



letterHEAD

DESIGN CHALLENGE

Letter Head is a dynamic word-forming card game. Players create words using the *Letter Head* deck, whose cards have letters instead of numbers and points instead of suits.

But *Letter Head* isn't just one card game, it's an infinitely expandable game kit. The core rules are sixteen games, including new spins on old favorites like memory, poker, and word-find. And over the years, *Letter Head* players have created their own games, finding new and awesome ways to put their *Letter Head* cards to use.

Which gave us an idea: what would happen if we encouraged fans to push, pull, and stretch *Letter Head* into new and exciting forms? What amazing games were still lurking out there, waiting to be discovered? Thus was born the *The Letter Head Design Challenge*!

Here, then, are six brand new *Letter Head* games, chosen from the many excellent submissions we received. Fun is just a few friends and a *Letter Head* deck away!

Anagrams

Claim letters from a common pool to form words. But beware, cards you've already used are still up for (ana)grabs!

Draw! Beat Down Their Weapons!

Escort your convoys through a dangerous forest, engaging in duels of witty vocabulary with highwaymen who want to make off with your precious cargo.

Gadsby!

Inspired by Ernest Vincent Wright's 1939 lipogrammatic novel of the same name, your challenge is to create words that do not use the letter E, while looking for opportunities to add Es to other players' words and thus negate their score.

Letter Mine

Explore a series of subterranean tunnels, mining letters from the rock itself in a race to build words faster than the other players.

Tensorial Relations

A deckbuilding word game in which the words you create enable you to buy even better cards. When all the cards have been purchased, the player with the highest scoring deck wins!

Word War

Create words from an always-morphing grid of letters, while trying to block the other players from doing the same.

Enjoy!

For more information visit www.atlas-games.com/letterhead

Anagrabs

by Steve Dee

For 2 to 6 players

“Anagrabs” is a game of nerve-grinding tension as letter after letter is turned over until someone can make a word. The more letters, the more possibilities—for those who can spot them in time.

The Play

The player to the left of the dealer goes first. On your turn, turn any one card face-up. If anyone can make a word at least three letters long, they may shout it out and claim that word. When you claim a word, pick up the cards that form that word and place them face-up in front of you.

When forming words, you may use already-claimed words in front of other players so long as you also use at least one letter from the middle of the table with it. When doing so, you must use all of the letters in the already-existing word, though those letters can be rearranged at will to form your new word. Wild cards can be used as any letter when creating your new word. You may not combine two or more already-claimed words to make a new word, nor may you split up words to make two or more words.

After another player has claimed a word, if you see a further play using all of the letters in that word, you may shout it out, even before play passes and another letter is turned up. Any wild cards present may be used as any letter. If your word is longer than the original word, take all of the cards in your word and place them face-up in front of you.

As soon as a card is turned face-up, and while everyone is considering what words may be formed from visible letters, play passes to the player to the left. That player may turn a card face-up whenever they're ready, regardless of whether anyone has shouted out a word or not. Play continues until there are fewer remaining face-down cards than there are players.

Example of Play

Bob, Sally, Gwen, and John are playing a game of Anagrabs. The face-up letters are A, G, N, E, and so far no one has claimed any words.

Bob turns over an R and passes play to the player to his left, John. While everyone considers the letters for a moment, Sally shouts “NEAR” and puts those cards in front of her. Bob shouts “RANGE”—he steals NEAR from Sally, placing the cards in front of him, along with the G. John doesn't see a further play so turns over a card, revealing a T. Sally yells “GARNET” and takes RANGE from Bob. It's Gwen's turn to flip a card and she reveals an S, immediately shouting “GARNETS.” John says “STRANGE,” but since STRANGE is not longer than GARNETS he cannot steal. John starts hoping for an E so he can make ESTRANGE.

The Goal

As letters are turned over, grab them to make words—but you can also grab other people's words as well.

Getting Started

Choose a table with ample playing surface. Everyone sits around the table such that they can easily reach the center.

