

Words on Target – 2nd Shots



No darts are used in the playing of this game.

From last month's introduction:

301 is one of the very common games in English darts. Throw three darts on your turn, add up the points earned and deduct them from 301. The object is to deduct exactly 301 points, ending up with zero, before your opponents do.

Let's play the game **Words on Target** with common English, uncapitalized 5-letter words. No hyphens or apostrophes allowed. The letters score points on the familiar scale A = 1, B = 2, ..., Z = 26.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

I'll be your opponent for this practice game and you may go first. Of course, I'll have to imagine what words you might pick. Hmm. I'll say you pick FUZZY, an excellent choice. It scores the sum of: 6, 21, 26, 26, and 25, or a total of 104 points. Congratulations on a good opener. Your 301 start has been whittled down to 197.

At this point we may want to adopt the rule that words over the course of a game, or the course of an evening, may be used only once. That prevents me from using your FUZZY, not that I would ever.

My move and I'll pick YURTS for a total of 103. I'm left with 198.

It's your turn and you slyly say WRYLTY. It scores $23 + 18 + 25 + 12 + 25 = 103$. Impressive. You're left with 94. At this point, as in the actual dart game, you need to plan ahead. If your next word adds to more than 94, you deduct nothing – you lose your turn. Worse than that would be having your word add to 90 or so, meaning your balance would be less than 5 points and less than any word can score. You lose.

Rather than putting a time limit, like an egg timer, on each turn to prevent the proverbial putterer taking ponderous amounts of time, we instead play the LIGHTNING ROUND. When both players – or two players in a game with more than two players – have reached a balance of 75 or less, all players can play at once, and play as many words as they want. The first person to reach exactly zero calls GAME and **everyone stops to check that person's score**. If the person made an error, they have the honor of going for the chips and dip. The LIGHTNING ROUND then continues until a winner is certified by the others.

Darts players get good at knowing the "finishes" for each balance. The finish for 50 is either 20, 20 and 10, or some equivalent. The photos at the top [and below] illustrate "word" finishes for 19, 20 and 50 points – the bull's-eye. By playing **Words on Target** often enough, you might also build up a bank of finishing words. I think this game has potential for the stay-at-home student as well. Good practice with vocabulary and mental addition / subtraction.

2nd Shots

I think you understand the game well enough, so rather than finishing ours, I'll leave you with the tasks of finding more word finishes. Here are some potential game situations.

1. A long shot. You have 101 remaining. Find a word that wins your game.
2. A tight squeeze. In playing the lightning round you've left yourself with 16 points. Can you still win the game?
3. One player has less than 75 remaining. It's your turn and you are at 76 and would like to avoid the lightning round. Find the winning word.
4. You just became the second player under 75 points and need 74 more to go out. Win the lightning round with one word.
5. You have 35 to go and you quickly added up the word GAFFS. It's 39. Too much. Can you adjust the letters to make a new word worth 35?

These five posers are summarized in the table below. Find the finishes.

- a. 101
- b. 16
- c. 76
- d. 74
- e. 35



Good hunting, and remember – eye on the bull's-eye and wrist flexed. Ha!