A method of playing a game includes scrambling letters, presenting identical sets of the letters in scrambled form in multiple display areas for viewing by multiple players of the game, and communicating a first word formed by a player from the scrambled letters, the first word having a minimum number of characters.
SCRAMBLE OR PRESENT AN ARRANGEMENT OF LETTERS AND/OR OTHER VISIBLE INDICIA

IDENTIFY A FIRST WORD THAT CAN BE FORMED FROM THE LETTERS AND/OR OTHER VISIBLE INDICA, THE FIRST WORD BEING A MINIMUM NUMBER OF CHARACTERS IN LENGTH

ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY A WORD LONGER THAN THE FIRST WORD (BEFORE A TIME INTERVAL EXPIRES)

AWARD ONE OR MORE POINTS TO A PLAYER WHO IDENTIFIES A LONGEST WORD THAT CAN BE FORMED

FIG. 8
**FIG. 9**

COMMUNICATION NETWORK (E.G., INTERNET, WIRELESS COMM. NETWORK)

GAME SERVER

**FIG. 10**

R A B T E L H G

OFF/ON

NEXT ROUND

SCORE

PLAYER A

9

UP

DOWN

PLAYER B

11

UP

DOWN

START TIMER

STOP

FIG. 10
GAME METHOD AND APPARATUS, INCLUDING WORD GAME WITH HAND-HELD SCRAMBLING DEVICE

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The invention relates generally to games and, for example, to a method of play of a game and a game apparatus involving competition among players to identify words from a scrambled arrangement of visible indicia such as letters.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] A large variety of games exists for entertainment and educational purposes. In a commonly known game sold under the trademark BOGGLE, a number of cubes or die bearing letters are shaken in a container and randomly fall into a grid. The participant then attempts to identify as many words as possible, where the words are formed by contiguous pairs of letters. Further, a large number of computer-based programs exists for teaching spelling, general knowledge, and trivia.

[0003] It would be useful to be able to provide a versatile method of play of a game and game apparatus involving competition among players to form the longest word (or phrase, alternately) from a scrambled arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTIONS

[0004] Methods of play of a game and game apparatuses are described herein. The methods may be used with the apparatus described herein or with other apparatus. Additionally, the apparatus may be used with the methods described herein, as well, but need not be. The methods and apparatus may be used to provide a challenging game for many ages and skill levels and may also be used at the same time by people of different skill levels.

[0005] In an example embodiment, a method of playing a game begins by scrambling letters or making ready an existing set of scrambled letters (or other indicia), and then presenting identical sets of the letters in scrambled form in multiple display areas for viewing by multiple players of the game. In an example of a two player game, each player views a respective display area, such as on opposite sides of a playing device. In an example of team play, each team can view a respective display area, for example on opposite sides of a playing device. A player communicates a first word having a minimum number of letters (e.g., four) from the scrambled letters/indicia. In one example, the player communicating the first word will be the player communicating the first valid word meeting the requirements of the game for calling out the first word (such as a valid word containing four or more letters). By way of example, communicating the first word includes calling out the first word. By way of example, communicating the first word includes providing one or more inputs representing the first word to a computing device or other game device. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes starting an interval of time (e.g., thirty seconds), and communicating before expiration of the interval of time a second word formed from the scrambled letters, the second word having or being formed from more characters than the first word. By way of example, communicating the second word includes calling out the second word. By way of example, communicating the second word includes providing one or more inputs representing the second word to a computing or other game device. In an example embodiment with multiple players playing the game, the second word is communicated by a different player (such as the other player/team) than the player who communicated the first word. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes awarding a point to the player who communicates a longest word that players of the game can form from the scrambled letters, for example the greatest number called out by the player awarded the point in the allotted time. In another example, a first timer can be started setting an interval within which a first valid word is called out, and in another example, there is no second word within which the first word is to be identified. In a further example embodiment, a first player/team identifies a first valid word, thereby starting a time interval (e.g., 30 seconds). If the time deadline for calling out a longer word than the first approaches, the second player/team or players (in a non-team play configuration) can buy extra time to find a longer word. If no longer word is discovered, a point or points can be deducted from the player/team or those players buying time, or the first player/team may be awarded two points, one for the first word and one for the purchase by the other player/team. In another example, play can continue for an additional interval or intervals (e.g., 30 seconds) during which interval(s) all or some of the players/teams can try to discover a longer word, with a subsequent award of a point(s). The number of additional intervals may be determined by the number of additional words discovered for the given scramble of letters.

[0006] In an example embodiment, a method of playing a game includes initiating a mechanical scrambling of game pieces within a game device (e.g., shaking the game device), and causing the mechanical scrambling of the game pieces to end by placing the game device on a surface, which could be used for example to force the game pieces upward, into the game device and into stationary positions such that letters on the game pieces are aligned. The method of playing a game next includes communicating a long word that can be formed from letters that are visible on the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the long word is a minimum number of characters (e.g., four) in length. In an example embodiment, communicating a long word includes taking turns communicating successively longer words that can be formed from the letters. In one example, the number of turns is one after the first valid word is called out. In another example, there are two or more after the first valid word is called out. In an example embodiment, communicating a long word includes providing a time limit (e.g., thirty seconds) by which a player must communicate a next word, for example a word after a word is previously communicated by another player. In one example, the “another player” is the second player or second team, and in a further example the “another player” is one of several other players in a multiple player, non-team play. In an example embodiment, communicating includes (correctly) pronouncing the long word. In another example embodiment, any player identifying a word does so by properly spelling the word while touching or indicating which letter is being relied upon to form the word in the sequence selected by the player. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes awarding a point to the player who com-
municates a longest word that players of the game can or in fact did form from the letters.

In an example embodiment, a method of playing an electronic game starts by causing a computer-executable program to control one or more video displays to present a randomly ordered arrangement of letters (e.g., eight letters). The method of playing an electronic game continues by identifying a first word that can be formed from the letters, the first word having a minimum number of characters (e.g., four), providing an input that causes the computer-executable program to control the one or more video displays to start or present a timer, and attempting (for example by a second player or second team) to identify a word longer in length than the first word before a time interval (e.g., thirty seconds) presented by the timer expires. In an example embodiment, the randomly ordered arrangement of letters is identically presented at multiple video displays or other presentation devices. In an example embodiment, the method of playing an electronic game further includes awarding one or more points to a player who identifies a long word that can be formed by players of the game from the letters. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls the one or more video displays to present a score and controls a system for allowing a player to change the score. For example, the system for allowing a player to change the score includes a system for selectively incrementing or decrementing the score. For example, the system for allowing a player to change the score is enabled after the timer expires. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls a system for allowing a player to initiate a next round resulting in a new randomly ordered arrangement of letters being presented at the one or more video displays. Some or all of the letters may be the same as or different from those in a previous presentation.