Choose a dealer in the normal way.

The Deal

Shuffle the deck and deal half its cards face down to the tabletop.

Choose two cards at random and turn them face-up.

How to Win

You win if you're the player with the highest score at the end of the game.



Scoring

Add up the point values of all letters in front of you. Wild cards count as zero points.

Challenges

If a challenged word proves to be invalid, the player who formed it must retract the card they played, and forfeit the opportunity to form any other word that turn. If the challenged word is valid, then the challenger forfeits the right to form a word on the next play.

Hints

As with “My Word!,” when it's your turn to play a card face-up, the pace of the game is in your hands. You have all the time you need to form a word, but once you turn a card face-up, you're stuck doing nothing until the next player goes. It's generally better to take your turn as quickly as possible; if you don't think you can form a word, pushing play to the next player only helps you, and if you can play cards to the table faster than your opponents can think, you'll keep their attention divided.

Variant—Splits And Combos

For an even wilder game, allow players to split up and combine words when stealing from other players; anything goes as long as a new letter is taken from the middle of the table and legal words are formed.



Draw! Beat Down Their Weapons!

by Jonathan Woodard

For 2-4 Players

In the days of Elizabethan England, many Governors found themselves needing to ship their goods to the crown in London. Though the woods were known to many as a dangerous place for an unguarded convoy, the danger 'tis frequently assumed to have been on account of robbers most foul. Forsooth! It were frequently the guardians protecting other convoys who were the real villains of the wood!

However, inspired by the works of The Bard on display at the Globe, these self-styled knights, these guardians of cargos in service to their Governors, came to a gentlesperson's arrangement that they might, rather than swap spillings of blood, duel with words to settle their combats.

Upon embarking, each guard would settle upon his most clev'rest word. On the journey to London, when waylaid, or indeed when waylaying, another shipment in the woods, these 'enlightened' guardians would attempt to outdo each other with their cleverness!

Embark

Each stack is a Convoy you are trying to successfully transport to London.

You should divide each Convoy into a Guardian's Word and a Cargo. The Guardian's Word can be made up of any number of cards in the Convoy. Cards that are not part of a Guardian's Word are your Cargo.

For each Convoy, place the Cargo face-down in front of you. Then place the Guardian's Word face-down atop the Cargo in such a way that drawing cards from the top will reveal the Word one letter at a time. You may place the Guardian's Word and Cargo stacked at right angles in their Convoy to help keep them distinct. When done correctly, your Convoys will form a row in front of you.

"This is the very false gallop of verses: Truly, the tree yields bad fruit."

—Touchstone in *As You Like It* Act III, Scene 2.

Scoring

When you have successfully advanced a Convoy three times, immediately place all cards from the Convoy into your scoring pile. Do not show anyone else the cards in your scoring pile.

The Goal

Defend your Convoys by pitting your best words in each against those of your opponents.

Getting Started

Choose a dealer in the normal way.

Deal

Deal stacks of 6 cards to each player until the deck is exhausted. Players may look at each stack as it is dealt to them, but should not mix stacks.

Scoring

When you have successfully advanced a Convoy three times, immediately place all cards from the Convoy into your scoring pile. Do not show anyone else the cards in your scoring pile.

The Play

The player to the dealer's left goes first.

On your turn, take one of two actions: advance or waylay.

To advance one of your Convoys, slide it one card-length forward on the table, and/or mark it with a token of some kind (pennies or other coins work fine).

To waylay another player's Convoy, announce that you are doing so. Indicate which of your Convoys is doing the attacking, and which of your opponents' Convoys you wish to waylay. This initiates a duel between the Convoys!

