

WORDTRIX

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INTRODUCTION TO WORDTRIX

With Wordtrix, you play against the computer and (optionally) another person in the recognition of words formed from a set of random letters. You gain points for each new word you find, with more points for longer words. Points are also earned for each second played. The computer receives points for each word it finds, but does not get points for each second played. Bonus points are gained for finding an exceptional number of words of the same length. Your total score is the sum of your word score plus time points minus the computer's score. A second player adds spice to the competition. You may play to a predetermined score or number of rounds.

Help is available for reminders on game rules and how to play. Additionally, Wordtrix retains the Personal Best Scores in each level of difficulty for you and other players and is displayed each time help is requested from any menu. The following sections detail the game instructions and rules, however, if you are familiar with other word games, the help displays provide most of the information necessary to play.

GETTING STARTED

Loading the Game:

First boot your computer with DOS. You can use a copy of the DOS diskette that came with your computer, for example. If you like, you can move a copy of DOS over to your Wordtrix diskette so that it autoboots. There is a setup command on your Wordtrix diskette to do this for you.

If you have two disk drives, simply insert your Master DOS diskette into your A: drive and turn on the computer. Now put your Wordtrix diskette into drive B:, and type "B:SETUP". This command will move DOS from your Master DOS diskette over to your Wordtrix diskette. Now you can boot your computer with the Wordtrix diskette.

If you have only one disk drive, insert your DOS Master diskette into drive A: and turn on the computer. Now type: "B:SETUP". DOS will now tell you to insert the diskette for drive B: and strike any key when ready. Follow these instructions using the Wordtrix diskette as the diskette for drive B: and the DOS Master diskette as the diskette for drive A:. Since you have only one drive, you will have to swap diskettes to copy DOS over. Now you can boot your computer with the Wordtrix diskette.

If you don't do this, you will need to type "WORDTRIX" after booting your DOS disk and inserting the Wordtrix diskette to start the game.

Part I. MAIN MENU

The main menu of choices now appears on the screen (see Figure 1). The Function Keys, located on the left side of the keyboard and marked 'F1' thru 'F10', are used to enter your choice from this and all other menus in the program. The magic wand will then point to your selection.

WORDTRIX		
* Press a function key	SKILL LEVEL	
F1 → Help	Master	
F2 → Play	Expert	
F3 → Reset totals	Competent	
F4 → Set skill level	Capable	
F5 → Set number of players	Trainee	
F6 → Quit	Beginner	
Player 1: 0	Round number: 1	Player 2: 0

Figure 1

'F1' Help

Pressing the 'F1' key will display a screen that describes how to use the main menu (see Figure 2). When you are finished looking at the display, you can press any letter key to see the Personal Best Scores chart. (See Figure 3.) After this display, pressing any letter key returns you to the main menu.

'F2' Play

Explanation of this selection is treated in the PLAY and RULES (Part II) section.

* MAIN MENU HELP *	

FUNCTION KEY PRESSED	ACTION TAKEN
F2 (PLAY)	: Press this key when you are ready to start playing.
F3 (RESET TOTALS)	: Sets round number back to one and scores to zero.
F4 (SET SKILL LEVEL)	: Press this key to change the skill level.
F5 (NUMBER OF PLAYERS)	: Press to change from 1 player to 2 players or 2 players to 1 player.
F6 (QUIT)	: Return to the operating system.
Press any key to see scores	

Figure 2

PERSONAL BEST SCORES						
Initials	Beginner	Trainee	Capable	Competent	Expert	Master
Press any key to continue						

Figure 3

'F3' Reset Totals

The reset totals option is activated by pressing the function key 'F3'. This choice sets the round number back to one and initializes the cumulative scores back to zero. Therefore, after exercising this option, the bottom of the screen shows:

Player 1: 0 Round number: 1

or

Player 1: 0 Round number: 1 Player 2: 0

'F4' Set Skill Level

The function key 'F4' from the main menu displays the skill menu, which enables you to reset the skill level (see Figure 4). The 'F1' key gives you a help display that describes how to set the skill level. When you are finished viewing the help display, pressing any letter displays the Personal Best Scores as shown in Figure 3. Pressing any letter key again returns the skill menu to the display.