In an example embodiment, a method for controlling a video game or other form of game presentation includes providing a processor with access to a computer-executable program. When executed by the processor, the computer-executable program controls the video game to present a randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images, and to present a timer in response to a start timer input provided by the video game processor. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls the video game to present a score and to provide a system for allowing the player to change the score. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program presents the randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia at multiple video displays or other presentation displays. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs from multiple players. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs provided via a personal computer, a hand-held electronic game apparatus, and/or a mobile communications device. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls the video game utilizing a network communications protocol. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls the video game utilizing an instant messaging technique.

In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes an electronic device with a display. The electronic device is configured to present on the display a randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images. The electronic device is configured to present on the display a visible timer, in response to a start timer input provided to the electronic device by a player. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to present a new randomly ordered arrangement of the visible indicia in response to a next round input provided by the player. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to present a score and to provide a system for allowing the player to change the score. The electronic device can take different forms. For example, the electronic device is a hand-held unit that includes a system for providing a player input to the game apparatus. Also, by way of example, the electronic device is a mobile communications device. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to establish a communications link to a network. For example, the communications link is wireless. The network can, but does not necessarily, include the Internet. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to receive inputs from multiple players at least one of which is remotely located in relation to the electronic device. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to present a list of all possible combinations and arrangements of the visible indicia that comply with a set of game rules.

In an example embodiment, an improvement in a game apparatus that facilitates scrambling game pieces includes a structure that aligns the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing of the game pieces by a player when the game apparatus is placed upon a surface. For example, an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees. In an example embodiment, the structure aligns the game pieces to be top side up in relation to the player.

In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes game pieces which are scrambled by operation of the game apparatus. The game apparatus also includes a structure, engaged by placing the game apparatus upon a surface, for automatically aligning the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the game pieces are hexagonally shaped. In an example embodiment, the game pieces bear visible indicia. In an example embodiment, the arrangement of the game pieces provides multiple identical sets of the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, the multiple identical sets of the visible indicia are each presented at a different viewing perspective. In an example embodiment, the structure for automatically aligning the game pieces includes receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface. In an example embodiment, the receiving channels include windows. In an example embodiment, the structure for automatically aligning the game pieces includes a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod.
when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface. In an example embodiment, the apertures are substantially circular in shape.

[0012] In an example embodiment, an improvement to a game apparatus in which multiple game pieces are scrambled includes a structure that sets the game pieces into positions resulting in multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia on the game pieces being simultaneously presented. In an example embodiment, the multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia are presented at different viewing perspectives or positions. In an example embodiment, the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface.

[0013] In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes game pieces which are moved by operation of the game apparatus, the game pieces including visible indicia. The game apparatus also includes a structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces providing dual simultaneous displays of the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, the dual simultaneous displays of the visible indicia are each presented at a different viewing perspective from each other. In an example embodiment, the game pieces are hexagonally shaped. In an example embodiment, the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface. In an example embodiment, an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees. In an example embodiment, the structure includes receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface. In an example embodiment, the receiving channels include viewing areas, openings or windows. In an example embodiment, the structure includes a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface. In an example embodiment, the apertures are substantially circular in shape.

[0014] In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes a housing with a display portion that includes receiving channels, and multiple game pieces (e.g., eight game pieces) laterally supported or guided by the receiving channels. Each game piece is hexagonal in shape and includes a circular inner surface. The game pieces have outer surfaces that are blank or bear visible indicia. The game apparatus also includes a rod secured to the housing and configured to support the game pieces adjacent to the circular inner surfaces. The rod is positioned a sufficient distance away from the display portion and the game pieces have a sufficiently large inner diameter such that the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the game pieces and such that the game pieces are partially disengaged from the receiving channels and free to rotate about the rod when the engaging force is removed. In an example embodiment, the housing includes an open bottom portion configured to permit the engaging force to be provided by contact between the game pieces and a surface upon which the game apparatus is placed. In an example embodiment, the receiving channels each include a top side and second and third sides adjacent to the top side. The top side is approximately the same width as the outer surface of the game pieces. The second and third sides are longer than the outer surface of the game pieces. The second and third sides are substantially parallel to the outer surfaces facing the second and third sides respectively when the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels. In an example embodiment, the display portion includes viewing areas or windows through which some of the outer surfaces of the game pieces can be viewed when the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels. In an example embodiment, the viewing areas or windows are configured in two rows along opposite sides of the display portion. In an example embodiment, the game pieces are configured with the visible indicia such that identical combinations of the visible indicia are visible through the windows of each row. In an example embodiment, the game apparatus further includes a handle secured to the housing. In an example embodiment, the handle includes a compartment, and the game apparatus further includes a timer (e.g., an hourglass) sized to be fitted within the compartment.

[0015] In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes multiple hexagonal ring game pieces that each include six outer surfaces, the outer surfaces selectively bearing visible indicia, and a housing including receiving channels complementary in shape to the hexagonal ring game pieces. The housing includes viewing areas or windows through which one or more rows of the outer surfaces can be viewed when the hexagonal ring game pieces are positioned within the receiving channels. In an example embodiment, the windows form an angle of approximately 60 degrees with a bottom portion of the housing. In an example embodiment, the windows are configured such that first and second rows of the outer surfaces can be viewed along opposite sides of the housing. In an example embodiment, the game pieces are configured with the visible indicia such that the first and second rows of the outer surfaces include identical combinations of the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, the game apparatus further includes a structure for mechanically coupling the hexagonal ring game pieces to the housing such that the hexagonal ring game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the hexagonal ring game pieces and such that the hexagonal ring game pieces are partially disengaged from the receiving channels and free to rotate in relation to the windows when the engaging force is removed. In an example embodiment, the structure for mechanically coupling includes a rod that supports the hexagonal ring game pieces. In an example embodiment, the hexagonal ring game pieces each include a circular inner surface adjacent to the rod. In an example embodiment, the housing includes an open bottom portion configured to permit the engaging force to be provided by contact between the hexagonal ring game pieces and a surface upon or against which the game apparatus is placed. In an example embodiment, the game apparatus includes a score keeping mechanism that can be manually manipulated by a player. In an example embodiment, the game apparatus further includes a handle secured to the housing.

[0016] In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes a housing containing game pieces which are scrambled by repositioning the housing. The game apparatus also includes a handle secured to the housing, the handle including a compartment, and a timer (e.g., an hourglass) sized to fit within the compartment. In an example embodiment, the game apparatus further includes a structure for
setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the scrambled arrangement of the game pieces includes dual identical displays presented at different viewing perspectives. In an example embodiment, the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface. In an example embodiment, an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees. In an example embodiment, the structure includes receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface. In an example embodiment, the receiving channels include windows. In an example embodiment, the structure includes a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface.

