



What's Your Scrabble Strategy? Andrew Talks About One of His Favorite Board Games

Scrabble has long been a favorite game of mine. I love to read and learn new words to expand my vocabulary, so it's no surprise that this word-building game is a top choice for me. My wife and I used to play a lot before we had kids, though now we tend to play more family-friendly games that even our youngest can participate in. He's a big Uno aficionado at the moment.

I bring up the famous tile-letter word game because the first week of August is National Scrabble Week. While there are so many board games, video games, and other types of entertainment on the market, Scrabble has really become a classic. It retains its place in many households as a favorite board game.

I've been playing since at least high school. I remember taking a Scrabble board and a dictionary to a local coffee shop to play for hours with my friends. If you've ever played, you know that a dictionary is essential to have for when a player challenges another player's word. And we could never bet on one being nearby, so we brought our own. Most people would just use their phones nowadays, but I still like thumbing through those alphabetized pages to look up words.

Challenging and learning new words was one interesting part of the game for me. Part of my love of playing is seeing my opponent's strategy and how expansive their vocabulary is. Serious Scrabble players often memorize two- and three-letter words to maximize their points and where they can play on the board, but I take a different approach. I just like to see what words I can fish out of my brain with the seven tiles on my rack and the letters currently on the board.

I've also tried out Words With Friends, a Scrabble-like game made for smartphones. Though I prefer sitting down to the actual board



game, I've also played some games on the app and enjoyed them. I learned a lot more two-letter words that way, and it's nice that you can play with someone on your own schedule when you have a moment to log on and play a word.

Scrabble isn't the only word game that has the ability to captivate my attention. I have fond memories of working on The New York Times' weekly crossword puzzle at my first legal job. We'd use our break time and lunch hour in the conference room to work on the daily crossword. The NYT puzzles get progressively harder throughout the week. Sunday is the holy grail, but since we worked Monday through Friday, it was always our goal to knock out the Friday puzzle — the hardest one published during the workweek — before we left for the weekend.

These days, most of my bonding over games happens while playing Monopoly or Uno with my family. My youngest son is 6, and he gets on these amazing winning streaks with Uno. It's fun to see him and my other two kids enjoy the same game. My wife and I overhear some good-natured trash-talking about the "draw 4" card. While we try our best to get the kids outside as much as we can in the summer, games are a great way to beat the heat or spend time together as a family in the evening. I'm just biding my time until my kids are old enough to take on their dad in a friendly game of Scrabble.

"I remember taking a Scrabble board and a dictionary to a local coffee shop to play for hours with my friends."

- Andrew M. Ayers

Have Celebrity Divorces Always Been Crazy?

What is it about celebrity marriages — and their subsequent endings — that fascinates society? Depending on how you measure, telling the stories of makeups and breakups is a multibillion-dollar industry for media organizations online, in print, and on TV. Are we really that hungry for nasty headlines? Or is something deeper going on in the human psyche?

In the last 12 months, we've seen some of the worst marriage breakups in Hollywood history, but Amber Heard and Johnny Depp's libel suit took center stage. As usual, "Whom do you believe?" was the question of the day, but it became obvious that both parties needed a therapist to work through serious emotional problems but tried unsuccessfully to do it on their own, instead.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the Heard/Depp trial was the violence that seemed to pervade their daily lives. But that's nothing new; in fact, the violent behavior of both partners is likely what drew so much attention in the first place.



That was certainly the case with O.J. Simpson's breakup with his wife, which didn't get half the headlines her murder would (and the "trial of the century" that followed) two years later.

You could argue, though, that we're getting better. When we look at the roots of the "celebrity divorce" phenomenon, it goes back in time to the realm of myth. The gods of Greece and Rome were always leaving each other and getting back together, a clear indication of the drama that interested our ancestors. But the most famous celebrity divorce of the pre-19th century (and perhaps of all time) was Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. It had all the hallmarks of modern public breakups: People took one side or the other, with other parties still "shipping" Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry and Catherine's divorce led to the trauma of war across England and Europe.

Like today's celebrity cases, it didn't last long. Anne was executed a few short years later when someone new caught the king's eye. Henry VIII was the archetype of the modern Hollywood actor with the wandering gaze, and Catherine and Anne typified the women willing to give him "one more chance."

Seeing how *that* ended, perhaps we should be grateful that things today are aired out in the media — instead of on the battlefield!

5 Tips for Your Next Affordable Getaway

Are you excited to explore the world again? Or maybe you've just gotten back from your latest vacation! In either case, the economic challenges of the pandemic might require travelers to plan their trips a little smarter. Here are five tricks to do just that.

1. Consider your budget while choosing your destination.

Any destination heavily impacted by tourists is going to be more expensive to visit. So, consider taking a tour through various French countryside towns instead of Paris! Not only could it be more culturally immersing, but it may even be more relaxing and less stressful than visiting a dense area.