SKILL LEVEL		
*	Press a function key	SKILL LEVEL
	F1 - Help	Master
		Expert
	F3 - Increase skill level	Competent
	F4 - Decrease skill level	Capable
		Trainee
	F6 - Quit	Beginner
Player 1: 0 Round number: 1 Player 2: 0		

Figure 4

You may wish to experiment with setting the skill level. The high intensity bar indicates which level of skill has been set. Every time either the 'F3' or 'F4' key is pressed once, the level of skill is changed one position. When the key is pressed for an extended period, the high intensity line races toward the end of the scale. It is not necessary for you to set the level of difficulty for each game. The skill level remains until it is reset by the player. You may return to the main menu by pressing 'F6'.

'F5' Set Number of Players

When the main menu appears once again, note that function key 'F5' specifies the number of players. Pressing the 'F5' key once sets the game for two players. If the 'F5' key is pressed again, the number of players returns to one player. For example, before you press the 'F5' function key, the line at the bottom of the main menu reads:

Player 1: 0 Round number: 1

When you press the 'F5' function key once, the second player is added and the bottom line reads:

Player 1: 0 Round number: 1 Player 2: 0

Pressing the 'F5' function key a second time brings back the number-of-players option to one person and the bottom line on the screen once again reads:

Player 1: 0 Round number: 1

'F6' Quit

Press Function Key 'F6' to discontinue play. Pressing F6 causes the screen to clear and the DOS A> prompt to appear.

Part II. PLAY AND RULES

Game play is started when Function Key 'F2' is pressed From the Main Menu.

A summary of options presently set is displayed. Once options are set to your liking, the actual playing of the game can begin.

The computer displays a set of 16 letters on the game screen. You attempt to find and enter as many three to six letter words as possible within a three minute period. There are certain restrictions about how the letters can be combined. Since the computer is making its list from a limited dictionary, but with mechanical thoroughness, your best effort must be made. To make things more sporting, the computer will grant you ten points for every second you choose to remain in the contest. Total scores = your points + time points - computer points.

'F2' Play

Pressing the function key 'F2' from the main menu on the first pass displays the options menu (see Figure 5). It is also displayed if scores

were reset, or the number of players changed. This feature allows you to be sure that everything is set to your satisfaction before you begin play. The option menu choices are as follows:

- 'F1' As with all other menus in this program, a screen of summarized assistance is available. When you have finished with this help screen, press any alphabetic key to see Personal Best Scores and then once again to return to the option menu.
- 'F2' This function key indicates that the options are correctly set.
- 'F3' This function key directs the player to the main menu where changes can be made. When these have been made, the PLAY option 'F2' can once again be selected from the main menu.

It is important to understand that the option menu is displayed only when scores have been reset, the number of players changed or it is the first round in a game. When options have been set to your satisfaction 'F2', Personal Best Scores are displayed (see Figure 3). The bottom of the screen reads:

Enter first player's initials (2 or 3 letters)

OPTIONS		SKILL LEVEL
*	Press a function key	
	F1 → Help	Master
	F2 → Options are correctly set	Expert
	F3 → Options are not correctly set	Competent
		Capable
		Trainee
	Number of players = 2	Beginner

Figure 5

To continue, respond to this prompt by entering the first player's two or three initials and press the (ENTER) key. If those initials have already been used in previous games, there is no problem and the new best scores are appropriately placed. If two players are playing, the following message is displayed next:

Enter second player's initials (2 or 3 letters)

Again, just enter the player's initials and press the (ENTER) key. If there are already 20 initials (20 different players) entered, and you try to enter a new set of initials, the prompt reads:

List is full--Enter initials of person you wish to delete.