In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes a set of hexagonal rings for a scramble game. The hexagonal rings include outer surfaces that are blank or bear visible indicia which are arranged along the outer surfaces such that pairs of the visible indicia that are spaced a predetermined number (e.g., one) of outer surfaces apart are identical but inverted in orientation. In an example embodiment, the outer surfaces are substantially flat. In an example embodiment, the set includes eight hexagonal rings. In an example embodiment, the hexagonal rings each include an aperture. In an example embodiment, the apertures are circular. In an example embodiment, the visible indicia are of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only consonants as the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only vowels as the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include a mixture of consonants and vowels as the visible indicia.

In an example embodiment, a method of solo game play includes (a) providing a player with a scramble of letters (e.g., eight letters), (b) awarding one or more points to the player for each qualifying word identified by the player in the scramble of letters depending upon scoring rules, and (c) repeating (a) and (b) for a number of rounds (e.g., ten rounds), aggregating points awarded to the player to provide a final score after a last round is played. In an example embodiment, the scoring rules provide that one or more points are awarded only for the longest qualifying word identified in each round. In an example embodiment, the scoring rules provide that one or more points are awarded for all qualifying words identified in each round. In an example embodiment, the scoring rules provide that each qualifying word have a minimum number of letters (e.g., four letters). In an example embodiment, each of the rounds has a time limit (e.g., thirty seconds) within which the player must identify one or more qualifying words.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top perspective view of an example embodiment of a game apparatus;

FIG. 2 is an exploded view of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 illustrates the game apparatus of FIG. 1 in operation;

FIG. 4A is a top view of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4B is a front view of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4C is a side view of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a bottom perspective view of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 shows hexagonal game pieces and receiving channels of the game apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 7A illustrates the game apparatus of FIG. 1 in operation;

FIG. 7B illustrates the game apparatus of FIG. 1 in operation;

FIG. 8 is a flow diagram of an example method of playing a game;

FIG. 9 illustrates example electronic devices configured according to principles described herein, as well as a communication network that can be used in various embodiments; and

FIG. 10 shows an example graphical user interface for electronic devices.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

Methods of play of a game and game apparatuses, for example involving competition among players, to identify words from a scrambled arrangement of visible indicia such as letters are described herein.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, in an example embodiment, a game apparatus 100 includes a housing 102, and a handle 104 and an end portion 106 which are fitted or secured (e.g., detachably snap-fitted) to the housing 102 at opposite ends thereof. In any of the examples, the housing can be any structure for receiving portions of the game pieces. The housing may also permit viewing of only portions of the game pieces, for example to decrease distractions by other portions of the game pieces not in play. In this example embodiment, the game apparatus 100 includes a set 106 of game pieces 110 that selectively bear visible indicia on outer surfaces 112 of the game pieces 110. In this example embodiment, each game piece 110 is a hexagonal ring game piece that includes six outer surfaces 112, and the housing 102 includes receiving channels 114, at least partly complementary in shape to the hexagonal game pieces. In this example embodiment, the housing 102 includes openings or windows 116 through which one or more rows of the outer surfaces 112 can be viewed when the game pieces 110 are positioned within the receiving channels 114. The windows can also be formed as other types of viewing areas.
In this example embodiment, the handle 104 includes an upper portion 118, a lower portion 120, and an end portion 122 which are fitted or secured together and to the housing 102 (e.g., detachably snap-fitted). In this example embodiment, the handle 104 includes a compartment 124 the boundaries of which are defined by inner surfaces of the upper portion 118, the lower portion 120, and the end portion 122, respectively. In an embodiment, the upper portion 118 and the lower portion 120 are secured together (e.g., with an adhesive or mechanically interlocked in some conventional fashion), or are integrally formed as a single component, with the end portion 122 being detachably secured thereto.

In this example embodiment, the game apparatus 100 includes a timer 126 sized to fit within the compartment 124. In this example embodiment, the timer 126 is an hourglass. However, it should be appreciated that the timer can be of a different type or shape, in which case the handle and/or its inner surfaces may be formed with a different shape to accommodate the shape of the timer. Moreover, the game apparatus 100 can be configured such that the timer 126 is secured in an alternate fashion (e.g., external to the housing 102 or handle 104), or not at all.

In this example embodiment, the game apparatus 100 includes a score keeping mechanism 128 that can be manually manipulated by a player. In this example embodiment, score keeping mechanism 128 includes a raised support structure 130 with parallel grooves 132 and 134 formed therein as shown. The score keeping mechanism 128 further includes score sliders 136 and 138 shaped to slide along the grooves 132 and 134, respectively. In an example embodiment, the grooves 132 and 134 are formed with evenly spaced notches (not shown) into which the score sliders 136 and 138 drop as they are moved from one end of the grooves to the other. The number of notches can vary depending upon the design of a particular game apparatus; it is generally contemplated that each of the grooves 132 and 134 will have an equal number of notches, although this is not necessarily the case. The raised support structure 130 is secured to the housing 102 (e.g., with an adhesive or mechanically interlocked in some conventional fashion). Alternately, the raised support structure 130 and the housing 102 are integrally formed as a single component.

In this example embodiment, the game apparatus 100 includes a structure for mechanically coupling the game pieces 110 to the housing 102 such that the game pieces 110 can be selectively set in a position for viewing and in a position for scrambling. For example, the game pieces can be fully seated within the receiving channels 114 and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the game pieces 110, and such that the game pieces 110 can be partially disengaged from the receiving channels 114 and free to rotate in relation to the windows 116 when the engaging force is removed. In this example embodiment, the structure for mechanically coupling includes a rod 140 that supports the game pieces 110. In this example embodiment, a recess 142 in the handle 104 supports one end of the rod 140 and another recess (not shown) in the end portion 106 supports the other end of the rod 140. In this example embodiment, the rod 140 is substantially cylindrical; alternately, the rod 140 can be flattened or have a number of flat surfaces or flat and rounded or other surface configurations.

In this example embodiment, a game apparatus includes a housing including or containing game pieces which are scrambled by repositioning (e.g., shaking) the housing, and a structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces. Referring to FIG. 3, in this example embodiment, the structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus 100 being placed (as denoted by arrow 150) upon or against a surface 152, such as a table top. In this example embodiment, the structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces includes the receiving channels 114 (FIG. 2) into which the game pieces 110 are seated or received when the game apparatus 100 is placed upon the surface 152. In this example embodiment, the receiving channels 114 include the windows 116. The surface 152 is preferably such as to reliably position at the same time all the game pieces for adequate visibility through the windows. In this example embodiment, the structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces includes the rod 140. In an example embodiment, the rod 140 is adjacent to the receiving channels 114 and passes through an aperture 142 (or generally central portion) of each of the game pieces 110.

