

Guide for Scrabble Tournament Organisers

Introduction

Organising a Scrabble tournament can be an exciting and rewarding experience, but it requires careful planning and coordination. This guide provides an overview of key areas to consider when organising a Scrabble tournament, from administrative tasks to prize distribution. Whether you're running a local event or a larger-scale competition, following this guide will help you ensure everything runs smoothly.

This guide has broken down tournament organisation into distinct phases — [initiation and ideation](#), [preparation](#), [just before the event](#) and the [actual event](#). Depending on the scale and specific details of the tournament you intend to organise, the activities that you will need to carry out and time you will need to allocate for each of these activities may differ. Do [send us an enquiry](#) if further assistance/advice is required.

1. Initiation & Ideation

a) Secure a venue

- **Size and accessibility**: Choose a venue that can comfortably accommodate the expected number of participants. Check public transport accessibility, and whether the venue is accessible for players with disabilities.
- **Facilities**: Look for a quiet, distraction-free space where players can focus. The venue should be sheltered and have adequate lighting, ventilation (air conditioning is strongly recommended in Singapore), and seating arrangements. Ensure the availability of restrooms, and look for water points and other amenities.
- **Power and Internet**: Ensure access to electrical outlets for pairing/word checking devices. A stable Internet connection is necessary for live streaming.
- **Lunch options**: As Scrabble tournaments typically stretch over the lunch hour, source for availability of affordable lunch options (e.g. food centres, coffee shops and/or fast food outlets). If there are no lunch options available nearby, consider arranging for food delivery or catering if you have a tight schedule. Bear in mind the need to cater for players with dietary restrictions (e.g., Halal, kosher, vegetarian, gluten-free).

b) Plan key tournament details

- **Date**: Pick a suitable date for the event, bearing in mind possible clashes with [local](#) and [international](#) events, public/school holidays and other activities that may impact attendance.
- **Schedule**: Pick a reasonable starting time and ending time - generally, most tournaments end before dinner. Provide time for registration and attendance taking on the day itself, to facilitate adjustments to the player roster if registered participants fail to show up.

Provide reasonable time for lunch considering the proximity of food options and whether food will be catered.

- Divisions: If applicable, organise players into different divisions. Divisions are typically organised by rating to allow players of similar standards to compete against each other. If necessary, discuss the ratings cut-off with the Ratings Officer before the tournament.
- Number of games: Select an appropriate number of games according to the start and end time, with ample buffer time. 8 games with about 1 hour per round is usually comfortable with a morning start and ending around 6-7pm. Also consider the experience and stamina of the players.
- Format and Rules: Choose the [format of the tournament](#). For the rules, the Scrabble Association adopts the [World English Scrabble Player Association \(WESPA\) rules](#). If there are any variations, please ensure that they are highlighted to the Ratings Officer
- Ratings: For the event to be rated by the Scrabble Association, send the details to the Ratings Officer. For WESPA rating, visit the [WESPA website](#) to find out the requirements.
- Entry fee: Decide on a suitable entry fee. Consider giving discounts to Scrabble Association members and youths to encourage participation.
- Prize distribution: Decide on a suitable prize distribution, typically with higher prizes going to top performers in stronger divisions. Consider class prizes (e.g. by ratings), prizes to encourage youth players as well as new players, or themed prizes (e.g. related to your tournament). For large tournaments, you can also offer prizes for highest word score or game. Prizes are typically in cash or vouchers, and in-kind prizes are also worth considering. For more formal tournaments, consider awarding trophies or medals for the top players.

c) Recruit manpower

- Tournament Director (TD): Recruit a TD to oversee the event, resolve disputes, handle unexpected situations, and ensure everything stays on schedule. You may recruit a non-playing TD, a playing TD or self-direct. The TD should be familiar with the rules for the competition (see item 1b). Consider remunerating your TD to compensate them for their effort and expertise.
- Guest-Of-Honour (GOH): Depending on the scale of the event, consider inviting a GOH to give out prizes at the end of the event, to increase its prestige.
- Volunteers: If required, recruit volunteers for roles such as player registration, logistics, photography, annotation (both if required) and general assistance. Make sure they are trained on their duties before the event, e.g. by providing an orientation session for volunteers to ensure they understand the tournament's flow, rules, and the venue layout. Equip them with clear communication channels for easy coordination during the event.

d) Sponsorship

- Finding sponsorship: Sponsors can help to defray costs and strengthen publicity for the event. Sponsorship could be in-kind or in cash, and could include venue, logistics or prizes. Look for potential sponsors that align with the tournament's audience (e.g., local

businesses, bookshops, or corporate partners). Consider offering them benefits like logo placement, event signage, or mentions during the event.

2. Preparation

a) Prepare registration form

- Key details: Include the key details in the registration form, or it can be a separate document if you prefer. While some of the items e.g. format, prize distribution need not be fully confirmed at the point of announcement, it is usually necessary to state practical information for players deciding whether to enter the tournament, e.g. date, start and end time, number of games, divisions and entry fees.
- Registration procedure: Set clear registration procedures, including deadlines, fees, and methods of payment. Offer online registration for convenience. We encourage earlier collection of fees for ease of organisation and to incentivise players to show up.
- Player information: Collect necessary player details, such as names, contact numbers, ages (if applicable), ratings (if they have one), and any special requirements (including dietary if food is provided).
- Sourcing for equipment: If equipment is required (e.g. Scrabble “sets”, timers, see item e), this is your opportunity to poll for availability!

