tournaments use the Scrabble dictionary!" To no avail; we lost the argument with the strongest refutation yet, said with a comedic smile on the person's face, "This is our house, and as house rules say, we can use this dictionary." So, we looked up the word in both dictionaries and sure enough, it's not in the official Scrabble dictionary but it is in the standard English dictionary. The Scrabble one only allowed an "s" at the end of the word, not a "d." The standard one did have the "d" at the end.



Oh well, lost that argument, but we had a lot of fun in the process! Further research complicates the dispute. A [Scrabble website](#)<sup>2</sup> says that "Players may place any word which can be found in a standard English language dictionary. Official Scrabble dictionaries also can be found in bookstores and online." In other words, house rules. Official tournaments, however, require a standard "[Official Tournament & Club Word List](#)."<sup>3</sup> Apparently, they no longer use dictionaries; judges use software. Players, following official rules, simply type the word into the computer and press the "tab" key, and the computer spits out a message confirming or denying the word's legitimacy. If I understand it correctly, a judge can be called on to make the final decision. That's the long way of saying that we lost the fight in a valiant and brave struggle, as our game wasn't an official tournament, and "house rules" ultimately prevailed.

Scrabble Slam is so fast-paced that you can often get away with putting down a card and yelling out a word that seems legitimate, allowing others to continue the game. Most of the time the players are so focused and intent on putting down their own cards that they don't notice. That happened to me when I put down an "s" to make the word "fiss." I thought that the word could be legitimate and I was close to winning the round, so I quickly played the card and even yelled out the word, "FISS!" Nobody noticed, and the next person put down a "t" to form the word "fist." Play continued and I finally played my last card, winning the round.



I then revealed what happened, but nothing could be done. I was already declared the winner. I don't know how I did it against three strong word-game players who beat me 99% of the time. That's what happens in fast-paced games. You can use the speed to your advantage.

After we played three or four rounds, one person remarked that Scrabble Slam is like the game Broken Knuckles, a.k.a. Double Solitaire. Opponents race to throw their cards into common piles, often hitting each other's knuckles and hands during the rough and tumble.

I rate this game as a "Double-take," since it leads to enjoyable competition with the family. I found myself looking at the box multiple times, realizing that the word "slam" is quite a good description of the game. Scrabble Slam takes quick thinking and fast strategizing and tactics in order to win. It's an excellent game that can bring out exciting and fun-natured arguments. The instructions are for the most part clear and concise; the game is easy to learn. Be sure to decide on a dictionary *before* you begin. Challenge words that don't sound right, because there's no penalty in stopping the game. If someone challenges you about a word you invented, make up a definition that sounds scientific. If they insist on looking it up, call them on the bluff by confidently handing them the dictionary and keeping a straight face. They just might believe you.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.hasbro.com/scrabble/en\\_US/shop/details.cfm?guid=E8E0CBDA-6C57-1014-ADF5-8E2A583F4B56&product\\_id=24046&src=endeca](http://www.hasbro.com/scrabble/en_US/shop/details.cfm?guid=E8E0CBDA-6C57-1014-ADF5-8E2A583F4B56&product_id=24046&src=endeca)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scrabblepages.com/scrabble/rules/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://scrabble-assoc.com/build/rules/rules2.html#r1a1a>