In this example embodiment, a game apparatus includes game pieces which are scrambled by operation of the game apparatus, and a structure, engaged by placing the game apparatus upon a surface, for automatically aligning the game pieces in an arrangement. In an example embodiment, the structure for automatically aligning the game pieces includes the rod 140. In an example embodiment, the rod 140 is positioned sufficiently far away from the receiving channels 114 and the apertures 142 (of the game pieces 110) are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces 110 to rotate about the rod 140 when the game apparatus 100 is lifted from the surface 152.

In this example embodiment, the arrangement facilitates ergonomic viewing of the game pieces. In an example embodiment, an improvement to a game apparatus that facilitates scrambling game pieces includes a structure that aligns the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing of the game pieces by a player when the game apparatus is placed upon a surface. Referring to FIGS. 4A-4C, in an example embodiment, an angle O formed by the game pieces 110 and the surface 152 is approximately 60 degrees. In this example embodiment, as best shown in FIG. 4B, the structure that aligns the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing aligns the game pieces 110 to be top side up as shown in relation to the player.

In this example embodiment, a game apparatus includes game pieces which are scrambled by operation of the game apparatus, and a structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces providing dual simultaneous displays of visible indicia on the game pieces. Referring to FIG. 4A, dual displays 160 and 162 are provided by two rows of the windows 116 in the housing 102. In this example embodiment, the dual displays 160 and 162 are each presented at a different viewing perspective (e.g., on opposite sides of the housing 102). By way of example, the dual displays 160 and 162 each form an ergonomic viewing angle of approximately 60 degrees with the surface 152, but from different perspectives on opposite sides of the game apparatus 100. It should be understood that displays of visible indicia, simultaneous or otherwise, can be provided at a variety of viewing angles and perspectives. Additionally, they do not necessarily have to be ergonomic.
Referring to FIG. 5, in an example embodiment, the housing 102 includes an open bottom portion 170 configured to permit an engaging force to be provided between the game pieces 110 and the surface 152 upon which the game apparatus 100 is placed. In this example embodiment, the housing 102 also includes divider walls (or partitions) 172 positioned between the game pieces 110 as shown. The divider walls 172 provide lateral support for the game pieces 110. In this example embodiment, each of the divider walls 172 includes a recess 174 to accommodate the rod 140.

Referring again to FIG. 2, in this example embodiment, the receiving channels 114 each include a top side 180 that is approximately the same length as the outer surface 112 of the game pieces 110. In this example embodiment, the receiving channels 114 also include a second side 182 and a third side 184 which are adjacent to the top side 180. The second and third sides 182, 184 are substantially parallel to the outer surfaces 112 facing the second and third sides 182, 184, respectively, when the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels 114. In an example embodiment, together the second and third sides 182, 184 provide a display portion 186 of the housing 102. Conversely, it can be said that the display portion 186 includes the receiving channels 114 which, in turn, include the windows 116. In an example embodiment, the display portion 186 includes windows 116 through which some or portions of the outer surfaces 112 of the game pieces 110 can be viewed when the game pieces 110 are fully seated within the receiving channels 114.

Referring to FIG. 6, in an example embodiment, the game pieces 110 are hexagonal in shape and include a rounded and in this example a circular (or substantially circular) inner surface 190. In an example embodiment, the rod 140 is secured to the housing 102 and configured to support the game pieces 110 adjacent to the circular inner surfaces 190. However, it should be appreciated that alternate shapes (for the inner surfaces 190) as well as alternate structures can be used to provide a mechanical interface between the outer surfaces 112 of the game pieces 110 and the rod 140. For example, FIG. 2 shows the inner surface of a game piece as substantially hexagonal similar to the hexagonal outer shape, and other inner surface configurations are possible, but a substantially circular inner surface as shown in FIG. 6 is suitable and would be included in the game pieces assembled in the structure of FIG. 2.

In an example embodiment, the rod 140 is positioned a sufficient distance away from the display portion 186, and the game pieces 110 have a sufficiently large inner diameter, such that the game pieces 110 are fully seated within the receiving channels 114 and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the game pieces 110, and such that the game pieces 110 are partially disengaged from the receiving channels 114 and relatively free to rotate about the rod 140 when the engaging force is removed.

In an example embodiment, an improvement to a game apparatus in which multiple game pieces are scrabbled includes a structure that sets the game pieces into positions resulting in multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia. In an example embodiment, the multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia are presented at different viewing perspectives, such as provided by the dual displays 160 and 162 (FIG. 4A). In an example embodiment, the structure is configured to set the game pieces 110 in response to the game apparatus 100 being placed upon a surface.

In an example embodiment, the game pieces 110 and the housing 102 are configured such that the outer surfaces 112 that are visible through the windows 116 provide multiple presentations of identical combinations of the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, for each of the game pieces 110, two outer surfaces 112 are displayed. By way of example, in a sequence of outer surfaces 112 on a game piece 110, a first and third outer surface are displayed, while a second outer surface therebetween is not.

In an example embodiment, each of the outer surfaces 112 bearing visible indicia includes a pair of visible indicia elements. The visible indicia are of one or more types selected from a group including, but not limited to: letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images. FIGS. 7A-7D show examples of portions of game pieces, namely, a sequence of outer surfaces including: a first outer surface 112-1, a second outer surface 112-2, and a third outer surface 112-3 presented as though unrolled and laid out flat. In these examples, each of the outer surfaces 112-1, 112-2, 112-3 includes a pair of visible indicia elements. In an example embodiment, the windows 116 are located in the display portion 186 such that, if the outer surface 112-2 faces the top side 180 (of the receiving channel 114), only the portions of the outer surfaces 112-1 and 112-3 denoted by dashed lines are visible through the windows 116. In FIG. 7A, the outer surfaces 112-1, 112-2, 112-3 bear visible indicia that include only vowels. In FIG. 7B, the outer surfaces 112-1, 112-2, 112-3 bear visible indicia that include only consonants. In this example, the outer surface 112-2 is blank. In FIG. 7C, the outer surfaces 112-1, 112-2, 112-3 bear visible indicia that include a mixture of consonants and vowels. In FIG. 7D, the outer surfaces 112-1, 112-2, 112-3 bear visible indicia that include a mixture of letters, numbers, symbols, and images. In an example embodiment, the game pieces 110 are configured with the visible indicia such that two aligned rows of the outer surfaces 112 include identical combinations of the visible indicia. For example, the row 112-1 is equivalent to but upside down relative to row 112-3.

