98-252
Wordplay: Fundamentals of Scrabble Strategy

Lesson 4: Board control

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Definitions

- Open
- Closed
- Variability
- Board control
Board Control

- When to play open/closed:
  - Playing style preference (your/opps)
  - Relative skill levels/vocabulary
  - Current score
    - Expected value vs. win probability
Example 1a: Too open to exchange

Rack: ACEIIRU
Example 1b: Closed!

Rack: ACEIIRU
Example 2: First move placement

Rack: BEEEOOWY
Example 2: First move placement

8F OBEY 18
Example 2: First move placement

9F MAX 31
Example 2: First move placement

8G OBEY 18
Example 2: First move placement

9G MAX 51
Bluffing (playing phonies)

• Good conditions:
  – Your word knowledge > opp's
  – Opp has left other phonies on
  – Opp has just challenged and lost
  – Fake bluff (waiting for bingo place)

• Bad conditions:
  – The last turn (NEVER play a phony!)

• Remember: playing a phony and getting challenged reveals your tiles!
Challenging

• HOLD first! (20 seconds)

• Good conditions:
  – Your word knowledge > opp's
  – Opp has played other phonies
  – Opp's play makes it impossible for you to win
  – Fake challenge (waiting for bingo place)
  – The last play (ALWAYS challenge!)

• Bad conditions:
  – Phony improves board for you
Challenging Bingos

• Bingos often:
  – “Seal the deal” (guarantee a win)
  – Open up the board

• People play phonies more when losing

• We have a natural desire to “catch” phonies

• Estimate the probability; calculate the average result in either case – be rational!
Anagram challenge!

- BEEORWY
- AEELNVS
- EILPRST
- AEPRTY?
- EHINSU?