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 Visit my main [Scrabble II for word lovers!](#) page.

Scrabble - Dating your classic Scrabble set, 1948 - 1999

As you know from my page dealing with [changes to the box top Scrabble rules](#), I've picked up a bunch of standard Scrabble sets dating from the early 1950s to at least 1999.

After reaching a "critical mass" of vintage Scrabble games, I got curious about the approximate time frame for when a given set rolled off the production line. I've always known that this wouldn't be easy; the two dates easily found on a Scrabble game tell us almost nothing about when the game was made.

One is the copyright for the rules, and the "1953" rules stayed in effect up to 1976, for example. The copyright on the board is even more useless; it stayed put at 1948 almost up to the year 2000! So when you see a vintage Scrabble set on eBay "from 1953" or "from 1948", buyer beware!

So we have to use other evidence, such as from a knowledge of the history of ownership of Scrabble, and from inserted forms and leaflets, to zero in on the time frame for a given set.

I hope my deductions are useful and interesting to you; they certainly aren't the final word. Most of the dates given here are very approximate; there's much room for refinement. And while I think this progression of standard Scrabble box styles is pretty complete, based on an observation of the Scrabble sets that come up for sale on eBay, you never know.

I'm also assuming that when a second Scrabble factory was built in 1957, both factories cranked out identical sets at the same time!

To get us rolling, here are the standard Scrabble sets I know of, arranged in a plausible chronology. If you click on a box top, you will be taken to the section explaining the considerations that went into determining the time frame for that set. The main aspects we look at are the box top design, the rules, the copyright and manufacturing information below the rules, and the board.

Period: 1948
 ([Sure wish I had a set!](#))

Period: 1949 - early 1953



Text: SCRABBLE/Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

Period: early 1953 - later 1953



Added text: Manufactured by Selchow & Righter Co., New York, N. Y.
 for Production & Marketing Corp.

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Changed text: "Corp." to "Company".

Period: ca 1955 - 1957?



Changed text: "Company" to "Co."

Period: ca 1958



Paper sticker changed to foil sticker; "Co." back to "Company".

Period: ca 1959?



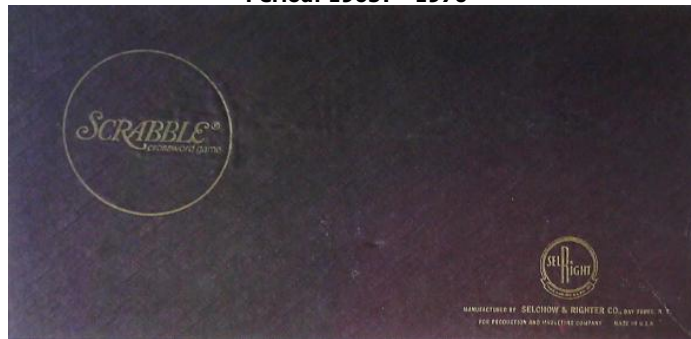
Added text: A CROSSWORD GAME.
New box color and texture.

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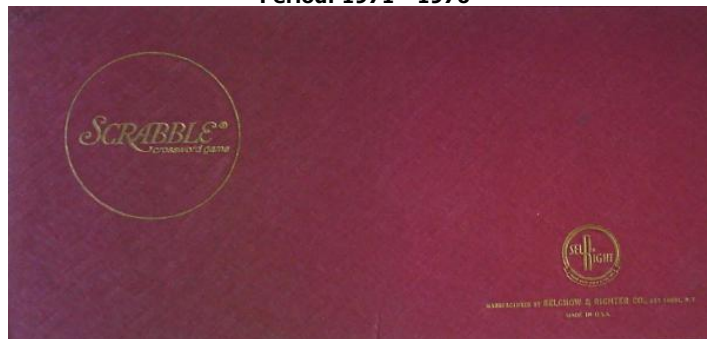
SelRight trademark and manufacturing statement stamped on box top.

Period: 1965? - 1970



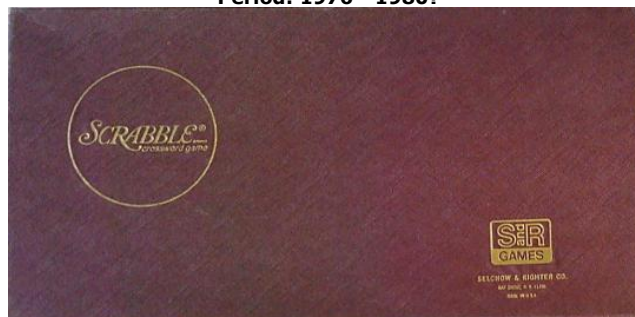
Round sticker replaced with stamped logo. Font change, and Bay Shore address in lower right.

Period: 1971 - 1976



Bright maroon; no more Production & Marketing Company.

Period: 1976 - 1980?



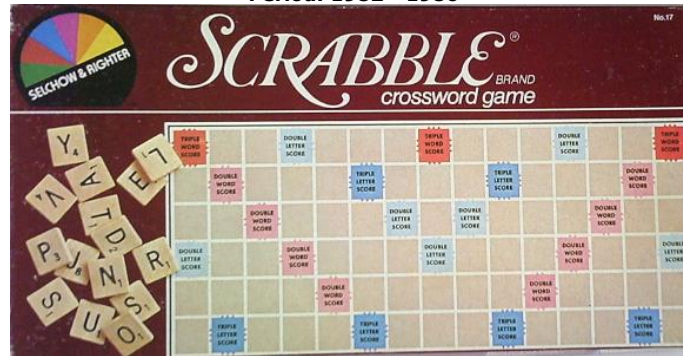
Rectangular "S and R GAMES" logo. Bay Shore zip code 11706 added.

