

PROLIX

rulebook

COMPONENTS

- 77 letter tiles
 - 1 cloth bag
 - 1 game board
 - 5 pencils
 - Set of scoresheets for 1-player games and 2-player games.
 - Set of scoresheets for 3-player games and 4- or 5-player games.
 - 45-second sand timer
-



9+



1-5



30-45
min.

OVERVIEW

In Prolix, players score points by coming up with words whose letters match those of the tiles on the board. Unlike other word games, you don't need all the letters of a word to be on the board to use that word. This means that you are free to use all those words you always wanted to use in other word games, but were always a few tiles or cards short! Of course, the letters in your word won't score if they aren't on the board, so even huge words can be stinkers if you don't use them at the right time.

Letters score based on how rare they are and where they are on the board. Once you finish scoring your letters, all tiles move across the board, changing their value.

If you have a great word, but it's not your turn, you're allowed to interrupt another player's turn and score. But be careful, because you can lose points by interrupting with low-scoring words. And, of course, other players can interrupt your turn if they wish, or even pressure you to say a word by flipping the timer.

A 3-player game takes 6 rounds, and a 4- or 5-player game takes 5 rounds. At the end of the game, the player with the most points wins.

These rules will focus on the 3-, 4-, and 5-player games. The 1- and 2-player variants are discussed at the end of this rulebook.

A quick note about the 5-player game: it can be quite nasty. Interrupts fly left and right. A table of inexperienced players should try a 3- or 4-player game before attempting the 5-player game.



SETUP

Put the 77 tiles in the bag. Determine a start player by having each player draw a tile from the bag. The player who draws a letter closest to A goes first (remember there are no A tiles, as there are no vowels among the tiles). Redraw all ties. Return all the tiles back to the bag.

Rotate the board so it faces the start player.

Give each player a scoresheet and a pencil. Be sure to use the correct scoresheet. The scoresheets are double-sided, so be sure to flip them over if you can't find what you're looking for.

Set the sand timer next to the game board within easy reach of all players.

Players should agree to a reference in which they can look up challenges.

The player to the right of the start player takes the tile bag and puts one tile onto each of the eight spaces on the board (see below).



Important: There can never be more than two of the rare (blue and/or red) tiles, or more than two of the same tile out on the board at any time of the game. If you draw an unplayable tile during setup, set it aside and keep redrawing until you get a playable tile. Once you've set up the board, put any drawn unplayable tiles back into the bag.

GAMEPLAY

When it's your turn, you are the active player. You take four steps during your turn.

- 1 Say a word
- 2 Score the word
- 3 Advance all tiles
- 4 Draw 2 tiles

1 SAY A WORD

Start by announcing a single word. There are two basic restrictions on the word you can announce:

1. No *proper*, *hyphenated*, or *capitalized* words are allowed. No words with apostrophes are allowed either.
2. No cheapies! You can't use a word with the same spelling as a word that someone already announced. You also can't add or remove some suffixes from words that were already used.

For examples and clarifications of this second restriction, please see the **No Cheapies!** section.

Note that if you take too long during this step, you might get the timer flipped on you, or you might be Interrupted. For details on both, please see **The Timer** and **Interrupts**.

2 SCORE THE WORD

Flip each tile that corresponds to a letter in your announced word. Remember that you don't need all the letters in a word present on the board in order to use that word!

For each tile flipped, you score the point value shown in that tile's column. If the tile shows a bonus value, then you score that as well.

Each tile only counts once for a used letter. If there is more than one tile that can be flipped for a letter, then you get to choose the tile to flip.

If a letter is repeated in a word, and there is more than one tile on the board for that letter, then you can flip one tile for each letter used.

The tiles do not need to be in any particular order on the board to be included in a word.

Write your word and the amount it scores in the top part of your scoresheet.



Figure 2: An example of scoring 15 points for the word "jewelers," using the same board previously shown. The W scores 5 points (4 from the column and 1 from the bonus), the J scores 5 points (3 from the column and 2 from the bonus), the S scores 3 points, and the L scores 2 points.

3 ADVANCE ALL TILES

Each tile now moves one column to the right. As you move the tiles, flip any used tiles back over so they show the side with the small letter again.

Tiles in the rightmost column are discarded and returned to the game box.



Figure 3: All letters have been moved one column to the right, and the C and D tiles have been drawn and placed into the leftmost column.

4 DRAW 2 TILES FROM THE BAG

Rotate the board so it faces the next player. This way, the board should always face the player whose turn it is.

Draw two tiles from the bag and place them in the first (leftmost 4-point) column.

Once you place the second tile onto the board, the next player's turn immediately starts.

Remember, there can never be more than two rare (blue and/or red) letters or more than two of the same kind of tile out on the board at any time. If you draw an unplayable tile, set it aside and keep redrawing until you get a playable tile. Then return any set aside tiles to the bag.