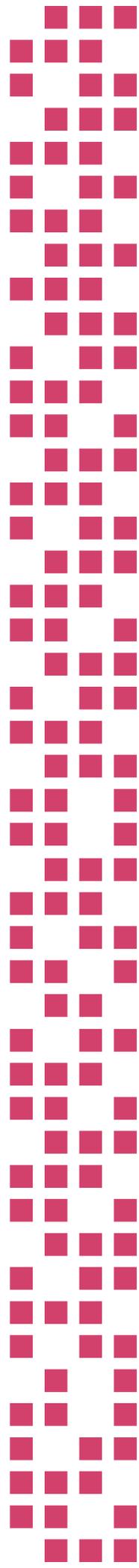
When waylaid or waylaying, you and your opponent each reveal cards from the top of your Convoy one at a time. When you have revealed the entirety of your Guardian's Word, you must stop revealing cards. If your opponent has revealed the entirety of their Guardian's Word and your Word is longer, you may continue revealing cards until you choose to stop or have revealed the entirety of your own Guardian's Word. Then you both total up the points of your Guardian's Words; if your Guardian's Word has the highest value, you win the duel and seize your opponent's Cargo, immediately adding it to the Cargo of your Convoy. When calculating the total of your Guardian's Words, wild cards count as zero.

If you won the duel, your revealed letters remain face-up with your Convoy. If you lost the duel, you immediately discard your entire Guardian's Word.

"Do you bite your thumb at US, sir?"

"I do bite my thumb, sir."

—Abraham and Sampson in *Romeo & Juliet* Act I Scene 1



How to Win

After the final convoy advances to safety, players should total up the points of all cards in their scoring piles. For this calculation, wild cards count as zero. If you have the highest point total, you win!

In the case of a tie, you win if you have the highest point total and the smallest scoring pile. If you are still tied with one or more other players, you and the other tied players shall engage in a pun-off, to be judged by the player with the lowest total points.

Strategy and Hints

The Guardian's Word is the word that will be used to defend the Convoy from assailants, so make it a high point-value one!

You score points for both the Guardian's Word and Cargo if you successfully transport your Convoy to London, so having high point cards in the Cargo is okay, but keep in mind that the Cargo may be stolen by another player before arriving.

Gadsby

by Steve Dee

For 2 to 6 players

Gadsby was a novel written in 1939 by Ernest Vincent Wright. It was a lipogram, or word game—the 50,000 word novel was written without using the letter “E” at all. In this game, you want to avoid “E”s in your words too.



The Play

The dealer goes first.

On your turn, you may make a word of at least three letters that does not contain an “E” card. If you can not, and you have fewer than ten cards in your hand, you must draw a card.

When you make a word, place the cards in front of you. Then, starting with the player to your left, each player in turn has a chance to play an “E” card on the word. If need be they can rearrange the letters to add an “E” to it.

Example: Bob plays RAG. An “E” can be added to make RAGE but also GEAR.

If a player does not have an “E” or chooses not to play, then the option passes to the next player, and so on, going clockwise around the table. If nobody plays an “E” card on the word, or it cannot have one played on it, you put the letters face down in your scoring pile. If any player played an “E” on the word, the word is canceled and placed in the discard pile.

Play then passes to your left, with the next player either making a word or drawing a card.

Scoring

When the deck is exhausted, total up the points of the cards in your scoring pile. For this calculation, wild cards count as zero. If you have the highest score, you win.

How to Win

Have the highest-scoring cards in your score pile at the end of the game.

The Goal

To make words from cards in your hand that can not be canceled out by other players playing “E” cards.

Getting Started

Choose a dealer in the normal way.

The Deal

Deal seven cards to each player. Put the deck within reach of everyone.

Strategy and Hints

This game depends on both timing and bluffing. You should not play an “E” on a low point-total word. And in general, you should try not to play them at all if you can get others to do so, because the more others play them the fewer “E” cards they will have to play on you. If you are to the immediate left of the current player, you should bluff and deny having “E”s to force others to play theirs.

It’s tempting to rely on words that can’t have “E”s added (BAG, HALE, FUR, GOT, etc.) but it is tricky, and if you do it too often, other players will surely punish you with an “E” the first opportunity they get.

Variant

If you find too many words being canceled, try forbidding a less common letter, such as “A” or “O.”