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Selchow & Righter "peacock tail" trademark.

Period: 1982 - 1986

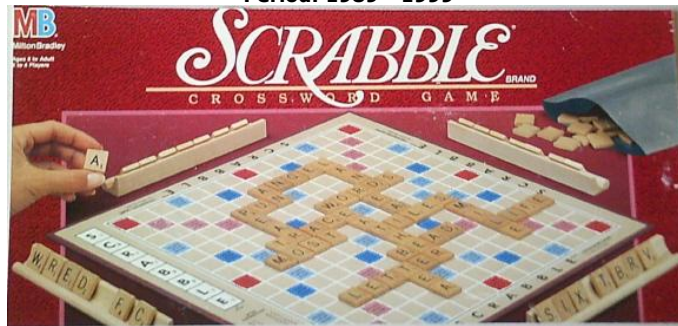


Selchow & Righter goes crazy with color.

Gap: 1986 - 1989

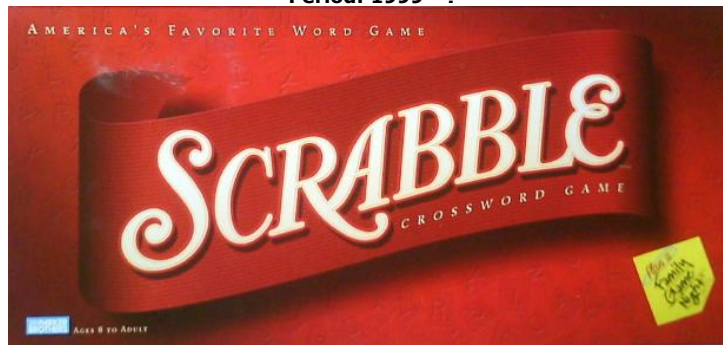
(I have no set from the Coleco period.)

Period: 1989 - 1999



Milton Bradley/Hasbro.

Period: 1999 - ?



Parker Brothers/Hasbro.

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This information was extracted from **Word Freak** by Stefan Fatsis.

1937-1947: Alfred Butts finalizes Criss-Cross Words. He sells about 100 sets.
 1947: Butts turns the game over to James Brunot. Brunot weeds out a few premium squares around the middle of the board; adds 50-point bingo bonus; renames it Scrabble!
 Summer 1948: Brunot makes a few hundred(?) Scrabble sets, mainly for promotional use.
 1948: **1948 SCRABBLE RULES.**
 1949: **1949 SCRABBLE RULES.**
 1949: 2413 games sold.
 1950: Brunot orders game boards from Selchow & Righter.
 1950: 1632 games sold.
 1951: 4859 games sold.
 Summer 1952: 200 games/week. Brunot returns from vacation to find 2500 orders!
 3rd Quarter 1952: 500+ games/week.
 4th Quarter 1952: 2000 games/week.
 Early 1953: 6000 games/week; but orders arriving by tens of thousands!
 March 1953: Brunot licenses production and marketing to Selchow & Righter.
 later 1953: **1953 SCRABBLE RULES.**
 1953: 800,000 games sold, regular and cardboard.
 1954: 3,798,555 games sold.
 Jun 26 1956: Patent granted for star points around the premium squares.
 1957?: Selchow & Righter builds new factory, offices in Bay Shore, Long Island.
 Sep 3 1957: SelRight trademark registered.
 Jan 1 1971: Brunot sells Scrabble outright to Selchow & Righter.
 1976: **1976 SCRABBLE RULES.**
 1986: Coleco buys Selchow & Righter.
 1989: Hasbro acquires assets of bankrupt Coleco.
 1989: **1989 SCRABBLE RULES.** Milton Bradley division of Hasbro makes Scrabble.
 1999: **1999 SCRABBLE RULES.** Parker Brothers division of Hasbro makes Scrabble.

Period: 1948

Defining characteristics for this period:

- Rule copyright: 1948

I don't have a set from this earliest period. Do you? If so, get in touch! I'd love to see the original rules, not to mention, the box and board and tiles and racks. Presumably, if you ever should stumble on one, it will be easy to recognize; there will be no date later than 1948 shown anywhere.

According to **Word Freak**, Scrabble's owner **James Brunot** started production in the summer of 1948, assembling the games in his kitchen. (It says that Brunot hired Selchow & Righter to make "a few hundred boards," but later in the book that date is put a couple of years later, which seems more plausible to me.)

Word Freak gives the impression that the Scrabble sets of 1948 were solely for promotional purposes. The inventor of the game, Alfred Butts, received his first copy from Brunot in December 1948, and it's hardly thinkable that any sales activity took place before that courtesy.

All this surely makes a 1948 original issue Scrabble set a very rare item, indeed. I don't know where you can view one. You can view Alfred Butts' **Criss-Cross Words**, which was the original Scrabble before James Brunot modified it slightly changed the name. Go to the **National Scrabble Association** web site and find a link to "History".

Period: 1949 - early 1953



Defining characteristics of sets for this period:

- Rule copyright: 1949
- Board copyright: 1948

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