

sightlesswordfight

Basic Rules:

Each player gets a blank 20×20 grid¹. The first player declares a word², and spells it out, by writing it at the top of a public list, with the number of letters, l , written to the left of it. Each player secretly places the word, one letter per blank, linearly, on her grid, either horizontally or vertically, wherever she wants. Each player gets l points, and secretly notes those beside her grid, keeping a running total.

The next player declares and spells a word, adding it and its number of letters, l , to the bottom of the list, and each player must secretly place that word in her grid such that it intersects with a word already in her grid, and all words present horizontally and vertically are legitimate words. Each player who was able to place the word gets l points. Any player unable to place the word gets no points, and the current game gets a strike.

Play continues in this manner until the current game has three strikes, at which point the game ends. The player with the most points wins!

Hint: You can use the public word list as an audit trail to make sure the winner didn't make a mathematical mistake, or cheat by placing a word out of order – for instance, several turns later when there came to be a word it could be placed across.

Variants (optional rules):

Be Fruitful and Multiply: (recommended)

When you place the word, whose length is of course l , the points you earn for the word are multiplied by the number of letters, already in your grid, that you reused in this new word. When noting your score, you should use the format illustrated to the right; this way, you clearly denote how many existing letters you reused in the first factor, and how many letters the new word is, in the second. On the first turn, there are no letters to reuse, so everyone scores 0 for the first turn. If you cross a single word, reusing one letter, which is typically the case, you will get $1 \times l$ points. If you manage to cross two parallel words, reusing two letters, you will get $2 \times l$ points. If the new word comprises a word already in the grid, and you can fit it that way into your grid, you really do get $w \times l$ points, where w is the number of letters in the old word. For example, the new word is **TOPICAL**:

reused	×	new	=	score
0	×	10	=	0
1	×	5	=	5
				5
5	×	7	=	35
				40

				T					
P	R	O	M	O	N	T	O	R	Y
				P					
				I					
				C					
				A					
				L					

This play gets 35 (5×7) points. Of course, with a case this simple, probably every other player got thirty-five points, as well.

Hint: If you play with this recommended variant, you probably will want to audit each others' scores at the end of the game, as much to look for mistakes as for cheating.

Zero Tolerance: (excellent for cut-throat two-player games)

One strike ends the game.

1 Or any configuration, including irregularly shaped grids, as long as all the players have identical grids.
 2 Abbreviations, acronyms, and proper nouns are disallowed, unless they are otherwise normal words. Just because an abbreviation, acronym, or proper noun is in a dictionary does not mean it is a valid word: Many dictionaries list those items interspersed with their other words, in order to make life easier for their users.