In an example embodiment, the visible indicia exclude letters infrequently occurring in words, such as the letters “Q”, “X”, and “Z”. In an example embodiment, an individual game piece does not bear particular combinations of letters that frequently occur in words, such as “JT”, “CR”, “BR”, and “DR”. However, it may be desirable for such combinations to be possible for display by having one letter in such a combination on one game piece and the other letter in the combination on a next adjacent game piece or on a game piece other than an adjacent game piece. FIG. 7E shows an example selection of letters that can be used on eight game pieces (identified in FIG. 7 as wheels), their distribution on the various game pieces and their relative orientations allowing the dual display of letters, presented as though unrolled and laid out flat. The letters “Q”, “X” and “Z” are omitted, and game pieces 2 and 8 are all vowels, and game pieces 1, 4 and 6 are all consonants. This selection and arrangement of letters permits a large number of letter combinations for forming words.

In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes a set of hexagonal rings for a scrabble game. The hexagonal rings include outer surfaces that are blank or bear visible indicia which are arranged along the outer surfaces.
such that pairs of the visible indicia that are spaced a predetermined number (e.g., one) of outer surfaces apart are identical but inverted in orientation (as shown, for example, in FIGS. 4A-4C). In an example embodiment, the outer surfaces on a given side are substantially flat. In an example embodiment, the set includes eight hexagonal rings; however, the set can include a greater or smaller number of rings. In an example embodiment, the hexagonal rings each include an aperture. In an example embodiment, the apertures are substantially circular. In an example embodiment, the visible indicia are of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only consonants as the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only vowels as the visible indicia. In an example embodiment, one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include a mixture of consonants and vowels as the visible indicia.

With respect to materials, in an example embodiment, the various components of the game apparatus 100 are made from a plastic such as styrene. Alternatively, some or all of the components can be made from other materials such as wood or metal or materials different from each other.

Referring to FIG. 8, in an example embodiment, a method 800 of playing a game includes, at 802, scrambling or presenting an arrangement of letters and/or other visible indicia. This can be accomplished using the game apparatus 100, namely, by holding the handle 104 and shaking the housing 102 (e.g., with a circular hand motion) such that the game pieces 110 rotate about the rod 140, and then placing the game apparatus 100 upon a play surface (e.g., a table top) to set the arrangement as described above. Alternatively, other apparatuses and devices including electronic devices can be used to provide the arrangement of letters and/or other visible indicia.

At 804, a player identifies a first word that can be formed from the letters and/or other visible indicia, the first word being a selected number or a minimum number of characters in length. In an example embodiment, the minimum number of characters is four. In other embodiments, the minimum number of characters is a smaller or larger number. In an example embodiment, the minimum number of characters varies between players. For example, a younger or less skilled player might be permitted to identify a first word that is three or more characters in length, while the first word for a competing player would be four or more characters in length. Various other schemes of providing “handicaps” can be provided. For example, an expert player might be required to identify a first word that is five or more characters in length.

At 806, a player attempts to identify a word that is longer than the first word. In an example embodiment, a different player (than the player who identified the first word) tries to identify a longer word. In an example embodiment, the player who identified the first word can also attempt to identify a longer word and gain an additional point if successful, (e.g., after the second player/team has exhausted their 30 second interval). In an example embodiment, a player is required to identify a longer word before a time interval expires. In an example embodiment, a player can request additional time at the risk of being penalized if he or she is still not able to identify a longer word when the additional time expires.

At 808, one or more points are awarded to a player who identifies a longest word that can be formed, such as the longest word in the allotted time. In an example embodiment, the method 800 is repeated until one of the players accumulates a particular number of points (e.g., 15 points). In an example embodiment, a player who was just awarded a point gets to set the arrangement (at 802) for the next round. Alternatively, another player has a turn at setting the arrangement, or a player with the lowest score gets to set the arrangement.

In an example embodiment, some or all plural forms of words are excluded from words that can be identified. In an example embodiment, only plurals forms of words ending in “S” or “ES” are excluded. In an example embodiment, “words” that can be identified include phrases, i.e., multiple words. For example, an element of visible indicia bearing an image might form part of a phrase in combination with other letters, numbers, symbols, and/or images. Also, an element of visible indicia bearing an image might represent a wild card.

In an example embodiment, a method of playing a game begins by scrambling letters, and then presenting identical sets of the letters in scrambled form in multiple display areas for viewing by multiple players of the game. A player communicates a first word having a minimum number of characters (e.g., four) from the scrambled letters. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes starting an interval of time (e.g., thirty seconds), and communicating before expiration of the interval of time a second word formed from the scrambled letters, the second word having more characters than the first word. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes awarding a point to the player who communicates a word longer than a word that any of the other players can form from the scrambled letters, for example in the allotted time even though longer words are possible.

By way of example, communicating the first (or second) word includes calling out the first (or second) word, or providing one or more inputs representing the first (or second or further) word to a computing device. Thus, players not capable of articulating clearly enough are able to play when an electronic system for receiving player inputs is provided. For example, a keyboard or keypad can be used to type in an identified word.

In an example embodiment, a method of playing a game includes initiating a mechanical scrambling of game pieces within a game device (e.g., shaking the game device), and causing the mechanical scrambling of the game pieces to end by placing the game device on a surface which forces the game pieces upward into the game device and into stationary positions such that letters on the game pieces are aligned. The method of playing a game next includes communicating a long word that can be formed from letters that are visible on the game pieces. In an example embodiment, the long word is a minimum number of characters (e.g., four) in length. In an example embodiment, communicating a long word includes taking turns communicating successively longer words that can be formed from the letters. In an example embodiment, communicating a long word includes providing a time limit (e.g., thirty seconds) by which a player must communicate a next word. In an example embodiment, communicating includes (correctly) pronouncing the long word, and in another example communicating includes properly spelling and indicating the
letters in the display that are relied upon to form the word. In an example embodiment, the method of playing a game further includes awarding a point to the player who communicates a longest word that players of the game can form from the letters, e.g., in the allotted time.

[0063] In another example embodiment, three or more players/teams play separately, for their own benefit. For example, a first player calls out a word (of a minimum length, such as four letters). Next, a timer is started and the other players/teams have, for example, thirty seconds to find a longer word which they write down (e.g., on paper); or a second player/team could yell out (or otherwise communicate) a five-letter word, and another player/team could yell out (or otherwise communicate) a six-letter word, etc. In either case, if all words are found within the time limit, then the player/team that found the longest word is awarded a point.

