

The Official Rules For Playing “Word For Word”

(This game is played much like the poker game, “Texas Hold 'em”)

Rev. 11.13.12

“Word For Word” is a word / card game for 2 or more players, ages 12 and up (and younger with a little help). The play consists of forming words and betting against other players for the highest scoring words. Players compete for pots (or pools) of chips (or other markers – e.g. tokens, play money, etc.) through word values, word length values, bonus letter values, bonus word values, other word bonuses, and the quality of the word created at the end of each round of play.

I. Before The Game Begins

1. Determining Game Parameters: Players should determine amongst themselves what chips or other markers will be used to designate points. For example, if using standard poker chips, a white chip may designate one point, a red chip could be five points and a blue chip ten points, etc.

* Players should determine what the ante is for each round. The ante is a predetermined value (e.g. a white chip, etc.) that each player must put in the pot (or pool) each round of play, before dealing begins.

* Players may determine any minimum and/or maximum values that bets can be made during play.

II. To Begin

2. Determining The Dealer: All the cards in the deck are shuffled and placed in a single deck.

* Each player “cuts” the deck of cards and takes the bottom card from the cut. The player who has the card with the highest point value will deal first.

* If two or more players have the same point value, the player with the card closest to the letter “Z” will deal first, unless another player has cut a wild card.

* Any player who cuts a wild card will deal first.

* If two or more players tie for the first deal, all the players who tied will cut the deck again and repeat the above process until one of the players wins the deal.

* The deal moves to the player on the left for each new round of play.

* Players ante in the pot before each round of play.

3. Dealing: All playing cards are placed in the deck and shuffled.

* The dealer announces the bonus category (see rule #21), if any, to be used during the game.

* The dealer then deals two cards (one at a time) letters down, to each player, beginning with the player to the dealer's left and continuing clockwise. These two cards are called the “thought” cards.

* Players look at their cards.

* The deal passes to the player to the dealer's left at the beginning of each round of play.

III. The Play

4. Order Of Play: Beginning with the dealer and moving in a clockwise direction (the player to the dealer's left), each player has a turn to make a play.

* The dealer must make the first bet, which can be any amount, subject to any minimum / maximum limits.

* Each player has the opportunity to either call the bet (match the current high bet), raise the bet (increase the current high bet, subject to any minimum / maximum limits) or fold (drop out of the current round of play).

* Any time there is a raise, the betting continues another round until each player has had a chance to call the recent high bet, raise it again, or fold.

* After the initial betting is completed, three cards are dealt with letters up, in the center of the table, which is referred to as the board. These first three cards are called the “shout.”

* The shout cards are community cards, meaning that all players will use them in combination with their thought cards to make the highest scoring word.

* From the shout on, betting begins with the player to the dealer's left, who can check (not bet) or bet. Each player must then call, raise, or fold (as explained above).

* After the betting is completed, a fourth card is dealt letter up on the board. The fourth card is called the “mumble” and is also a community card.

* Another round of betting occurs.

* A fifth and final card is dealt letter up on the board. The fifth card is called the “whisper” and is also a community card.

* A final round of betting occurs. The remaining players (who haven't folded previously) show their thought cards. Each player makes the highest scoring word from two to seven letters (their two thought cards and the other five that have been dealt on the board) in length.

* Once a player has declared his/her word for purposes of scoring, it cannot be changed.

(a) Winning The Round Of Play: The player who can make the highest scoring word, from two to seven letters in length is the winner. The winner then collects the pot and a new round of play begins.

* If all players are unable to make a word of at least two letters in length, the player with the highest cumulative card point total is the winner.

* If two or more players tie, they split the pot evenly.

IV. Wild Cards

5. Wild Card Use: A wild card (indicated in these rules as “” for designated blue wild card or “” for designated

red wild card) may be used in any word as any letter and color.

* A player using a wild card must announce what letter and color it represents.

(a) Wild Cards In Words: A word can contain any number of wild cards.

V. Challenging Words

6. Ruling Dictionary: Players should decide in advance which dictionary (whether in print or online) will be used to govern the game.

* All words used as part of speech may be used, with the exception of abbreviations, contractions, prefixes & suffixes used as a single word, words using an apostrophe and/or hyphen.

* Proper nouns (i.e. names) may not be used unless specifically required for category play (see rule #21). An example might be the category, "Names of United States Presidents," "Politics," "Religion," etc., where proper nouns would be necessary.

7. Limits To Challenging Words: Any player may challenge any other player's word.

* The challenge may include relevance, in the case of a category bonus.

* Category bonus challenges will be determined by all players voting. In the event of a tie vote, the challenger wins. There is no penalties for losing a category challenge. The challenged player's word remains unchanged, but not longer qualifies for a category bonus.

