



A blog for fans of Bananagrams, word games, puzzles, and amazing things

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2009

So I played the online version of Bananagrams...

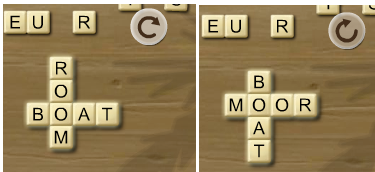
I finally played the Facebook version of Bananagrams. (I suspect that the other versions (Bebo and MySpace) are basically the same.) It is a Flash application with a colorful interface and sound effects.

At first I trained on "Solo Cafe", a timed solitaire game where all the letters were revealed at the beginning. The first game I got an easy set of letters and was basically struggling with the mouse controls. I then played a few more games, doing a bit worse. Finally I was able to beat my initial time (by about 50%), so I figured maybe I was ready to try playing against live opponents.

I was faced with a screen showing many games in progress and one that was waiting for enough players to start. I clicked on the "waiting" one, which may have been a mistake because as soon as it came up on my screen the game started. I think there were four other people in the game at the beginning. I didn't have much time to look at what was going on in the sidebar (where you can see pictures of your opponents and very tiny depictions of their live grids). I did notice when one guy exited the game as there was some kind of brief pop-up notification. (Seeing the grids and remaining letters of one's opponents in a heads-up display would be a nice option for meatspace Bananagrams.) I was the first to finish with all of my letters, but then I realized that the game wasn't over. (Playing Solo Cafe had acclimated me to not peeling.) So I clicked on the pile of tiles in the upper left corner to start peeling. About five peels in, other players caught up. As my surplus letters piled up, I found a way to form them into words, and so I was the last to peel, leaving just two tiles in the bunch. I found a place for the last tile and clicked on the just-materialized banana icon in triumph.

The challenge is adjusting to the mouse control. As far as I can tell, there is no keyboard control. You can click on the letter you want and drag the tile to where you want it. You can also select many tiles by clicking on the table and dragging to form a selection rectangle.

You can then drag the group of tiles together. Also, immediately after selection a circle with a curved arrow in it appears near the group of letters. If you click on the circle, the group of tiles will rotate 90 degrees clockwise, like this:



Once learned, these tools would be useful when major grid-restructuring is necessary. Elite online Bananagrams players are probably separated by subtle mastery of the interface and selection/rotation tricks.

I can imagine that implementing the controls differently would make the game much easier. Imagine, for instance, that you click with the mouse where you want to place a letter and then type the letter that you want there. And then if you type the next letter in the word, it should automatically be placed, too.

From posts about surveys on gameplay, I suspect that the interface will be improving in the future. Aside from the interface issues, online Bananagrams resembles offline Bananagrams in one important regard: it is a addictive and quite fun.

Further reading: You might also enjoy reading [my review of an online speed Scrabble game](#).

Also: tips on [how to improve your Bananagrams performance](#) and [the longest word that you can make in Bananagrams](#).

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Ba-nan-a-grams *n.* a word game like Scrabble without the board or the racks or the big cardboard box or the scoring or the waiting

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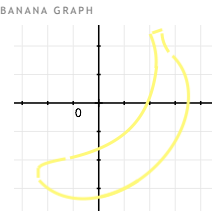
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SURLY TEABAG

Efficiency freak:
Refers to himself in
the third person.

Often drops the subject of the
sentence. Only reads the first half of
palindromes.

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