

Code of Conduct

Behavior Contrary to the Integrity of the SCRABBLE Game

The favorable reputations of SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword Game and the North American SCRABBLE Players Association (NASPA) are valuable assets. They create tangible benefits for all NASPA members.

SCRABBLE players and officials serve as ambassadors for the game. Accordingly, everyone involved in organized SCRABBLE should refrain from engaging in conduct or behavior detrimental to the integrity of SCRABBLE when attending a club or tournament. All SCRABBLE participants should also strive to present a positive image during SCRABBLE events even during those times when they are away from the tournament area, in such places as restaurants or hotels.

Players and directors are reminded that their friends, spouses, relatives, and other associates who attend SCRABBLE events with them should not negatively disrupt the event nor impede club and tournament officials from doing their jobs.

Players and officials are encouraged, to the best of their abilities, to be cooperative and courteous with media personnel who are covering SCRABBLE events.

A SCRABBLE event should be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved. Behavior that is deemed harmful to this objective will not be tolerated. All players are urged to inform club and tournament directors about any incidents which are detrimental to the positive atmosphere at a SCRABBLE event. In order to create a pleasant atmosphere at SCRABBLE events, the following guidelines have been established.

Directors shall issue penalties when any of the following transgressions occur:

Classification 1 Code Violations

a. Abuse of Equipment

Players shall not throw, slam, break, damage or destroy any game equipment or tournament equipment. This includes (by way of example, but not limited to) tiles, tile bags, racks, boards, clocks, chairs, tables, receptacles, documents, or computer equipment. This also includes personal items such as clipboards, pens, items of clothing, and other possessions.

b. Verbal Abuse

Players shall not at any time verbally abuse an opponent, a tournament official, volunteer, or any other person connected within the precincts of the tournament site. Verbal abuse is defined as any statement that is derogatory, insulting, threatening, or otherwise abusive.

c. Audible Obscenities

Players shall not use any audible obscenities while playing a game or in the accepted boundaries of the tournament area. An audible obscenity is defined as the use of words commonly known and understood to be profane and uttered clearly and loudly enough to be heard.

d. Visible Obscenities

Players shall not make obscene gestures of any kind while playing a game or while in the accepted boundaries of the tournament area. A visible obscenity is defined as the making of a sign by a player with hands or other means that is commonly known to have an obscene meaning.

e. Written Obscenities

Players shall not use any written obscenities to insult, demean, or harass other players or tournament officials. This includes the writing of words or statements, commonly understood to be profane, that can be easily seen by nearby players or passersby. It is permissible to write offensive words on a challenge slip when such words are challenged. It is also permissible to write offensive words that have been played during a game (or words that were considered for play) on one's score sheet or note paper.

f. Leaving the Playing Area during a Game without Legitimate Cause

With the exception of unavoidable restroom breaks or other legitimate reasons, players shall not leave the playing room before their games are completed. This type of behavior is both disrespectful and unnerving to opponents.

g. Deliberate Noncooperation with Tournament Officials

Players must be cooperative with tournament officials and staff at all times. Deliberate noncooperation includes (by way of example, but not limited to) refusing to complete mandatory paperwork, refusing to cooperate with official game annotators (at tournaments where annotation was advertised), refusing to leave the playing area when asked to do so, refusing to tidy the playing area, and other acts of noncompliance that hinder the smooth operation of a tournament.

h. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Players shall at all times conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner and give due regard to the authority of officials and the rights of their opponents and other players. Unsportsmanlike conduct is defined as any misconduct by a player that is not specifically defined in other sections

of this code, but is clearly abusive, negative, or detrimental to the success of the club, tournament, NASPA, or organized SCRABBLE in general.

Penalties for Classification 1 Code Violations

When a tournament director ascertains beyond a reasonable doubt that a player has committed a Classification 1 Code Violation, the director is empowered to discipline said player in the following manner:

1st offense: official warning

2nd offense: 100-point penalty applied to tournament spread

3rd offense: ejection and disqualification from the tournament

Note: A director may use his/her discretion to apply a stricter penalty for a first offense if the violation is especially flagrant or egregious. (i.e., A director may immediately issue a 100-point spread penalty or eject the transgressor for a serious transgression. Likewise, a director may eject a transgressor for a flagrant second offense.)

Classification 2 Code Violations

a. Physical Abuse

Players shall not at any time physically abuse any official, opponent, or other person within the precincts of the tournament site. Physical abuse is defined as the unauthorized touching of an official, an opponent, or other person at a tournament site, that harms, harasses, provokes, or intimidates that individual.

The penalty for physical abuse is the immediate ejection and disqualification of the perpetrator from the tournament, possible suspension from future events, and possible revocation of his/her NASPA membership without refund.

b. Intimidation, Threats, and Harassment

Players shall not at any time engage in behavior that intimidates, threatens, or harasses fellow players, club officials or tournament officials. This includes (by way of example, but not limited to) sexual harassment, stalking, confrontational or antisocial behavior, spoken or written threats, or any other malicious acts that can reasonably be perceived as intimidation.

Directors are empowered to remove and disqualify any player from a club or tournament who behaves in the aforementioned manner. NASPA has the right to suspend and/or revoke the membership of any player, without refund, who is deemed guilty of such a transgression.

Classification 3 Code Violations

a. Cheating

Players at SCRABBLE clubs and tournaments are honor-bound not to cheat. Cheating is a serious infraction that cannot be tolerated. Those who are caught cheating at a tournament will be immediately ejected and disqualified from the event. NASPA may also suspend or revoke the membership of any player caught cheating.

Acts of cheating can include (by way of example, but not limited to)

1. Concealing or palming extra tiles.
2. Disguising an overdraw situation by hiding, palming, discarding, or destroying tiles.
3. Failing to report an overdraw immediately.
4. Deliberately falsifying data on a result slip.
5. Using marked tiles.
6. Consulting premade word lists, dictionaries or other reference books, or word-source devices during a game.
7. Using an accomplice to gain information about the validity of words, an opponent's rack, or any other information.
8. Peering into the tile bag by any means.
9. Colluding with an opponent to achieve a specific game result.
10. Attempting, by any means, to look at a score sheet or notes that an opponent is concealing.
11. Knowingly announcing an incorrect turn score or cumulative score, or knowingly verifying an opponent's incorrect turn score or cumulative score.

b. Suspicious Behavior

A player whose actions and/or behaviors are deemed to be suspicious by the director will be warned that he/she is suspected of cheating. Any further occurrences of suspicious behavior can result in ejection and disqualification from the tournament.

Note: It is understood that tournament newcomers may sometimes "accidentally" cheat or engage in suspicious behavior because of their inexperience. Considerable leeway and the benefit of the doubt should be given to unseasoned players who violate the rules without malicious intent. The rules pertaining to cheating are generally designed for experienced tournament players who are trying to gain an unfair advantage with their actions and who realize what they are doing is wrong and contrary to the spirit of the game.

Record of Code Violations

Tournament directors are required to report all code violations to NASPA's Tournament Committee as soon as the event ends or sooner (use the Incident Report Form).

NASPA will keep a record of all reported transgressions. An accumulation of transgressions will result in a warning that subsequent transgressions will result in longer suspensions and/or other disciplinary action.

Right to Appeal

A player who is penalized with one or more code violations has the right to file an appeal to NASPA. A written intention of the appeal must be submitted to NASPA within 30 days of the alleged incident. Upon receiving such notice, NASPA, with the assistance of the Advisory Board, will investigate the circumstances of the code violation, and may, if deemed necessary, conduct a formal hearing. At any time during the appeal process, the accused player may submit any evidence and/or present witnesses to assist in his/her defense.