Note that the entering of any but alphabetic characters results in a "beep" by the machine, which indicates that an incorrect response has been made. After you have entered your initials, the game screen appears and you are ready to play.

Playing the Game

Figure 6 shows the "letter grid" which is generated by the computer. Neither you nor the computer can form words from just any letter combination which comes to mind. Each letter must touch the following letter in sequence. The touching can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal. The acceptable letter sequence can be left or right, up or down. No letter can be used twice in the same word unless it appears in another place on the letter grid and in the correct order needed for the word. Some examples will clarify these restrictions. The word "miss" is acceptable because it follows a sequence of touching letters. Notice that the double "s" does not reuse the same letter in the map. Other words from Figure 6, which are acceptable, are alp, aim, ass, ant, nap, mint and missal. Figure 7 represents the same letter map. In the upper right hand corner an unacceptable word has been formed. "Ships" is not acceptable, because the letter "s" has been used twice.

Acceptable words : any word (noun, adjective, adverb, plural, any form or tense) is acceptable. Proper nouns, abbreviations or words containing apostrophes or hyphens are not acceptable. You must be on your honor to enter only standard English dictionary words, because the computer is programmed to check only for duplicates or words which are not formed according to the prescribed sequence of touching letters.

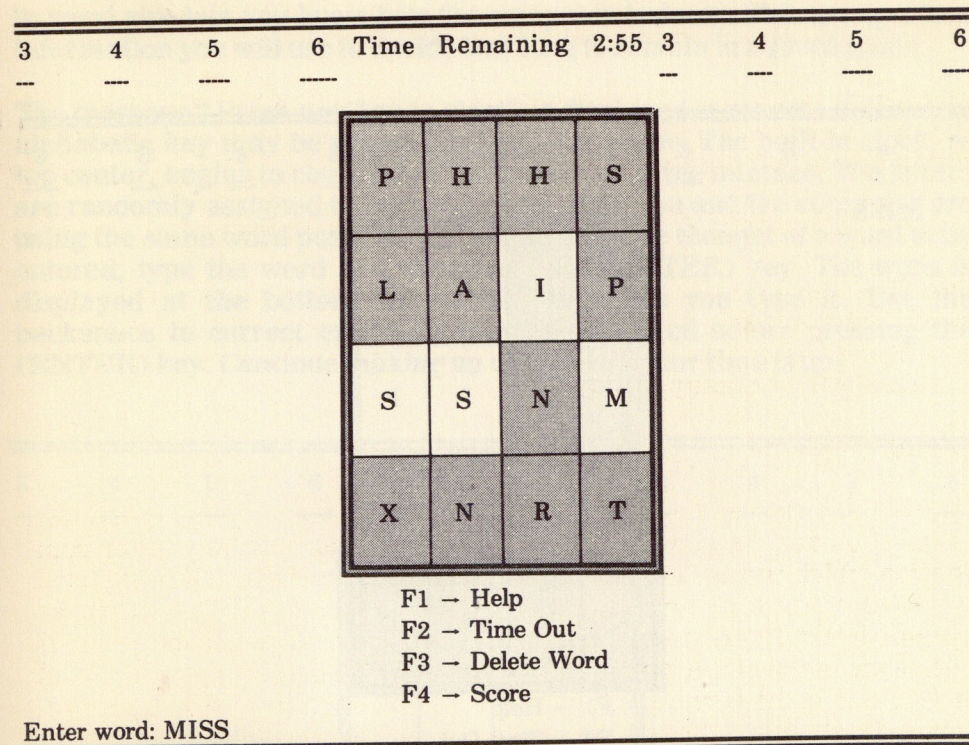


Figure 6

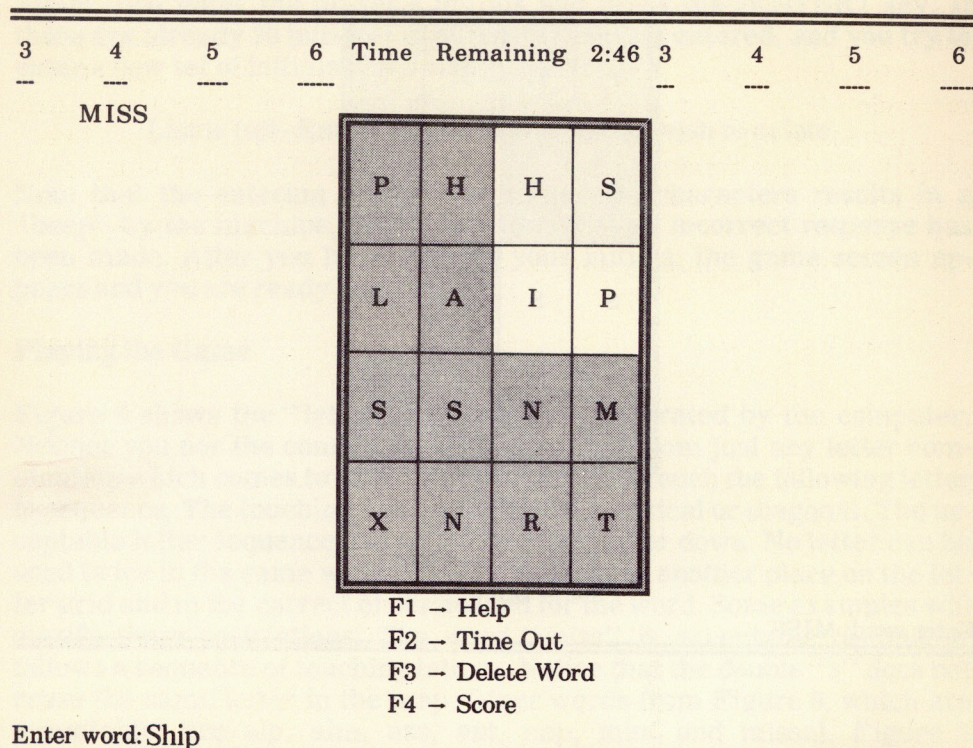


Figure 7

To begin : the game screen has in its center a vacant letter grid (Figure 8) that forms a four by four box. The 3,4,5 and 6 on each side of the box represent the word lengths which are allowed. The left side will contain your lists for each word size. The right side will record the computer's efforts. While the game is in progress, question marks grouped according to word size lets you know how the computer is doing. This is important information you will use to decide how long to remain in a given game.

The message "Press any key to start" is displayed in reverse video. Any alphabetic key may be pressed to begin the game. The built-in clock, at top center, begins to count down the time from three minutes. The letters are randomly assigned to the letter map. Both you and the computer are using the same word possibilities. When you have thought of a word to be entered, type the word and then press the (ENTER) key. The word is displayed at the bottom left of the screen as you type it. Use the backspace to correct errors, if they are detected before pressing the (ENTER) key. Continue making up words until your time is up.