[0064] In various embodiments, a single player plays the game. In a first “solo play” example embodiment, the player is given ten rounds (e.g., shakes of the device) or some other number of rounds. For each round, after the letters are presented in scrambled form (e.g., by placing the device on the playing surface), the timer is started and the player attempts to find the longest word that he or she can find within the time limited provided by the timer (e.g., 30 seconds). For a game device that is placed on a surface, the player may wish to place the timer on top of the device to more readily notice when time is about to expire for a given round. When using the game apparatus 100 (FIG. 1), the player’s score and a record of how many rounds have been played are kept using the score keeping mechanism 128. For example, the slider 138 (the one closest to a right-handed player) is used to keep a record of rounds, and the slider 136 is used to keep score. In an example embodiment, the points awarded to the player in a given round are equal to the number of letters used in the identified word less three:

- [0065] 4 letter word = 1 point
- [0066] 5 letter word = 2 points
- [0067] 6 letter word = 3 points
- [0068] 7 letter word = 4 points
- [0069] 8 letter word = 5 points

In this example embodiment, the slider 136 can be used to keep track of a total of twenty points; therefore, if the player gets to twenty points, the player can continue keeping score by resetting the slider 136 and remembering that he or she already has twenty points.

[0070] In a second “solo play” example embodiment, one point is awarded for every word that the player can find in a given scramble of letters within the time limit (e.g., 30 seconds) regardless of the length of the word(s), provided the word is a minimum number of letters (e.g., four letters) in length. Other “solo play” variations than those explicitly described herein are also possible.

[0071] FIG. 9 illustrates example electronic devices configured according to principles described herein, as well as a communication network 900 used in various embodiments. By way of example, the communication network 900 includes the Internet, or a wireless communications network. In an example embodiment, a Web-based game is provided by a server 902 using the communication network 900 to communicate with an electronic device. Possible electronic devices include, but are not limited to: a mobile communications device 904 (such as a cellular telephone), a hand-held electronic game 906, a mobile computing device 908 (such as a notebook computer), and a personal computer 910. Alternately, a computer-executable program controlling a game can be physically resident elsewhere (e.g., stored in a memory device 912 and executed by a processor 914) or distributed processing can be employed, with the communication network 900 principally serving a communications function. For example, an instant-messaging version of a game can be provided between electronic devices which communicate via the communication network 900. It is further contemplated that different types of electronic devices can be used by different players while playing a game.

[0072] Referring to FIG. 10, in an example embodiment, a graphical user interface 1000 for electronic devices is configured to receive player inputs from one or more players. By way of example, the graphical user interface 1000 is provided at one or more electronic devices of the types shown in FIG. 9.

[0073] In an example embodiment, the graphical user interface 1000 (e.g., part of a video game) is controlled to present a randomly ordered arrangement 1002 of visible indicia. The indicia may be of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images. The graphical user interface in this example is controlled to present a timer 1004 in response to a start timer input 1006 provided by a player. It should be understood that the arrangement 1002 of visible indicia can be provided in other configurations, for example, in a two-dimensional array of indicia elements, or in some other grouping or haphazard arrangement to further challenge players. In a further example, the graphical user interface 1000 can be controlled to receive user input and if desired to present the user input representing the user’s choice for a word that can be formed from the indicia. An electronic device can also be configured to start a timer, for example for a 30 second interval, during which another user can enter a choice for a longer word. Additionally, the electronic device can be configured to start the timer only when a player first inputs a word that represents a valid combination or arrangement of the visible indicia that comply with a set of the game rules.

[0074] In an example embodiment, the graphical user interface 1000 is controlled to present a new randomly ordered arrangement of the visible indicia in response to a next round input 1008 provided by the player. In an example embodiment, the graphical user interface 1000 is controlled to present a score 1010 and to provide a mechanism 1012 for allowing the player to change the score. For example, the mechanism allows each player to increment or decrement his or her score.

[0075] In an example embodiment, a computer-executable program presents the graphical user interface 1000 at multiple video displays. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs from multiple players. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs provided via a personal computer, a hand-held electronic game apparatus, and/or a mobile communications device. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls a video game utilizing a network communications protocol. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls a video game utilizing an instant messaging technique.
In an example embodiment, a method of playing an electronic game starts by causing a computer-executable program to control one or more video displays to present a randomly ordered arrangement of letters (e.g., eight letters). The method of playing an electronic game continues by identifying a first word that can be formed from the letters, the first word having a minimum number of characters (e.g., four), providing an input (e.g., start timer input 1006) that causes the computer-executable program to control the one or more video displays to present a timer 1004, and attempting to identify a word longer in length than the first word before a time interval (e.g., thirty seconds) presented by the timer 1004 expires. In an example embodiment, the randomly ordered arrangement of letters is identically presented at multiple video displays. In an example embodiment, the method of playing an electronic game further includes awarding one or more points to a player who identifies a longest word that can be formed by players of the game from the letters. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls the one or more video displays to present the score 1010 and controls a system for allowing a player to change the score. For example, the system for allowing a player to change the score includes a system for selectively incrementing or decrementing the score. For example, the system for allowing a player to change the score is enabled after the timer 1004 expires. In an example embodiment, the computer-executable program controls a system (e.g., next round input 1008) for allowing a player to initiate a next round resulting in a new randomly ordered arrangement of letters being presented at the one or more video displays.

In an example embodiment, a game apparatus includes an electronic device with a display, such as one of the electronic devices shown in FIG. 9. The electronic device is configured to present on the display a randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images, and a visible timer, in response to a start timer input provided to the electronic device by a player. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to present a new randomly ordered arrangement of the visible indicia in response to a next round input provided by the player. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to provide a system for allowing the player to change the score. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to establish a communications link to a network. For example, the communications link is wireless. The network can, but does not necessarily, include the Internet. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to receive inputs from multiple players at least one of which is remotely located in relation to the electronic device. In an example embodiment, the electronic device is configured to present a list of all possible combinations and arrangements of the visible indicia that comply with a set of game rules.

Although the present inventions have been described in terms of the example embodiments above, numerous modifications and/or additions to the above-described embodiments would be readily apparent to one skilled in the art. It is intended that the scope of the present inventions extend to all such modifications and/or additions.

What is claimed is:
1. A method of playing a game, comprising:
   scrambling letters;
   presenting identical sets of the letters in scrambled form in multiple display areas for viewing by multiple players of the game; and
   communicating a first word formed by a player from the scrambled letters, the first word having a minimum number of characters.

2. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein the minimum number of characters is four.
3. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein communicating the first word includes calling out the first word.
4. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein communicating the first word includes providing one or more inputs representing the first word to a computing device.
5. The method of playing a game of claim 1, further including:
   starting an interval of time; and communicating before expiration of the interval of time a second word formed from the scrambled letters, the second word having more characters than the first word.
6. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein the interval of time is thirty seconds.
7. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein communicating the second word includes calling out the second word.
8. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein communicating the second word includes providing one or more inputs representing the second word to a computing device.
9. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein the second word is communicated by a different player than the player who communicated the first word.

