

# Not beany enough

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The other night, I was playing a friendly game of Scrabble®, and I managed to play BEANIER\* (meaning “with a stronger flavor of beans”) onto a triple-word score, crossing the B with an open Y, scoring over 100 points in the process. This sufficiently demoralized the other players that the game turned into “play anything that vaguely resembles a word, with creative spelling encouraged.” It turns out that BEANIER\* is not listed in the online versions of the SOWPODS or TWL Scrabble word lists, although I made the move in good faith. If the others had thought to challenge, they would’ve succeeded. My brother and I play Scrabble with very different styles. I’m not so much concerned with scoring (although I certainly try to make high-scoring moves) as I am with having a pretty board with a lot of intersections and clever words. I treat Scrabble as a collaborative effort that happens to have a winner at the end, in the same spirit as shows like *My Music* or *Says You*. As a result, I don’t pay too much attention to whether I’m opening easy access to a triple-word square, and I will forego a higher-scoring play in favor of one that uses a funny word or which connects two parts of the board. If you look at my scoresheet at the end of the game, it consists of a lot of medium-scoring moves (and a few really pathetic ones), with maybe one “super-move” per game where I play a bingo or otherwise manage to rack up a lot of points at one go. My brother’s approach is much more methodical. He doesn’t play a very flashy game; he just focuses on scoring twenty or more points per move. If you look at his scoresheet, it’s just a slow, steady climb to the final tally.

This means that when we play, it’s a competition between the tortoise and the hare. (I’m the hare.) Will my “super-move” be enough to hold off the steady erosion of my lead from the constant barrage of strong moves? Usually, the answer is No. Slow and steady wins the race. But I like to think I have more fun.

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