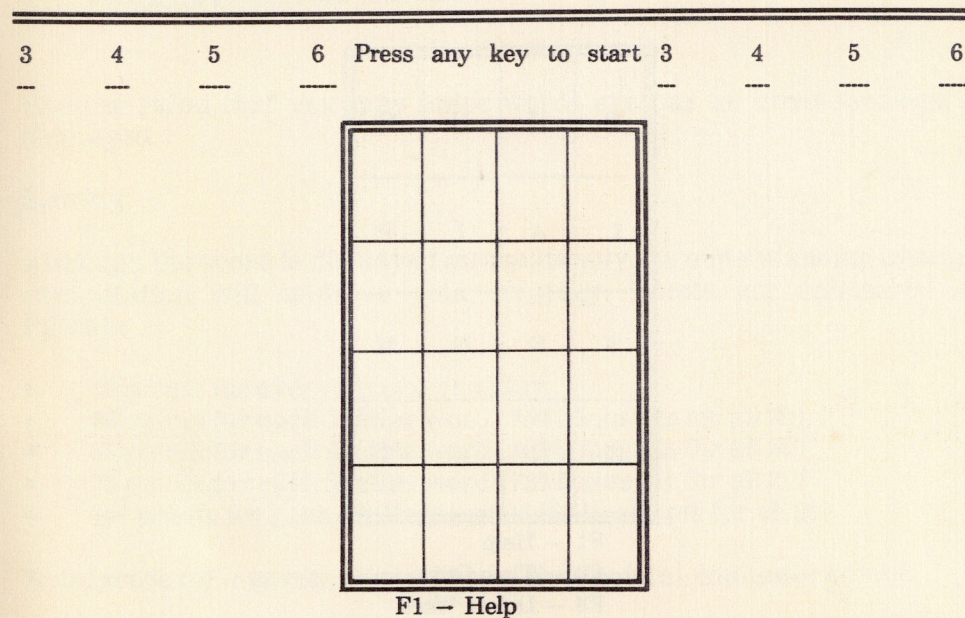


Figure 8

Below the bottom of the letter grid the active Function Keys are described. At any point in the game you may press the Function Keys 'F1' to call up the help display or 'F2' for a break. Both these actions stop the time clock. To delete any word on your list press 'F3', type the word to be deleted, followed by (ENTER). When you wish to terminate the game early for strategic reasons, press for Score 'F4'.

Whether you terminate early for strategic reasons or the clock runs out, the net score (this game) is computed and displayed on the bottom of the letter map. The total cumulative score is displayed directly beside it. Your time score is shown below the time remaining at the top of the grid. At top left your word score is found and the top right shows the computer's word score. The computer's words are displayed in capitals whereas yours may be displayed in upper or lower case, depending on what case you use. Press function key 'F6' to return to the main menu.

3	4	5	6	Time	Remaining	3:00	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---				---	---	---	---

P	H	H	S
L	A	I	P
S	S	N	M
X	N	R	T

F1 - Help
 F2 - Time Out
 F3 - Delete Word
 F4 - Score

Enter word:

Figure 9

Error Messages

There are five error messages that you may receive while playing the game:

- Word must be 3 to 6 characters - word entered was too long or too short
- Improper combination "(text of improper combination)" - word does not follow touching sequence or reuses one letter position
- You have not entered that word yet - word to be deleted was not on word list
- Word group already full - twenty words that length already entered
- You already entered that word

Keep in mind that you may enter words even as an error message is displayed.

Scoring

Although the score is displayed automatically, an understanding of score computation will improve your strategy. Points are calculated as follows:

- 10 points for every second you play
- 25 points for each 3 letter word (250 bonus pts for all 20)
- 50 points for each 4 letter word (500 bonus pts for all 20)
- 75 points for each 5 letter word (750 bonus pts for all 20)
- 100 points for each 6 letter word (1000 bonus pts for all 20)

Total score for a game: your points + time points - computer points.

Let us take the hypothetical situation where you are half way through the game and thoroughly stumped. The computer is piling up words like crazy (indicated by ??? on the upper right side of the letter map). It may be better to cut your losses and terminate the game early by pressing function key 'F4'. On the other hand, the ten points per second you receive for remaining in the game gives enough of an edge that continuing to play usually makes good sense. You can never score less than zero. Experiment with different strategies until you get a feel for the game.

Reseting Personal Best Scores

If you wish to delete all of the Personal Best Score information (initials and scores), type WRESET and (ENTER) when you have the DOS A> prompt. This eliminates all records of Personal Best Scores and sets the level of difficulty to competent. Do not use WRESET unless you want to eliminate all previous records of scores and players.