b) Announcement and publicity

- Scrabble Association’s website: List the event on our [upcoming events page](#), by [contacting our webmaster](#), providing the key details and link to the entry form/key details document.
- Social media: Promote the event through social media channels. If you wish to publicise your event via Scrabble Association’s [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) page, please [send us an enquiry](#).
- Local outreach: Look for other channels to promote your event, e.g. schools, libraries, community centers, and clubs. Consider designing flyers and partnering with local businesses.
- Press and media: For larger-scale events, consider reaching out to local newspapers or radio stations to gain media coverage of your event.

c) Secure logistics

- Scrabble “sets”: Includes Scrabble board, full set of 100 tiles, and two racks. Consider securing additional sets or having backup equipment in case of damage. Refer to WESPA rules item 1.3 on the preferred quality of sets. Experienced players typically own their own equipment (and could have more than one set), so poll for availability and tap on resources (see item 2a) if required. If further equipment is required, [send us an enquiry](#).
- Timers: Provide timers for each game to enforce time limits. Digital timers are ideal, otherwise mobile phones are also permissible. Refer to WESPA rules item 1.4.2 on the preferred quality of timers.

- Laptops: It is necessary to have at least one laptop or similar device with requisite software to carry out pairing. It is recommended to provide devices for self-adjudication of challenges; however players may also use their own smart devices for self-adjudication.
- Scoresheets/scorecards: Decide whether to provide scoresheets/scorecards, and if not, communicate them to the participants beforehand. It is not mandatory to provide scoresheets but typically expected to provide scorecards for players to keep track of their game records.
- Tables/chairs: Tables should be minimally 60cm length x 60 cm width; a bit larger, say 70cm x 70cm, is comfortable. Check if the venue has sufficient quantities of these, and if not, make arrangements to borrow or rent these. Determine if it is helpful to prepare table numbering/labels to facilitate navigation during tournaments.
- Result submission: Determine how you will collect results - via hardcopy result slips, or online (e.g. via Google Form), and make the necessary preparation.
- Pairing displays: Determine how you will display pairings - via a printout (which will require a printer), projection (which will require a projector), or online dissemination (which will require a communication channel set up for participants, see item 3b).
- Communication devices: Especially for large tournaments, you may need to use a microphone or similar device to make announcements and maintain order.
- Stationery: Have pens, pencils, paper, and other necessary materials available for tournament officials. It is not expected to provide them for players, although it would be nice to have some stock.
- Food and beverages: While not mandatory, it will be good to provide water, coffee/tea, snacks, and/or meals during the event. Ensure there are options for players with dietary restrictions (e.g., Halal, kosher vegetarian, gluten-free).

3. Just Before the Event

a) Set up venue

- Table setup: Arrange tables and chairs for optimal player movement and comfort. Ideally, each table should be clearly numbered and easily identifiable, with different playing areas for each division.
- Registration desk: Have a designated registration desk where players check in and receive materials such as scorecards, game sheets, and name tags.
- Scrabble sets: If you are providing any Scrabble sets, you may set them up on the table, with tiles squared (either in a single 10x10 square or in 4 5x5 squares).
- Spectator areas: Especially if you expect visitors (e.g. parents of youth players) or plan to livestream the games, set up areas for spectators to watch the tournament.

b) Set up communication channels

- Participant WhatsApp group: Consider setting up a WhatsApp (or similar) group for your participants. This can be used to assist players with locating the venue on the day itself, make important announcements and disseminate match pairings.

4. Actual Event

a) Start of event

- Attendance-taking: Make sure that everybody arrives promptly and registers themselves. Contact those who have yet to arrive near to the end of the stipulated registration time, and check if they are on their way or dropping out of the tournament.
- Treatment of latecomers: Players who arrive late should expect to have their clocks started past a certain time, so as to not affect the event schedule. They may also forfeit the game if their clock runs down to a certain time, according to the prevailing rules.
- General briefing: Create an optimal briefing environment by guiding players to be seated. Orientate players to the venue, amenities (e.g. restrooms, water fountain, food and beverages) and key personnel (e.g. TD). Encourage players to monitor their own comfort and energy levels and go for a quick washroom/snack break if required after each round.
- Rules briefing: Ensure that all players, especially newcomers and international players who may play by different rules, are aware of the official tournament rules (e.g., time limits, challenge rule, acceptable word list, what constitutes cheating/unethical behaviour), and know how to get help if required (i.e. call the TD).

b) During event

- Managing the schedule: While you may have planned out a detailed schedule, you may have to make on-the-fly adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances. The lunch break is one slot which can be adjusted according to discretion: it should not be too long such that the tournament ends after the announced end time, nor should it be too short such that players cannot reasonably enjoy their meal.
- Maintaining order: At times, it may be beneficial to maintain order in the tournament venue, e.g. get players seated to start a round, manage spectators.
- Equipment checking: Equipment often goes missing or gets left behind at a tournament. Regularly remind players during the tournament to check for the completeness of game equipment, including by squaring the tiles on the board after each game.

c) End of event

- Closing ceremony: After all results have been entered, announce the winners of the tournament and give out the prizes. Photo-taking is highly encouraged for posterity.
- Promote other events: Before everybody disperses, consider taking the opportunity to promote any upcoming tournaments. Feel free to promote the Scrabble Association too!
- Ratings: Submit the round-by-round results to the webmaster for SA ratings, and to WESPA for WESPA ratings.

At the end of it all, give yourself a pat on the back for successfully organising a tournament! We hope you'll be raring to go again...