

# The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

**SCRABBLE WORDS ARE “RIDIC”\* ....EXCEPT FOR THE WORD “SCHVITZ”**

\*New words in the Scrabble Dictionary include “ridic” (ridiculous), “obvs” (obvious), “lotsa” (lots of), “bezzy (best friends in regular speech), “emoji” (expressive digital icon), and “cakehole” (mouth). Use “LOLZ” (meaning: laughs a someone else’s or one’s own expense)...and get 13 points.

**by**

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The Yiddish language is dynamic, humorous, and changing. In the book, “Yiddish with Dick and Jane” by Weiner and Davilman, they give a new meaning to the word “farblondjet”:

“I go to Starbucks for a lousy cup of coffee, I take one look at the grande this and vente that, with the macchiato and the caramel latte cream, I get totally farblondjet.”

Linda Winer (Newsday) wrote about the B’way show, “It Shoulda Been You”:  
“What are the chances of finding humor in the pushy Jewish mother-of-the-bride who nags her overweight single daughter to ‘skip a few meals’? Or the gentile groom who speaks Yiddish “like he learned it from a nun”?

Ruth & Bob Grossman said [in 1964]: “Gay in draird” is what the Garfinkles said when that hotel in Palm Beach used the excuse, ‘all booked up.’”

Sylvia Schildt said that she could recall the expression, “makh mit di reglayim” (literally, “make with the feet”) as a way of saying “get away from here” - implication being that something bad could be happening and it’s time to get out of Dodge. But the use of reglayim made it harder for the other person to understand.

Julian Sinclair (“Let’s Schmooze”) discusses the word “shtick.” He writes, “You might say that wearing kabbalistic symbols is today part of Madonna’s shtick...”

Aaron Lansky (Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA) wrote, “We are living in what Sholem Aleichem called a hayntike velt--a modern world. Thanks to new technology--and your generosity--more of Yiddish literature is accessible to more people than at any other time in history. Just six years after we started posting Yiddish books online, they have been downloaded an astonishing 1.3 million times.”

And writer/activist, founding editor of Ms. magazine, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, says that she feels entirely at home on the Upper West Side. “It’s like a shtetl in Manhattan.”

Norman Pearlstine has dissuaded his Time writers from using the age-old [Yiddish] language that has given us such indispensables as tchotchke, shtick, and schmuck. Pearlstine [New York Magazine, 2/1/99] said there is no official prohibition against Yiddish, but admits he frowns on its usage. Pearlstine also insists that if a writer absolutely has to use Yiddish, he or she must understand it, explaining, “If you call someone a putz, you should know it doesn’t just mean a stupid person.”

The new Scrabble dictionary is out and I’m thrilled to see that it contains the Yiddish word “schvitz”--to sweat or perspire. Note: A “shvitsbod” is a steam bath and if we say “shvits vee a beeper,” we mean that we “sweat like a beaver.” There’s even a workout/strength training video named “SHVITZ, MY YIDDISHER WORKOUT.”

Virtually, every word you can think of that starts with a “sh”--shlep, even schmuck--is acceptable in Scrabble. They can also be spelled with or without a “c” in between. However, don’t try using the word “shtuppie,” a Rabbi Jack Moline term which means “Suburban High Tech Upwardly Mobile.” You could use the word “shvartseh” as in “Barak Obameh iz di ershter shvartseh prezident” (Barak Obama is the first African American president.)

And, speaking of Yiddish words, Philologos (“Forward,” Sept. 12, 2014) quoted Beth Kissileff: “A rabbi recently said to me that there is no word for ‘fun’ in any Jewish language because Judaism is purpose and goal oriented... Uriel Weinreich’s English-Yiddish Yiddish English Dictionary offers us three Yiddish words for “fun”: “hanoe,” which means “pleasure or enjoyment”; “khoyszrek,” which is fun made of someone or something; and “katoves,” which means “jest” or “lark.”

“Nu, shoy! Gai shoy!” (Move, already!) Get out the Scrabble game!

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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of  
two books:**



**"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and  
"Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish  
Trivia." To order a copy, go to her  
website: [MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com](http://MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com)**

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