If the bag is out of playable tiles when you try to draw tiles, take all the discarded tiles from the box and mix them all up back into the bag. Then resume drawing tiles.

NO CHEAPIES!

There are five restrictions on words based on other words already used in the game.

1. You can't use a word with exactly the same spelling as a previously played word. It doesn't matter if the meaning or pronunciation of your word is different. If one player uses "jumper," you can't use "jumper" later in the same game, even if you mean the article of clothing instead of a person jumping. If one player uses "articulate" with the last syllable rhyming with "what," you can't use "articulate" with the last syllable rhyming with "late" later in the same game, even though the pronunciation of your word is different.

2. You can't change the pluralization of a previously played word. If someone uses "wrench," you can't use "wrenches," or vice versa. The same restriction applies to non-standard pluralizations. "Goose" to "geese" isn't allowed, nor is "gypsies" to "gypsy."

3. You can't change the tense of a previously played word. If someone uses "jumped," you can't use "jump" later in the same game, or vice versa. The same restriction applies to non-standard past tenses, like "dive" to "dove," or vice versa.

4. You can't add or remove "-ly" to or from the end of a previously played word. If someone uses "jubilantly," you can't use "jubilant" later in the same game, or vice versa.

5. You can't add or remove "-ing" to or from the end of a previously played word. If someone uses "begrudging," you can't use "begrudge" later in the same game, or vice versa.

These rules all apply to each other. So if someone plays "begrudging," you can't play "begrudged" in the same game.

All other modifications to previously-played words are allowed.

INTERRUPTS

If you see a word that you want to use during another player's turn, you are allowed to interrupt and use the word yourself! However, interrupts score fewer points than they normally would, so you should only interrupt when it's worth it.

At the end of the game, some of your interrupts will replace your lowest scores. The switch will happen whether or not the interrupts score more than the word they replace. Use your interrupts with care!

To interrupt someone's turn, immediately say your word. You cannot interrupt someone before the previous player has placed the two tiles on the board to end his turn, and you cannot interrupt someone after he has said his word. You cannot interrupt your own turn.

If you interrupt someone's turn, announce and count the value of your word, and move the tiles normally as described above. However, you will record the word and its value in the middle part of your scoresheet.

Next, subtract points from the word's value. The penalty depends on the number of people in the game.

- Subtract 2 points from the word's value if you're playing a 3-player game.
- Subtract 3 points from the word's value if you're playing a 4- or 5-player game.

Write the difference in the Score column. That is the interrupting word's score.

If this was the first time the active player was interrupted this turn, then after your word is scored, move the tiles as you normally would at the end of your turn. The player to the active player's right draws two new tiles from the bag. The active player now gets to say a word again.

If this was the second time the player was interrupted this turn, then his turn is over! He records a zero for this round, moves the tiles, and the next player takes his or her turn. The interrupted player should not lose heart, though; that zero can be replaced by one of his own Interrupts at the end of the game (see the End of Game section).

In the rare situation that a player uses all his interrupts, he is out of the game. He will not take any more turns, and he may not interrupt for the rest of the game. At the end of the game, he will score only the total of all his interrupts, as they will have replaced all his scoring opportunities (see the End of Game section). This is an unusual scenario, and it rarely turns out well!

THE TIMER

If you feel that a player is taking a long time on his turn, and you don't think there are any worthwhile words to interrupt with, you can flip the sand timer. That gives him 45 seconds to come up with a word.

If the timer is in the middle of a table and not running during a player's turn, anyone who isn't the active player may take the timer in front of him and flip it. This player, who will now have the timer running in front of him, may not interrupt. Any other non-active player may still interrupt while the timer is running.

If the active player can't come up with a word before the timer runs out, he is interrupted by the timer. Move all the letters on the board as if another player had interrupted him. If this is the first time he has been interrupted, then he gets to play again. If this is the second time he has been interrupted, then his turn is over, whether his first Interrupt was from a player or the timer.

PROLIX 4-5 PLAYERS

REGULAR SCORING

| ROUND | WORD | SCORE |
|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | Maximiger | 17 |
| 2 | | 0 |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |

At the end of the game, cross out one fewer word in your Regular Scoring Section than the number of times you interrupted.

INTERRUPT SCORING

| WORD | VALUE | PENALTY | SCORE |
|--------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Convolutated | 19 | - 3 | 16 |
| | | - 3 | |
| | | - 3 | |
| | | - 3 | |
| | | - 3 | |
| | | - 3 | |

At the end of the game, cross out one fewer word in your Regular Scoring Section than the number of times you interrupted.