10. The method of playing a game of claim 1, further including:
    awarding a point to the player who communicates a longest word that players of the game can form from the scrambled letters.
11. A method of playing a game, comprising:
    initiating a mechanical scrambling of game pieces within a game device;
    causing the mechanical scrambling of the game pieces to end by placing the game device on a surface which forces the game pieces upward into the game device and into stationary positions such that letters on the game pieces are aligned; and
    communicating a word that can be formed from letters that are visible on the game pieces.
12. The method of playing a game of claim 11, wherein initiating the mechanical scrambling includes shaking the game device.
13. The method of playing a game of claim 11, wherein the word is a minimum number of characters in length.
14. The method of playing a game of claim 13, wherein the minimum number of characters is four.
15. The method of playing a game of claim 11, wherein communicating a word includes taking turns communicating successively longer words that can be formed from the letters.
16. The method of playing a game of claim 15, wherein communicating a word includes providing a time limit by which a player must communicate a next word.
17. The method of playing a game of claim 16, wherein the time limit is thirty seconds.
18. The method of playing a game of claim 11, wherein communicating includes pronouncing the word.
19. The method of playing a game of claim 11, wherein communicating includes correctly pronouncing the word.
20. The method of playing a game of claim 11, further including:
awarding a point to the player who communicates a longest word that players of the game can form from the letters.
21. A method of playing an electronic game, comprising:
causing a computer-executable program to control one or more video displays to present a randomly ordered arrangement of letters;
identifying a first word that can be formed from the letters, the first word having a minimum number of characters;
providing an input that causes the computer-executable program to control the one or more video displays to present a timer; and
attempting to identify a word longer in length than the first word before a time interval presented by the timer expires.
22. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the randomly ordered arrangement of letters is identically presented at multiple video displays.
23. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the randomly ordered arrangement of letters includes eight letters.
24. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the minimum number of characters is four.
25. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the time interval is thirty seconds.
26. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, further including:
awarding one or more points to a player who identifies a longest word that can be formed by players of the game from the letters.
27. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the computer-executable program controls the one or more video displays to present a score and controls a system for allowing a player to change the score.
28. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 27, wherein the system for allowing a player to change the score includes a system for selectively incrementing or decrementing the score.
29. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 27, wherein the system for allowing a player to change the score is enabled after the timer expires.
30. The method of playing an electronic game of claim 21, wherein the computer-executable program controls a system for allowing a player to initiate a next round resulting in a new randomly ordered arrangement of letters being presented at the one or more video displays.
31. A method for controlling a video game, comprising:
providing a processor with access to a computer-executable program which, when executed by the processor, controls the video game to present a randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images, and
present a timer in response to a start timer input provided to the video game by a player.
32. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program controls the video game to present a new randomly ordered arrangement of the visible indicia in response to a next round input provided by the player.
33. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program controls the video game to present a score and to provide a system for allowing the player to change the score.
34. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program presents the randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia at multiple video displays.
35. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs from multiple players.
36. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs provided via a personal computer.
37. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs provided via a hand-held electronic game apparatus.
38. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program is configured to receive player inputs provided via a mobile communications device.
39. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program controls the video game utilizing a network communications protocol.
40. The method for controlling a video game of claim 31, wherein the computer-executable program controls the video game utilizing an instant messaging technique.
41. A game apparatus, comprising:
an electronic device with a display, the electronic device being configured to present on the display a randomly ordered arrangement of visible indicia of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images, and
a visible timer, in response to a start timer input provided to the electronic device by a player.
42. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is configured to present a new randomly ordered arrangement of the visible indicia in response to a next round input provided by the player.
43. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is configured to present a score and to provide a system for allowing the player to change the score.
44. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is a hand-held unit that includes a system for providing a player input to the game apparatus.
45. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is a mobile communications device.
46. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is configured to establish a communications link to a network.
47. The game apparatus of claim 46, wherein the communications link is wireless.

48. The game apparatus of claim 46, wherein the network includes the Internet.

49. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is configured to receive inputs from multiple players at least one of which is remotely located in relation to the electronic device.

50. The game apparatus of claim 41, wherein the electronic device is configured to present a list of all possible combinations and arrangements of the visible indicia that comply with a set of game rules.

51. In a game apparatus that facilitates scrambling game pieces, the improvement comprising:
   a structure that aligns the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing of the game pieces by a player when the game apparatus is placed upon a surface.

52. In a game apparatus that facilitates scrambling game pieces, the improvement of claim 51, wherein an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees.

53. In a game apparatus that facilitates scrambling game pieces, the improvement of claim 51, wherein the structure aligns the game pieces to be top side up in relation to the player.

54. A game apparatus, comprising:
   game pieces which are scrambled by operation of the game apparatus; and
   means, engaged by placing the game apparatus upon a surface, for automatically aligning the game pieces in an arrangement facilitating ergonomic viewing of the game pieces.

55. The game apparatus of claim 54, wherein the game pieces are hexagonally shaped.

56. The game apparatus of claim 54, wherein the game pieces bear visible indicia.

57. The game apparatus of claim 56, wherein the arrangement of the game pieces provides multiple identical sets of the visible indicia.

58. The game apparatus of claim 57, wherein the multiple identical sets of the visible indicia are each presented at a different viewing perspective.

59. The game apparatus of claim 54, wherein the means for automatically aligning the game pieces include receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface.

60. The game apparatus of claim 59, wherein the receiving channels include windows.

61. The game apparatus of claim 59, wherein the means for automatically aligning the game pieces include a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces.

62. The game apparatus of claim 61, wherein the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface.

63. The game apparatus of claim 61, wherein the apertures are substantially circular in shape.

64. In a game apparatus in which multiple game pieces are scrambled, the improvement comprising:
   a structure that sets the game pieces into positions resulting in multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia on the game pieces being simultaneously presented.

65. In a game apparatus in which multiple game pieces are scrambled, the improvement of claim 64, wherein the multiple identical arrangements of visible indicia are presented at different viewing perspectives.

66. In a game apparatus in which multiple game pieces are scrambled, the improvement of claim 64, wherein the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface.

67. A game apparatus, comprising:
   game pieces which are scrambled by operation of the game apparatus, the game pieces including visible indicia; and
   a structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces providing dual simultaneous displays of the visible indicia.

68. The game apparatus of claim 67, wherein the dual simultaneous displays of the visible indicia are each presented at a different viewing perspective.

69. The game apparatus of claim 67, wherein the game pieces are hexagonally shaped.

70. The game apparatus of claim 67, wherein the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface.

71. The game apparatus of claim 70, wherein an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees.

72. The game apparatus of claim 70, wherein the structure includes receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface.

73. The game apparatus of claim 72, wherein the receiving channels include windows.

74. The game apparatus of claim 72, wherein the structure includes a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces.