8. Legality Of Challenged Words: When a player challenges another player's word, the ruling dictionary is used to determine if the word is a legal word.

* If the challenged word is in the ruling dictionary and qualifies under these rules, the word is considered legal and the challenger loses the value of the pot divided by the number of players at the end of the round of play. For example, if the pot total was 100 and there were four players, the challenger would lose 25 points, chip value, etc. ($100 / 4 = 25$). The challenger would be required to add the 25 points, chips, etc. to the pot along with their ante at the beginning of the next round of play. If the challenger does not have the points required to add to the pot in the event of losing a challenge, the player would be eliminated from the game and all their points, chips, etc.) would be added to the pot in the next round of play.

* If the word is not legal, the player making the illegal word folds and loses the round of play.

9. Dictionary Restrictions: Players are restricted to using the ruling dictionary, which can only be consulted to determine legal words, and only upon a challenge, and only on the challenged word.

* Any violation of this rule will result in the player being in violation folding from the current round of play.

VI. Scoring

10. Scorekeeper: If points are to be used rather than chips or other types of marker, one of the players is designated as the scorekeeper. The scorekeeper verifies and records each player's score after each round play and keeps a running total for each player.

11. Letter Values: The value of each letter is listed below the corner letters on each card.

12. Wild Card Values: Wild cards count the same value as their designated letter values. For example, a wild card being used as the letter "Z" would have a point value of "15" in the word in which it is being used.

13. Bonus Letter Values: Any player making a word using two identical consecutive letters, results in each of the two letters receiving a bonus letter value.

* For example, if a player made the word "**BIGGER**" (letters are underlined for emphasis), both of the "G" letters would receive a bonus value.

* A player making the word "**GONG**" would not receive any bonus value, since the "G" letters were not being played consecutively (i.e. next to each other).

* *NOTE: The bonus letter values are based upon the color / letter combinations of the word – not the word itself.*

(a) Double Letter Bonus: If the two identical consecutive letters being played are blue (e.g. "**BIGGER**") or mixed colors (e.g. "**BIGGER**"), the letter values are both doubled (x2).

(b) Triple Letter Bonus: If the two identical consecutive letters being played are both blue with one of the two letters being a wild card (e.g. "**BIG^WER**") or the two letters being played are both red (e.g. "**BIGGER**"), the letter values are both tripled (x3).

(c) Quadruple Letter Bonus: If the two identical consecutive letters being played are both blue with both letters being wild cards (e.g. "**BI^W^WER**") or the two letters being played are both red with one of the two letters being a wild card (e.g. "**BIG^WER**"), the letter values are both quadrupled (x4).

(d) Quintuple Letter Bonus: If the two identical consecutive letters being played are both red with both letters being wild cards (e.g. "**BI^W^WER**"), the letter values are both quintupled (x5).

14. Word Values: The letter values of each word are added together to obtain the initial word value.

* Each word can contain a number of additional bonuses, which are combined to achieve a total word value that is used for scoring.

15. Flush Bonus: A bonus is awarded for certain “flush” words. A flush consists of a word in which all the letters are the same color.

* *There are only half as many red letters as there are blue letters, so flushes created with all red letters have a higher bonus value than those that are created with blue letters or mixed colors.*

(a) No Flush Bonus: A mixed color word (e.g. “ZIPS”) or a blue flush with no wild cards (e.g. “ZIPS”) has no flush bonus – the word value is unchanged.

(b) Double Flush Bonus: A blue flush with one or more wild cards (e.g. “ZIPS”) or a red flush with no wild cards (e.g. “ZIPS”) has a double flush bonus – the word value is doubled.

(c) Triple Flush Bonus: A red flush with one or more wild cards (e.g. “ZIPS”) has a triple flush bonus – the word value is tripled.

16. Flushes Using Wild Cards: A wild card played in any word retains its wild card status and can be used as any letter of either color.

17. Word Length Bonus Value: Words that are four or more letters in length receive a bonus value for length. The longer the word, the more bonus value it has.

* Use the following chart to determine word length bonus values:

Word Length Bonus Value										
Word Length	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bonus Value	0	1	2	4	8	16	32	64	128	256

(a) Maximum Word Length Bonus: The maximum word length bonus value is 8 points, since the longest any word can be in this game is seven letters.

(b) Adding Word Length Bonus Points: All word length bonus points are added to the word score prior to applying any double or triple flush bonuses (see rule #15).

* For example, if the total point value for a blue flush (e.g. “OXEN”) is 14 and the word is four letters in length, a word length bonus of 1 point would be added, for a combined word value of 15 points.

* Because the word is a blue flush with a wild card, the points would be doubled (i.e. $15 \times 2 = 30$ points).