TIEBREAKERS

| WORD | SCORE |
|------|-------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

TOTALS

TURN ORDER:

1. Say a word
2. Score the word
3. Advance all tiles
4. Draw two tiles

CHALLENGES

GRAND TOTAL

Figure 4: A player's scoresheet in the middle of a 4-player game. This player had interrupted with the word "convolutated," which scored 19 points. After the penalty, this will be 16 points. Since this word interrupted another player's turn, it's written in the middle part of his scoresheet, not the topmost Regular Scoring section. Note that this player had the misfortune to be interrupted twice in the second round, so he had been forced to score zero for that round. But with a 16-point interrupt potentially replacing that zero, he's not in bad shape.

If the active player comes up with a word or is interrupted while the timer is running, then the word is scored normally. After the drawing player draws two new tiles, he moves the timer back to the middle of the table, whether or not it's running.

A player can't start the timer after a player has announced his word, or before the two new tiles have been drawn to start a player's turn. It can't be flipped during a challenge either.

If there is a challenge raised or an Interrupt announced while the timer is running, then move the timer back to the middle of the table. It can't be flipped again until it has run out. The timer has no bearing on the result of the challenge.

If the timer runs out while it's in the middle of the table (i.e. not in front of a player, because of a challenge or an Interrupt), it has no effect on a player's turn, other than the fact that it can now be flipped.

TIEBREAKER

If two or more players say their words at the same time, then they have to go to a tiebreaker. If one player is finishing his word just as another player has started saying his word, it still requires a tiebreaker.

All tied players write their words down on their scoresheets, in the bottom "Tiebreaker" part.

Then they score each word. Do not move tiles to the next column as these words are being scored. Each tile should score the same amount for every tied player.

Now, compare the value of all the tied players' words. When you look at the value of an interrupting player's word for tiebreaker purposes, take the value before the penalty, not after.

If the active player has the most valuable word, then he gets to count his word as normal.

If an interrupting player has the most valuable word, then he gets to count his word as an Interrupt. It will be scored just like any other interrupting word, including getting a -2 or -3 penalty.

If all the tied players' words are the same value, and one of the tied players is the active player, then the active player wins the tie. If there are several tied interrupting players and only one of them has the best word, then only he gets to score his word. If there is more than one interrupting player with the best word, then all tied interrupting players get to score their words.

All tied players' words are considered "used" for the purposes of the No Cheapies rule.

Once the tiebreaker is resolved, move the tiles across the board as you normally would after a word is scored.

CHALLENGES

If someone uses a word that you don't think exists, then you can challenge it. Play stops immediately during a challenge, so no one can announce an interrupt or flip the timer at this time, though players can certainly think of words while they wait.

If half of the players not involved in the challenge (*rounded up*) recognize the word, then the challenge fails.

Otherwise, look up the word in the reference you agreed to use at the start of the game. If you can't find the word, then the challenge succeeds. If you can find it in the reference, the challenge fails.

If the challenge succeeds, then the challenged player can't use that word. If he is the active player, he continues to take his turn. If he was interrupting, he may interrupt again with a different word. Other players may immediately interrupt.

If the challenge fails, then the word counts.

At the end of the game, each player loses 2 points for each failed challenge.

If the timer was running during the challenge, move it to the middle of the table. It can be re-flipped once it runs out.

END OF THE GAME

A 3-player game takes six rounds. A 4- or 5-player game takes five rounds. A round is complete once all players have filled out the same number of scores along the top parts of their scoresheets. Remember that some of those scores can be zeroes if anyone has been interrupted twice in a row.

Players who have completed the left sides of their scoresheets can continue to interrupt other players until the game ends.

Once the game ends, players add up their points. To do this, count the number of times you interrupted during the game. You must then cross out a number of scores in your Regular Scoring section based on the number of times you interrupted. Be sure to cross out your lowest-scoring words, especially zeroes you may have received from being interrupted twice.

In a 3-player game, you cross out one word in your Regular Scoring section for each word in your Interrupt Scoring section. So if you interrupted 3 times, cross out 3 words in your Regular Scoring section.

In a 4- or a 5-player game, cross out one fewer word in your Regular Scoring section than the number of times you interrupted. So if you interrupted 3 times, cross out 2 words in your Regular Scoring section.

Note that you score six words in a 4- or a 5-player game, even though there are only five rounds. This means that you will want to interrupt at least once in a 4- or a 5-player game!

Then, add up the remaining Regular Scoring words. Add up the scores in the Interrupt Scoring part of your scoresheet. Sum those totals together and subtract points you lost from challenges to come up with your final score.

Reminder: It is possible to lose points from your Interrupts if you're not careful!

The player with the most points wins. In case of a tie, the tied player with the highest-scoring single word wins. For the purposes of this tiebreaker, include scores from words used as Interrupts without the Interrupt penalty.

If there's still a tie, compare the tied players' second-highest single word scores, and so on, until the tie is broken. If the tie stubbornly persists, then the players share the victory.