75. The game apparatus of claim 74, wherein the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface.

76. The game apparatus of claim 74, wherein the apertures are substantially circular in shape.

77. A game apparatus, comprising:
   a housing with a display portion that includes receiving channels;
   a plurality of game pieces laterally supported by the receiving channels, each game piece being hexagonal in shape and including a circular inner surface, the game pieces having outer surfaces that are blank or bear visible indicia; and
   a rod secured to the housing and configured to support the game pieces adjacent to the circular inner surfaces, the rod being positioned a sufficient distance away from the display portion and the game pieces having a sufficiently large inner diameter such that the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the game pieces and such that the game pieces are partially disengaged from the receiving channels and free to rotate about the rod when the engaging force is removed.
78. The game apparatus of claim 77, wherein the housing includes an open bottom portion configured to permit the engaging force to be provided by contact between the game pieces and a surface upon which the game apparatus is placed.

79. The game apparatus of claim 77, wherein the receiving channels each include:
   a top side that is approximately the same length as the outer surface of the game pieces, and
   a second and third sides adjacent to the top side that are longer than the outer surface of the game pieces, the second and third sides being substantially parallel to the outer surfaces facing the second and third sides respectively when the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels.

80. The game apparatus of claim 77, wherein the display portion includes windows through which some of the outer surfaces of the game pieces can be viewed when the game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels.

81. The game apparatus of claim 80, wherein the windows are configured in two rows along opposite sides of the display portion.

82. The game apparatus of claim 81, wherein the game pieces are configured with the visible indicia such that identical combinations of the visible indicia are visible through the windows of each row.

83. The game apparatus of claim 77, wherein the plurality of game pieces constitutes eight game pieces.

84. The game apparatus of claim 77, further including: a handle secured to the housing.

85. The game apparatus of claim 84, wherein the handle includes a compartment, and further including a timer sized to be fitted within the compartment.

86. The game apparatus of claim 85, wherein the timer is an hourglass.

87. A game apparatus, comprising:
   a plurality of hexagonal ring game pieces that each include six outer surfaces, the outer surfaces selectively bearing visible indicia; and
   a housing including receiving channels complementary in shape to the hexagonal ring game pieces, the housing including windows through which one or more rows of the outer surfaces can be viewed when the hexagonal ring game pieces are positioned within the receiving channels.

88. The game apparatus of claim 87, wherein the windows form an angle of approximately 60 degrees with a bottom portion of the housing.

89. The game apparatus of claim 87, wherein the windows are configured such that first and second rows of the outer surfaces can be viewed along opposite sides of the housing.

90. The game apparatus of claim 89, wherein the game pieces are configured with the visible indicia such that the first and second rows of the outer surfaces include identical combinations of the visible indicia.

91. The game apparatus of claim 87, further including: a structure for mechanically coupling the hexagonal ring game pieces to the housing such that the hexagonal ring game pieces are fully seated within the receiving channels and set in position when an engaging force is applied to the hexagonal ring game pieces and such that the hexagonal ring game pieces are partially disen-gaged from the receiving channels and free to rotate in relation to the windows when the engaging force is removed.

92. The game apparatus of claim 91, wherein the structure for mechanically coupling includes a rod that supports the hexagonal ring game pieces.

93. The game apparatus of claim 92, wherein the hexagonal ring game pieces each include a circular inner surface adjacent to the rod.

94. The game apparatus of claim 91, wherein the housing includes an open bottom portion configured to permit the engaging force to be provided by contact between the hexagonal ring game pieces and a surface upon which the game apparatus is placed.

95. The game apparatus of claim 87, wherein the game apparatus includes a score keeping mechanism that can be manually manipulated by a player.

96. The game apparatus of claim 87, further including: a handle secured to the housing.

97. A game apparatus, comprising: a housing containing game pieces which are scrambled by repositioning the housing; a handle secured to the housing, the handle including a compartment; and a timer sized to fit within the compartment.

98. The game apparatus of claim 97, wherein the timer is an hourglass.

99. The game apparatus of claim 98, further including: a structure for setting a scrambled arrangement of the game pieces.

100. The game apparatus of claim 99, wherein the scrambled arrangement of the game pieces includes dual identical displays presented at different viewing perspectives.

101. The game apparatus of claim 99, wherein the structure is configured to set the game pieces in response to the game apparatus being placed upon a surface.

102. The game apparatus of claim 101, wherein an angle formed by the game pieces and the surface is approximately 60 degrees.

103. The game apparatus of claim 101, wherein the structure includes receiving channels into which the game pieces are seated when the game apparatus is placed upon the surface.

104. The game apparatus of claim 103, wherein the receiving channels include windows.

105. The game apparatus of claim 103, wherein the structure includes a rod adjacent to the receiving channels, the rod passing through an aperture of each of the game pieces.

106. The game apparatus of claim 105, wherein the rod is positioned sufficiently far from the receiving channels and the apertures are sufficiently large in size to permit the game pieces to rotate about the rod when the game apparatus is lifted from the surface.

107. A game apparatus, comprising:
   a set of hexagonal rings for a scramble game, the hexagonal rings including outer surfaces that are blank or bear visible indicia, the visible indicia being arranged along the outer surfaces such that pairs of the visible indicia that are spaced a predetermined number of outer surfaces apart are identical but inverted in orientation.

108. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein the outer surfaces are substantially flat.
109. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein the predetermined number is one.

110. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein the set includes eight hexagonal rings.

111. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein the hexagonal rings each include an aperture.

112. The game apparatus of claim 111, wherein the apertures are circular.

113. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein the visible indicia are of one or more types selected from a group including letters, characters, numbers, symbols, and images.

114. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only consonants as the visible indicia.

115. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include only vowels as the visible indicia.

116. The game apparatus of claim 107, wherein one or more of the hexagonal rings of the set include a mixture of consonants and vowels as the visible indicia.

117. A method of solo game play, comprising:
(a) providing a player with a scramble of letters;
(b) awarding one or more points to the player for each qualifying word identified by the player in the scramble of letters depending upon scoring rules; and
(c) repeating (a) and (b) for a number of rounds, aggregating points awarded to the player to provide a final score after a last round is played.

118. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein the scramble of letters includes eight letters.

119. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein the scoring rules provide that one or more points are awarded only for the longest qualifying word identified in each round.

120. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein the scoring rules provide that one or more points are awarded for all qualifying words identified in each round.

121. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein the scoring rules provide that each qualifying word have a minimum number of letters.

122. The method of solo game play of claim 121, wherein the minimum number of letters is four.

123. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein the scoring rules provide that the number of rounds is ten.

124. The method of solo game play of claim 117, wherein each of the rounds has a time limit within which the player must identify one or more qualifying words.

125. The method of solo game play of claim 124, wherein the time limit is thirty seconds.

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