

HOW TO PLAY

T O S S W O R D S

Equipment:

Two sets of 26 letter tiles – one per player or team

One game sheet

Two dice -- one for regular play, the other for advanced play or handicapping

Two writing strips with a whiteboard-like finish

Two black pens

Preparation:

Each player/team places their 26 letter tiles face-down. Players flip a coin (or something like that) to decide who moves first.

Objective:

To be the first player or team to “retire” their complete set of 26 letter tiles

Making a move:

A move starts with a random choice of two or more tiles and a toss of the die.

1) Retiring two tiles

Suppose first that two tiles are chosen. To retire them, all you have to do is come up with a word that contains both letters *such that the number of spaces between the letters equals the number shown on the die*. (A toss of “0” means that the two letters must be adjacent.)

For example, suppose your two tiles turn out to be C and T. You toss the die and it comes up a “3.” You can then retire the C and T if you produce a word such as TRANCE, because there are precisely three spaces between the T and the C. You can demonstrate your word (sometimes opponents like proof!) by placing the two tiles on the 12×1 strip and then writing in the remaining letters.

		T	R	A	N	C	E				
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Note: The order of the letters doesn’t matter, and they can be anywhere within the word.

2) Retiring three or more tiles

It is possible to retire more than two tiles on a single move (an attempt to catch up or maybe pad your lead!), and here's where things get more challenging. If you choose more than two tiles, you must designate two of them as the "key tiles" prior to turning them over – these must be separated by the toss of the die, as before. But now you face an additional constraint: *The word you come up with must contain any and all extra tiles.* For example, suppose your key tiles were I and K, and you also chose a P. If the die came up a 2, you could retire all three as follows:



Retired tiles are placed in the appropriate slots on the game sheet – but if no word can be found, the player's move is over, the chosen tiles are returned face-down to the pile, and play continues.

The first player or team to retire all 26 tiles is the winner!

A few fine points:

- It's not a bad idea to place some sort of time limit for each move – a minute sounds about right. Which leads to the following interactive variation: If the time limit is exceeded and the **other** player or team **immediately** comes up with a word that works, they can return one of their opponent's retired tiles to the original pile. (In the old days, the game would include a sand timer; nowadays, you have your phone and know what to do!)
- You can't retire only one tile on a given move – if you're down to three tiles at the end of the game, you need to retire them all!
- It's not a bad idea to place some sort of time limit for each move -- maybe a minute? Sounds about right. Which leads to the following interactive variation: If the time limit is exceeded and the **other** player or team **immediately** comes up with a word that works, they can return one of their opponent's retired tiles to the original pile. (In the old days, the game would include a sand timer; nowadays, you have your phone and know what to do!)

- Words used in TOSSWORDS must be between three and twelve letters. (You may have already figured out that two-letter words could only arise if you rolled a “0” and discovered that your two chosen letters happened to form a word. Still, show some class and make a longer word – it will always be possible!) As for the twelve-letter upper limit, that’s the length of the writing strip!
- Proper nouns aren’t permitted. And don’t try using your S tile by creating a plural -- that’s unacceptable, and if you try it, your opponent is entitled to pour a bowl of soup on your head. (Just checking to see if you’re still reading.)
- As you may have noticed, TOSSWORDS is intended to be played one-on-one or with teams -- if you have three people, you might as well play *Scrabble*. Oh, wait, check that. Just kidding. Play TOSSWORDS two-on-one instead . . . which leads to the next bullet point!
- The 12-faced die is intended as a way to equalize the game – it looks hard and it certainly *can* be hard. So, if you’re parents competing with your precocious yet vulnerable 10-year-old twins, try handicapping yourselves with the 12-faced die. Its faces are numbered 0-10 and work just as before, while the blank space is a wild card and can represent any number you’d like. See – it’s not *all* bad!
- Although TOSSWORDS has plenty of catch-up potential, having the first move can be considered an advantage. To even things out, you can . . . 1) Agree to a draw if the second player/team retires all their tiles immediately after the first one does, or, even better, 2) Switch positions and play another game!