TIPS

- As a very general rule of thumb, try to net at least 15 points with each word. This is especially true when deciding if it's worth it to Interrupt.
- Don't forget about words that start with vowels, or that start with consonants which aren't on the board.
- Scoring a zero for a round isn't terrible, unless you don't have Interrupts with which to replace it. It isn't unusual to have a player score a zero for a round and still win the game.
- On the other hand, a low-scoring Interrupt is bad. Make sure your Interrupts are worth plenty of points before diving in. You want all your Interrupts to be worth more points than the words they replace. If an inexperienced player interrupts with a low score, allow him or her to take it back.

PROLIX

4-5 PLAYERS

| REGULAR SCORING | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| ROUND | WORD | SCORE |
| 1 | giving | 18 |
| 2 | flummoxed | 17 |
| 3 | | 0 |
| 4 | plucky | 16 |
| 5 | scrapbooking | 20 |

At the end of the game, cross out one fewer word in your Regular Scoring Section than the number of times you interrupted.

| INTERRUPT SCORING | | | |
|-------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| WORD | VALUE | PENALTY | SCORE |
| picnicking | 20 | -3 | 17 |
| hurdled | 17 | -3 | 14 |
| | | -3 | |
| | | -3 | |
| | | -3 | |
| | | -3 | |

At the end of the game, cross out one fewer word in your Regular Scoring Section than the number of times you interrupted.

| TIEBREAKERS | |
|-------------|-------|
| WORD | SCORE |
| | |
| | |
| | |

TOTALS

71

TURN ORDER:

1. Say a word
2. Score the word
3. Advance all tiles
4. Draw two tiles

31

CHALLENGES

1 -2

GRAND TOTAL

100

Figure 5: A sample scoresheet at the end of a 4-player game. This player interrupted twice with the words "picnicking" and "hurdled." Note that this player lost 2 points from a failed challenge. She also had the misfortune to have been interrupted twice in the third round, so she lost that turn. Fortunately, that zero is the score she got to cross out from her interrupts.

- In the 4-player and 5-player games, you will score six words, because one of your Interrupts will count in your final score. So make sure you Interrupt at least once, plus once for each zero you're forced to take.

- There may be some games where you flip the timer like crazy. There may be others where you never touch it at all. It all depends on the players and the tiles on the board.

VARIANTS

1 player

In the 1-player game, one player tries to stay alive through six rounds, trying to get the best possible score. You stay alive by trying to beat a minimum cumulative score each round.

Set up the board normally, but use the special 1-player scoresheet. Once you set up the board, immediately flip the timer.

You now have 45 seconds to come up with your first word. You may write as many words in the scratch area as you like.

If the timer runs out and you haven't started writing your word in the scoring area yet, you must use the last word in your scratch area.

Now score your word, and add it to your running total for the whole game. Compare your cumulative score to the target score for the round. If your total score is equal to or greater than the target score, go on to the next round. If it isn't, you immediately lose the game!

If you live to see another round, move the tiles across the board. This is just like the regular rules, except that you will discard the four tiles in the two rightmost columns, move the remaining letters over two columns, and draw four new letters. Then flip the timer and come up with a new word.

The game ends after the sixth round. If you have at least 105 points, consider yourself a winner!

2 players



In the 2-player game, both players puzzle over the same board simultaneously. Speed helps, but seeing the best word is key. And a player with a big lead must overcome a handicap to beat his opponent.

To set up, place the tiles on the board as usual. Use the special 2-player scoresheets.

There are no interrupts or individual turns. Each round, both players simultaneously look at the board and try to come up with the best word. The player with the best word each round gets a Mark. The first player to get 5 Marks wins the game.

When a player thinks he has a good word, he writes it on his scoresheet and flips the timer in front of him. The other player now has 45 seconds to write down a word. Once a player has flipped the timer, he may not change the word he wrote down.

When the timer finishes, both players score their words. One player may have to subtract a handicap (see below). The player with the highest-scoring word gets the Mark. If both words are tied, the player who flipped the timer gets the Mark.

Before you start the next round, see if one player has more Marks than the other player. If so, that player must deal with a handicap the following round. His word will be worth fewer points on the following round. The handicap is equal to the number of Marks the leader has, minus the number of Marks the other player has.

For example, Amanda leads Brian, 2 Marks to 1 Mark. Next round, Amanda's word will be worth 1 point less. If Amanda wins that Mark anyway, she will lead 3 Marks to 1 Mark, and her next word will be worth 2 points less.

Note that only the player who has more Marks in a round will have the handicap. The trailing player has no handicap.

Before the next round, move the tiles across the board. This is just like the regular rules, except that you will discard the four tiles in the two rightmost columns, move the remaining letters over two columns, and draw four new letters. Then move onto the next turn.

If one player challenges another player's word, the player who wins the challenge gets the Mark for that round.

The first player to get 5 Marks wins the game.

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