2. Sign up for Scott's Cheap Flights.

One of the most important parts of booking an affordable vacation is booking it at the right time. Scott's Cheap Flights will track all the cheapest flights at an airport of your choice — you'll get over 50%–75% savings on highly rated airlines. This will get you stress-free travel for a much lower price!

3. Travel in a group.

If you travel with friends, your expenses become a lot more manageable. Let's say you and a partner travel with two other couples — renting a swanky cabin at \$200 a night will only cost around \$33 per person. Plus, you will create some amazing memories together!



4. Plan your meal budget ahead of time.

Looking forward to eating certain dishes? Find local menus and prices to ensure you don't spend more than you planned. If you want an authentic and homestyle culinary experience, consider signing up for a peer-to-peer dining experience through Traveling Spoon or Bon Appetour, which is tax-free as well!

5. Consider volunteering for vacation.

Want to go on a self-discovery trip? Why not cut your expenses in half by volunteering? For example, Habitat for Humanity offers a nine-day Mexico trip for \$1,200 with lodging, food, and activities included. You'll get to build structures and create something permanent for the local community.

Traveling on a dime is no sweat with the right tools. Best of luck, traveler!

TAKE A *BREAK*



Earlier this year, Russia announced it would abandon its missions to the International Space Station in favor of a new, Russia-only station orbiting Earth. At the same time, China has begun working in earnest on its own permanent space installation, raining construction debris down on coastal Africa and other places. With private American interests gaining traction in orbit (and the confidence of our government), things are getting awfully crowded up there — and not by actors that typically play well together.

All of which begs the question: Will the 21st century see the first violent conflict in space?

We have to delve into “space law” (yes, it’s really called that) to understand this question. It started in the 1940s and ‘50s, when the USSR launch of Sputnik signaled a new ground for scientific competition in the Cold War, as well as fears of more direct, armed conflict. The landmark “Outer Space Treaty” of 1967 was the response, and nations continued to deal with space concerns until the end of the century.

The general principles were those of cooperation and goodwill, and that made sense in the 20th century, when it was unlikely any power would be able to seriously colonize stations in orbit or the moon itself, nevermind other planets. But in the past 20 years, many countries have been unwilling to *seriously* commit to more specific agreements or laws. When you see the rapidly increasing presence many countries are seeking in orbit, you start to understand why. Nobody wants to hamstring themselves and compromise their interests when the resources of our solar system are made available through technology.

Even though this may be a new arena, the problem is an old one. International Law — of which “space law” is a subset — is not typically enforceable and never has been. Private ventures, like those of Elon Musk, may face crackdown by their governments or the international community. But nations themselves will take what they want, when they want it — and right now, that could make peace on the final frontier a long shot in the 21st century.

TOMATO AND WATERMELON SALAD (YES, REALLY!)

Inspired by BonAppetit.com

Bon Appétit magazine calls tomato and watermelon “soul mates,” and they’re right! This surprising gourmet salad will be a hit at your next barbecue.

Ingredients

- 1 tsp peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, coarsely crushed
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 4 cups seedless watermelon, rind removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 heirloom tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 oz feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- Sea salt, to taste

Directions

1. In a small saucepan, sauté spices and herbs in the coconut oil for 3 minutes over medium heat to create turmeric oil. Take the pan off of the heat, then let it cool.
2. Combine the watermelon, tomatoes, and feta on a large platter or in a bowl. Drizzle with cooled turmeric oil. Now, simply sprinkle with sea salt and enjoy!



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Fight SAD Early! Start Taking Vitamin D Now, Before the Sun Goes Away

Do you get SAD? We're talking about seasonal affective disorder, which affects 1%–10% of the population depending on the state you live in. Symptoms of SAD are similar to symptoms of depression, but unlike chronic depression, which can occur at any time, people with SAD only experience symptoms during a certain time of year, usually winter.

SAD has been strongly linked with shorter days and less sun — although summertime SAD can result from long days that make sleep difficult, resulting in irritability and mood swings. In most cases, however, winter is the problem season, likely due to a link between less sun and a vitamin D deficiency.

Depression is one common symptom of vitamin D deficiency, especially in patients who aren't prone to depression due to other circumstances. Unfortunately, very few foods are good sources of vitamin D. The best source is sunlight itself.

There are a few ways to combat wintertime SAD. Establishing a regular sleep schedule is important, as is an exercise routine and healthy diet. As mentioned, it's hard to find vitamin D in foods, but milk and other food products are often intentionally enriched with it during processing.

The most common solution, however, is taking a vitamin D supplement, which can be purchased over the counter at drugstores and grocery stores. It is commonly recommended for people living in places with harsher winters, and although there are negative side effects if taken in excess, a regular daily dose of vitamin D is a healthy way to ensure you have the right levels in your system.

This month is the perfect time to begin that process. Vitamin D can take several months to build up to effective levels in our bodies. It may be the hottest time of the year in many places, but it's also the ideal time to start fighting SAD early!