Letter Mine

by J. Walton

For 3-6 players

In “Letter Mine” you explore a series of underground tunnels, mining letters from the rock itself and trying to build words faster than your opponents.



Set Up

Shuffle the deck of *Letter Head* cards and place it face-down, off to the side of the play space.

For a three or four-player game, place a single index card in the middle of the play space and place all of the players’ tokens on that starting index card. With five or six players, place two starting index cards adjacent to each other and split the players’ tokens evenly between the two cards. At the start of the game, the index cards will be blank; when you unsuccessfully attempt to mine a card, you will have to write a number on that card, so make sure everyone has a pencil.

The youngest player takes the first turn, with play then proceeding clockwise.

Scoring

Your score is the value of all face-down letters in front of you. Wild cards are worth no points.

How to Win

The winner is the first player to score 21 or more points.

Variants and House Rules

Try varying the total points needed to win. 15 points makes a good introductory game for new or young players, or if you prefer a quicker game. For those seeking something more challenging, 35 points creates a more expansive, complex game.

Goal

Explore an expanding field of letters that you can “mine” and then use to spell words.

Materials

In addition to the *Letter Head* deck, you will need:

- a token to represent each player
- 1 six-sided die
- a set of blank index cards or similar-sized scraps of paper
- one or more pen or pencils

The Play

On your turn, take three of the following actions, in any order. You may take the same action multiple times.

Explore: If your token is currently on an index card that has empty edges (a card’s edge is empty if there is no index card adjacent to it on that side), take a new index card and place it next to one of the empty edges, forming part of a grid. Also, draw a *Letter Head* card from the deck and place it on this newly explored index card. You’ve discovered a new area with a new letter and your action is complete!

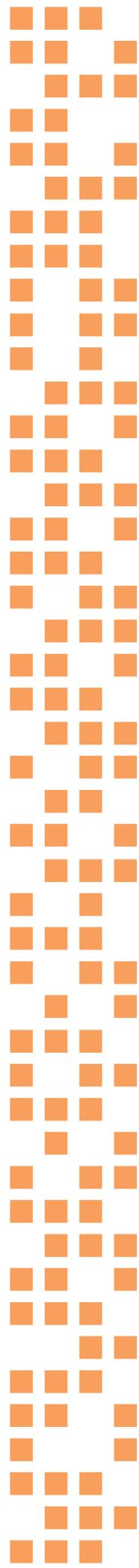
Move: Move your token from its current location to an adjacent index card and your action is complete. You cannot move into a space where there is no index card; you must first explore that space (adding a new index card there) before you can move onto it.

Mine: If you are in the same location as a *Letter Head* card, you can attempt to mine that letter and take it for yourself. Roll the die and if there are any numbers written on the index card, add those to the roll. If your total is less than the value of the letter, you fail to mine that card; write the number you rolled on the current index card and your action is complete. If your total equals or exceeds the value of the card, take that card and place it face-up on the table in front of you. Wild cards have a value of zero, and are therefore always successfully mined. After successfully mining a card, cross out or erase any numbers written on the index card, and then your action is complete.

Spell: Spell one word using only *Letter Head* cards face-up in front of you. Flip the used letters face down and score points equal to their total value. Wild cards can be used as any letter but have a point value of zero. Once you’ve scored your word, your action is complete.

After you’ve taken three actions, draw and place a *Letter Head* card on every index card that does not currently have a card or a token on it. Then play passes to the next player.





Strategy and Hints

The opening actions of the game are often

Explore → **Move** → **Mine**, though this can change if someone uncovers a letter that is difficult or impossible to successfully mine in a single move. After the first couple of turns, play will become more varied as the map of index cards becomes more complex.

Vowels and other common letters are often easy to mine in a single action but ultimately don't allow you to score many points, so keep an eye out for rarer and more valuable consonants.

