

Wobble Mysteries

An asymmetric Wordle/Scrabble mashup for a wordy mastermind and one to four clever detectives

By Jonathan Leistiko

Inspired by a prompt from the Board Game Design Lab community on Facebook

Story

Something strange is afoot in the city of Abblescra. A devious mastermind has pulled off a cunning caper. They have a head-start on you, but they've left a trail of clues. Can you decipher the clues and foil their fiendish plan before they escape?

Object

If you're the mastermind, you're playing one-player Scrabble. Your goal is to complete your getaway by accumulating 250 "scheme" points. Simple, right?

Wrong. There's a team of detectives determined to foil your plans.

If you're a detective, your goal is to decipher the clues the mastermind's left behind by figuring out the words the mastermind's played. You do this by picking a word they've played with all blank tiles, making a guess, and using the mastermind's answer to deduce what the word is. Your team wins if it accumulates 250 "clue" points.

You Need

- A standard Scrabble® set.
- A bunch of blank "letter stand-in" tokens that fit in a standard Scrabble™ tile space.
- A Wobble Mysteries mastermind play sheet.
- (Optional) a folder or screen to hide the mastermind's play sheet.
- One Wobble Mysteries detective play sheet per player.
- A bunch of Wobble Mysteries clue sheets. (About 30?)
- A pen or pencil for each player.

Set Up

- Pick one player to be the mastermind. Everyone else is a detective.
- Put the Scrabble® board where everyone can see it, and in easy reach of the mastermind.

- If you're the mastermind, take a mastermind play sheet, a pencil, and (optionally) a "hide your stuff" screen. Also take a tile rack and put the tile bag nearby. Draw seven tiles, put them on your rack, and keep them secret. Start thinking of your first word.
- If you're a detective, take a detective play sheet and a pencil.
- Put the Wobble Mysteries play sheets in easy reach of all players.

Play

You play Wobble Mysteries in rounds. Each round has two turns: A mastermind turn, and a detectives turn. The mastermind is the only actor during the mastermind turn, and the detectives are the primary actors during the detectives turn. The game starts with a mastermind turn, then a detective turn, and continues to alternate for the rest of the game.

The Mastermind Turn

If you're the mastermind, you're playing Scrabble™ with all normal rules, but by yourself and with the following additional rules:

- 1) When you make a word, write it down on your play sheet. Draw it on the board where you played it and write it on the side in the next numbered blank for "words played." If you used a blank, make a note of what tile was blank.
- 2) Set the tiles you played aside face-down in their own pile so you can put them on the board later if you need to.
- 3) After you make a word, place letter stand-in tokens on the board where you would normally place the tiles. Also announce how many points you scored for the word and what your total score is. Write both of those on your play sheet in the spaces provided.
- 4) Set up a Wobble Mysteries clue sheet for the word. Write the turn number in the space provided, write what the word scored in the space provided, and put stars in the clue word boxes to represent the number of tiles in the word. Hand the new clue sheet to the detectives.
- 5) If your score is 250 or greater, let the detectives know that they must deduce a clue this round or you will escape and win. Feel free to mock them or monologue a little – you've earned it.

The Detective Turn

No matter how many detective players there are, you only get one turn and one guess per detective turn. Work as a team to make decisions in steps 1 and 2.

- 1) Detectives: Pick a clue sheet.
- 2) Detectives: Write your guess for what the word might be on the first blank line of the clue sheet and hand it to the mastermind.
- 3) Mastermind: Compare the detectives' guess to the actual word. Put a box around each letter that's correct and in the correct position. Put a line under each letter that's correct and in the wrong position. Hand the clue sheet back to the detectives.

- a) If the detectives' guess repeats a letter, but the letter only occurs once, answer the most correct letter first, then ignore the less correct letter(s).
 - i) Example: Your word is "TRAVEL" and the detectives guess "STREET" you would put a line under the T and R and a box around the second E. You would leave all the other letters alone.
- b) It should go without saying, but you must answer honestly and accurately.
 - i) If you make a mistake during play, do your best to correct it. The detectives may take up to 50 points (their choice) from your score and add it to theirs as compensation.
- 4) Mastermind: If the guess was correct, replace the word's placeholder tiles on the board with its real tiles and reduce your score by the word's score.
- 5) Detectives: If the guess was correct, increase your score by the word's score.

Ending the Game and Winning

At the end of each round, if at least one team has 250 points or more. The game ends. If you're the mastermind and you have more points, you successfully execute the last steps of your plot and escape without repercussions. Gloating is in order. If you're a detective and your team has more points, you successfully pieced together enough evidence to convict the mastermind. Congratulations!

Origin and Credits

On Feb 2, 2024, a moderator of the Board Game Design Lab group posted a design challenge with a theme of "curious detectives" and a mechanic of "strategic word game."
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BGDLCommunity/permalink/1716115585577738/?mibextid=W9r11R>) I saw the post shortly after it was posted and replied with an outline of this game. I wrote the first draft of these rules (including these notes) later that day. I still have to make the play sheets, but the game's pretty much done. I'm just not sure if 250 is a good endgame threshold.

Scenarios

The Case of the Curious Colophon

Detective Power: Insight

Once per game, each detective may point at a placeholder (blank) tile in play and ask the mastermind to replace it with the correct tile. When this happens, the mastermind scores the value of that letter, including special letter and word multipliers.

Mastermind Power: Slippery

Once per game, you may skip announcing your word and running total for one turn. If you do this, you may (and should) skip announcing the word total on the round immediately following.

Mastermind goal: Colophon

- Make the words **emblem**, **imprint**, **title**, and **spine**: +10 points per word; +10 points for all four (50 points total for all four words.).

Wobble Mysteries Deluxe:

Skills & Scenarios

The Wobble Mysteries rules on the prior provide the essential structure of a Wobble Mysteries game, but they don't really describe a mystery, per se. Where's the *mystery*? That's where skills and scenarios come in.

Skills

- Special powers for the detectives.
 - Themes:
 - Interrogator:
 - Connections:
 - Triggers:
 - On a 2L
 - On a 2W
 - On a 3L
 - On a 3W
 - Spend X (10, 20, 50) points
 - Once per game
 - Once per turn
 - When you completely whiff (take a second guess)
 - When you solve a clue
- Special powers for the mastermind.
 - Themes:
 - Stuff
 - Powers:
 - Ingenious: May use 8+ point tiles as blanks. Must announce what letter you're using as a blank when you do it.
 - Should be 10 points
 - Slippery: May skip announcing your word and running total for one turn, and may skip announcing the word total on the round immediately following.
 - Should be once per game.

Scenarios

- Special goals for the mastermind.
 - Three words that end in a vowel
 - A nine+ letter word
 - A 10+ letter word

- Make 2+ words in one play
 - Make 3+ words in one play
 - Make a word using all one-point tiles (no blanks)
 - Make a word with no one-point tiles (blanks are ok)
- Story cards that outline a case and get revealed at scoring checkpoints.

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The Sinister Syllables

The Precarious Palindrome

The Secretive Spoonerism

The Passive Voice

The Dangling Participle