98-252
Wordplay: Fundamentals of Scrabble Strategy

Lesson 4: Board control

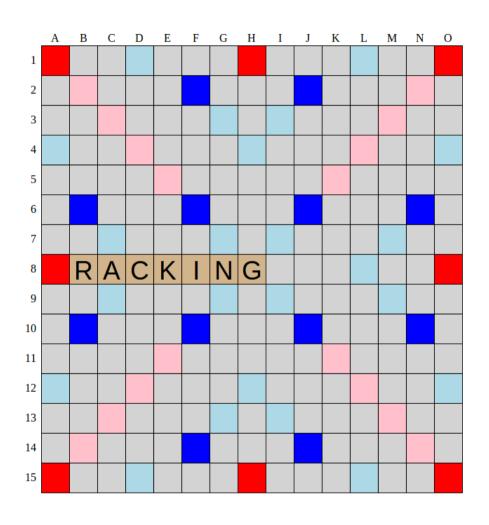March 17, 2016
Jemmin Chang

Definitions

- Open
- Closed
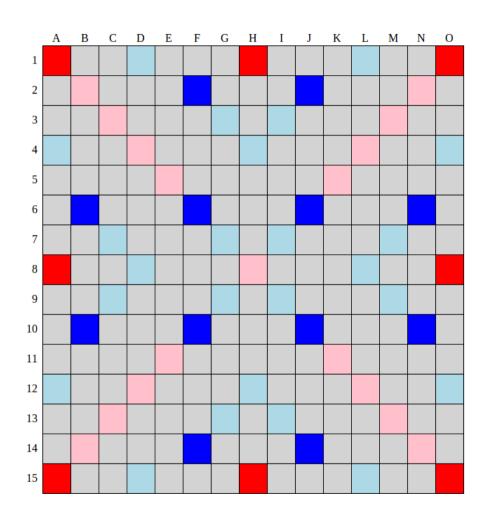- Variability
- Board control

Board Control

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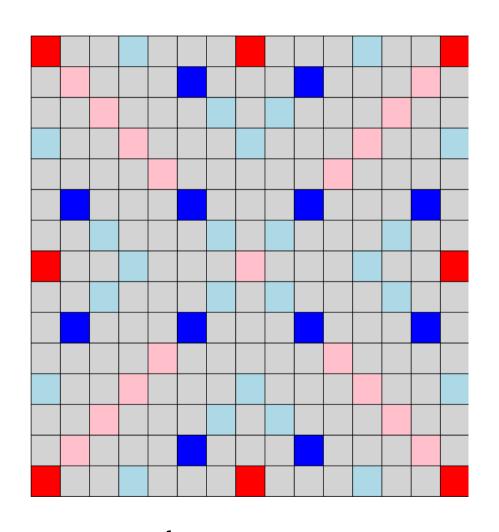
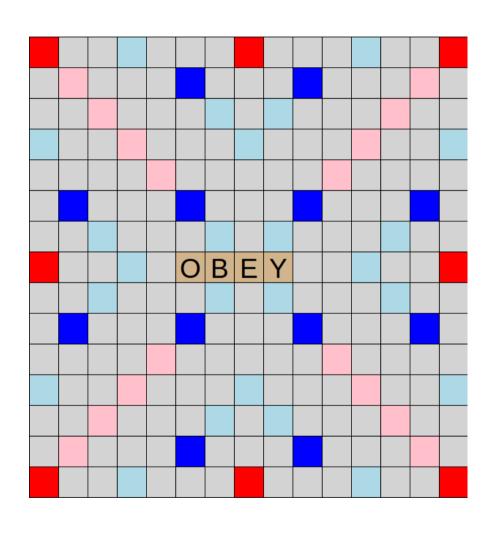# Example 1a: Too open to exchange

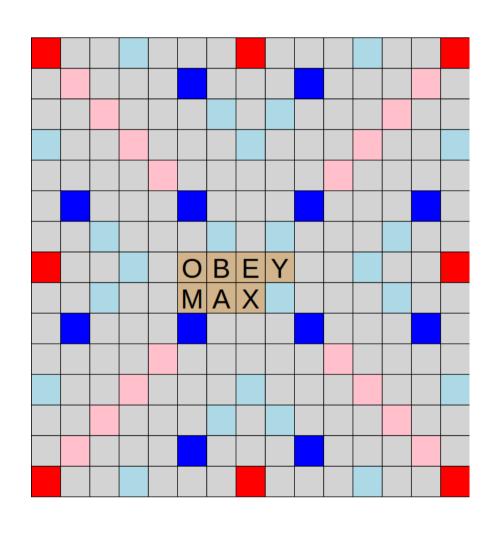Rack: ACEIIRU

Example 1b: Closed!
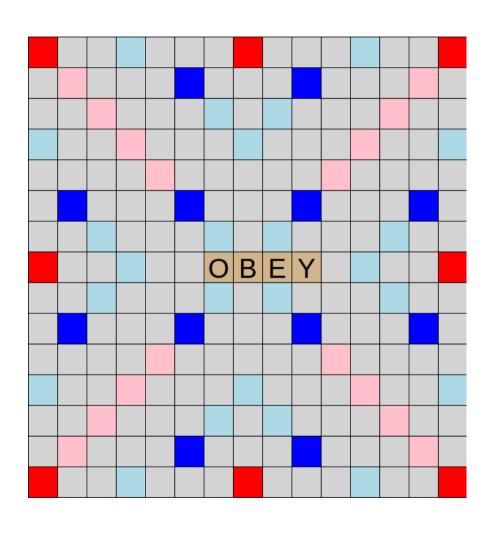

Rack: ACEIIRU

Example 2: First move placement

Rack: BEEEOWY

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
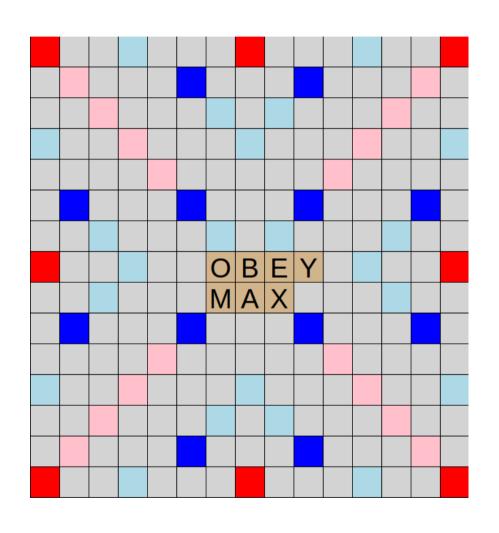

9G MAX 51

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?