High-value letters can either be critical to winning or a risky distraction, depending on when and where they appear in the game. You might spend all three of your turn's actions mining a high-value letter but—with an unlucky roll or two—still not be able to finish the job, leaving an opening for another player to swoop in and grab that letter. Additionally, spending a lot of time on a single high-value letter gives your opponents a chance to build a lead by spelling multiple words. Also keep in mind, a high-value letter is only useful if you have other letters to go with it.

If a letter you've been waiting for appears several spaces away, you'll have to decide whether it's worth the risk to go after it. Sometimes it's better to abandon a plan and consider other options.

Finally, as your opponents close in on a winning score, it can be important to keep an eye on the letters they have, and which other letters will help them win. Sometimes you can mine letters an opponent needs to prevent them from winning for at least another turn.

Tensorial Relations

by Nick Wedig

For 2-4 players

“Tensorial Relations” is a deckbuilding word game.



The Play

The player to the dealer’s left goes first.

On your turn, you do the following, in order:

- Play all the cards from your hand face-up in front of you.
- Identify one word you can make with those letters. You do not have to use all the letters in your hand in the word, though unused letters are still considered played.
- Determine the value of the word you spelled. Each letter is worth the value listed on its card. Letters with values higher than 10 (like Z or Q) count as 10. Letters you did not use are worth zero points. Wild cards are worth zero points.
- Purchase additional letters from the Store. The value of the word you played determines how much you can “spend” in the Store. The total value of the letters you purchase must be equal to or less than the value of the word you created. Letters with a listed value greater than 10 cost 10 points to purchase. Wild cards also cost 10 points to purchase. Any points left over at the end of your turn are lost.
- Place any letter you purchase in your discard pile.
- Discard the cards you played from your hand to your discard pile.
- Replenish the Store. For each card you purchased from the store, draw a new card from the draw pile and place it face-up in the Store for future players to purchase.
- Draw a new hand of six cards from your personal deck. If there are not enough cards in your deck, draw the remainder, then reshuffle your discard pile. Your reshuffled discard pile becomes your deck. Continue drawing until you have six cards in hand.

Play then passes to the player on your left.

When the draw pile has no more cards in it, you will be unable to replenish the Store each turn. Continue playing until all of the cards in the Store have been purchased. At that point, the game ends and each player totals up their final score.

Example

Alicia, Beth and Carlos are playing “Tensorial Relations.” Each already has a hand of cards.

Face-up in the Store are the letters S, J, B, D, W, Z and P.

The Goal

Spell words using letters in your personal deck to earn points to buy more letters, which in turn allow you to spell even better words.

Getting Started

Take one each of the following letters and shuffle them together as your starting deck: R, S, T, L, N, A, E, I, and O.

Choose a dealer in the normal way.

The Deal

Shuffle the remaining cards together to form the draw pile.

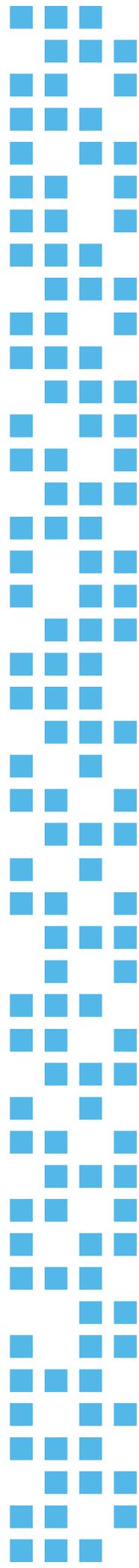
Deal seven cards from the draw pile face-up in the center of the table. These face-up letters are called the Store, and they are the letters currently available for purchase.

Each player draws six cards from their personal deck, to be their hand of cards.

On Alicia’s turn, she reveals the word LONERS, using all the letters in her hand. L is worth 3 points, O is worth 2, N is worth 2, E is worth 1, R is worth 2 and S is worth 2. So in total, LONERS is worth 12 points. Looking at the letters, Alicia decides to purchase the letters S for 2 and J for 10 (J displays 18 on the card, so it counts as 10.) Alicia places the S and J in her discard pile, along with the cards from her hand. Then she draws two cards from the draw pile, K and A, and places them in the Store to replace the letters that she bought. At the end of her turn, Alicia draws to replenish her hand to six cards. There are three cards left in her deck—A, I and T—so she draws those. Then she reshuffles her discard pile (L, O, N, E, R, S, S, and J) to make a new personal deck. She has three cards in hand, so she has to draw three more. She draws J, S and E.