18. Outburst Bonus: An outburst occurs when any player creates a word using all seven letters.

* An outburst receives a separate, one-time bonus of 75 points.

* This is a separate bonus that cannot be doubled or tripled and is added after all other values and bonuses have been calculated.

19. Exclamation Bonus: An exclamation occurs when any player spells “OMYWORD” using all seven letters.

* An exclamation receives a separate, one-time bonus of 100 points. The word counts as a valid word, even though it is not, and cannot be challenged.

* This is a separate bonus that cannot be doubled or tripled and is added after all other values and bonuses have been calculated.

20. Palindrome Bonus: A palindrome is a word that is spelled the same forwards and backwards (e.g. “MOM”, “DAD”, etc.).

* A palindrome receives a separate, one-time bonus of 5 points for the first 3 letters and 5 additional points for each letter thereafter.

* For example, the word “MOM” would receive 5 bonus points while “REDDER” would receive 20 bonus points. (i.e. “RED” = 5 + “DER” = 15).

* This is a separate bonus that cannot be doubled or tripled and is added after all other values and bonuses have been calculated.

21. Category Bonus: The dealer of any round may decide if a bonus category is to be used during the game.

* The category can be anything the dealer chooses, such as “Oceanic,” “School,” “Animals,” “Garden,” etc.

* A category bonus occurs when a player spells a word that is included in the category.

* A category word receives a separate, one-time bonus of 10 points.

* For example, if the category is “Oceanic,” words such as “EEL,” “FISH,” “CRAB,” “SEAL,” “SHARK,” etc. would all be included in the category and receive a bonus.

* This is a separate bonus that cannot be doubled or tripled and is added after all other values and bonuses have been calculated.

VII. Scoring Summary

22. Scoring System / Guide: Because there are so many different ways to score points, the following system / guide should be used to assist in scoring points;

(a) Each Play: Using the word “BIGGER” as an example, scoring each play should proceed as follows:

(i) Establish Any Bonus Letter Values: In this example, the “G” results in both “G” letters (include the “G” as a “G”) receiving triple letter value (see rule #13b). Each “G” has a value of 3, so the triple letter value is 9 points each.

(ii) **Establish Word Value:** Continuing with this example, each letter of the word has the following values; **B**=4, **I**=1, **G**=9, **⊗**=9, **E**=1, **R**=2 for a word value of 26 points (4 + 1 + 9 + 9 + 1 + 2 = 26).

(iii) **Establish Word Length Bonus Points:** Continuing with this example, the word “**BIG⊗ER**” is six letters in length, so the word length bonus is 4 points (see rule #17), which is then added to the total word value of 26 points for a combined word value of 30 points.

(iv) **Establish Any Bonus Word Values:** Continuing with this example, the word “**BIG⊗ER**” is a blue flush with a wild card and receives a double flush bonus (see rule #15b). The 30 points (total word value thus far) would be doubled for a new combined word value of 60 total points.

(v) **Establish Outburst / Exclamation / Palindrome / Category Bonuses:** Since the word “**BIG⊗ER**” did not use all seven letters, there is no outburst bonus.

* The word “**BIG⊗ER**” is not “OMYWORD,” so there is no exclamation bonus.

* Because the word “**BIG⊗ER**” is not a palindrome, there is no palindrome bonus.

*Had the category announced by the dealer been something like “Dimensions,” the word “**BIG⊗ER**” would have qualified for a category bonus. In the example of “Oceanic” as the category, there would be no category bonus.

* Continuing with this example, the total play resulted in a score of 60 points. If there had been an outburst, exclamation, palindrome or category bonus, the bonus points would be added to the word value after all the previous scoring had been done.

VIII. End of Game

23. Ending The Game: The game ends when any of the following occur:

(a) **Going Out:** One player has forced all other players out of the game by winning all the points, chips, etc.

(b) **Score:** A predetermined score has been reached during play.

(c) **Time Limit:** A predetermined time limit has been reached.

24. Winning The Game: The winner is the player with the highest chip/point total at the end of the game.

(a) **Tie Breaker:** In the event of a tie score at the end of the game (i.e. a predetermined score or time limit is reached – rule #23a or 23b), the winner will be determined by the players who tied playing an additional round until one player has more chips / points.

IX. Optional

25. Rule Changes: These are the official rules for playing “Word For Word.” If you ever compete in an official tournament, these rules will govern play.

* However, when you're playing leisurely, you may choose to modify or even ignore some of the rules to suit your particular style of play.

* For example, you may choose to ignore rule #6 altogether and use the dictionary to look up words at any time during the game, rather than challenges only.

* The main factor is that you and your fellow players have fun and enjoy playing this game and the many other variations of “Oh My Word.”

* If you come up with some of your own variation(s) that work well, send us an email and let us know.

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