Now it is Beth’s turn. Beth reveals that the best word she can create from her hand is SAINT, with a leftover O. The letters in her word total up to 9 points (the O isn’t used in her word so Beth gets zero points for it). With her 9 points, she decides to purchase the letter B. B costs 9 points, so it’s the only letter she can afford. The B goes in her discard pile, along with S, A, I, N, T, and O from her hand. Beth replaces the B with a new card—a wild card—from the draw pile so that the Store has seven cards face-up. Beth then draws the remainder of her personal deck (L, E, and R). She is out of cards, so she reshuffles her discard pile to make a new personal deck. She draws three cards (T, O and I) to get her hand up to six cards. Play then proceeds to Carlos and the game continues until there are now more cards in the draw pile or the store.





Scoring

At the end of the game, each player counts up the total value of all letters in their decks, including all cards in their discard pile. As with purchasing, cards with a value listed higher than 10 count as 10, and wild cards count as zero.

How to Win

The player with the highest total score wins.

Challenges

If a challenged word proves invalid, the active player loses their turn. They discard all cards from their hand and draw a new hand. The player to their left then takes their turn.

If the word is valid, the challenging player loses their next turn.



Word War

Alex Kanous

For 2-4 Players

In “Word War,” you strive to form words from an always morphing grid of letters.

The Play

The dealer goes first.

When it's your turn, if you do not already have a card in your hand, draw a card from the top of the deck or the discard pile. If you already have a card in your hand, you may discard that card, face-up, to the discard pile, and then draw a new card from the deck. The card in your hand is to be kept face-down.

Then, if there is an open spot on the grid, you may choose to play a single card from either your hand or your score pile onto one of those spots. Alternatively, you may choose to replace a card currently in the grid with a single card from either your hand or your score pile, so long as the card you play has a higher value than the card it replaces. The replaced card is placed face-up on top of the discard pile.

Finally, you may attempt to spell a word using the cards on the table. The word must be at least three letters in length and formed from cards that are sequentially adjacent, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. The word must be able to be read in order, though that order may be forward, backward, or diagonally. The same card cannot be used multiple times to form a word.

If you correctly spell a word, choose one card used to form that word and place it face-down in your score pile. The value of this card cannot exceed the combined value of the other cards used to spell the word, and it may not be a card you added to the grid this turn. Wild cards have a value of 0.

If you are unable or choose not to form a word on your turn, you must pass. On your remaining turns you may play two cards, from either your hand or your score pile, onto open spots in the grid or to replace existing cards in the grid. If you are unable or choose not to form a word on any of your remaining turns, you must pass a second time and are out of the game until the scoring phase.

Scoring

Once all players have passed twice, add up the points on all the cards in your score pile. Wild cards have a value of 0.

Challenges

If a challenged word proves to be invalid, the player who formed it must retract the card they played, if any, and forfeit the opportunity to form any word that turn. If the challenged word is valid, then it is scored as normal and the challenger forfeits the right to form a word on their next turn.

The Goal

Score points by forming words using the cards face-up on the table while trying to limit your opponents' opportunities to do the same.

Getting Started

Choose a dealer in the normal way.

The Deal

Arrange sixteen cards face-up in a 4x4 grid on the table. Place the remaining deck to one side.

How to Win

You win if you have the highest score after all players have passed twice.



Strategy and Hints

Consider where and when you insert cards into the grid from your hand or score pile. As those cards cannot be selected as your score card, they will remain on the table to potentially be taken by your opponents.

Sacrificing higher value cards from your score pile to form words may be advantageous if you would otherwise be forced to pass. Remember, once you have passed twice, you are done until the game ends!