

Wordle puzzles the world one letter at a time

By Naylie Hernandez & Max Baumgartner



WORDY ROUTINE: Senior Nida Haider attempts to guess Wordle’s word of the day in the morning at school. Haider plays daily to maintain her streak and track her progress.

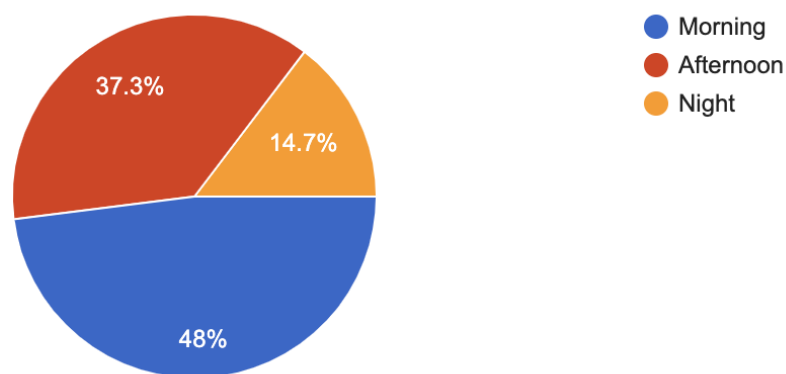
In a generation where technology has the power to unite and provide unique forms of entertainment and fun, people are always looking for new ways to keep themselves engaged. The new year of 2022 kicked off with a bang for Brooklyn-based software engineer, Josh Wardle, when his word-guessing game by the name of Wordle garnered millions of concurrent players in a short period of time.

Wardle created Wordle because his girlfriend, Palak Shah, loved any kind of game involving words and word-guessing. In Wordle, players must guess the daily five-letter word in just six tries. Anytime you guess a letter in the correct spot, it will become green, and if

you guess a letter correctly but it is in the wrong spot, it will appear yellow. The game was initially just something for the couple to play together, but he later shared it with his family group chat and other relatives, becoming a hit in his close-knit circle.

Upon seeing the game’s potential, Wardle released Wordle to the public in October 2021. By November 1, the game had only about 90 players. Just two months later, at the beginning of January, the game amassed over 300,000 active players which became over two million less than a week later, gradually being implemented into the daily routines of people across the globe.

“I first heard about Wordle from one of my best friends. She had been playing it with her psychology class and mentioned that I should play too,” said senior Tiffany Decaso. “I see Wordle as a great conversation starter amongst my peers and a unique but simple way of challenging my brain every day.”



Out of 75 students, 45% indicated that they play Wordle in the morning, supporting that many players have implemented Wordle into their daily routines.

Students and teachers alike have joined in on the Wordle craze and recognized its impact: “It has brought a sense of community for people, for instance, my [yearbook] editors and I will send our Wordle scores to each other,” said English and Journalism teacher Brooke

Acosta. “I think it exposes young people and people in general to words that they may not be familiar with.”

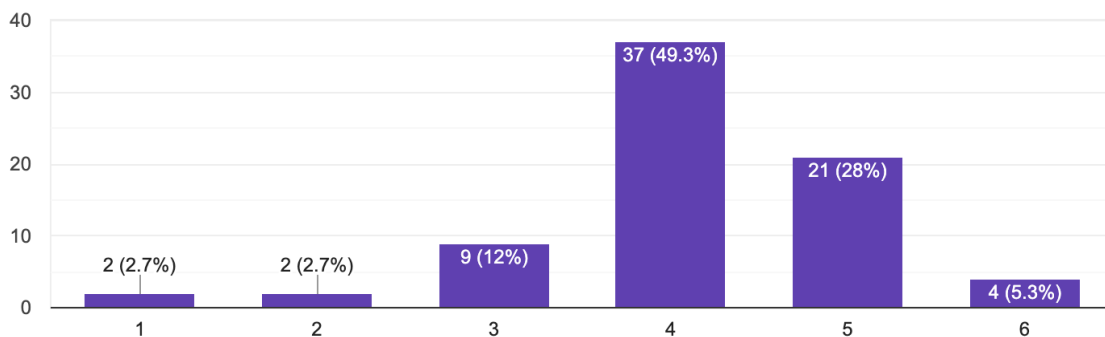
The popularity of Wordle has not only garnered millions of players but has also inspired others to make their own spin-off games with a similar format. “I have played Wordle spin-offs in different languages, such as Spanish and French.” said senior Ashley Feng. Creators around the world have taken the Wordle formula and incorporated their own twists, spanning across several subjects, for example, Nerdle which has players guess a daily math problem, and Heardle where you must guess a song title from a short audio snippet, both just in six tries like Wordle.



HEAD SCRATCHER: Seniors Megan Eppel and Wilson Nuñez test their vocabulary to guess the challenging word of the day during lunch.

Not only does Wordle stimulate the brain, but it also stimulates fierce competition amongst others: “I could show you the science 200s building; our group chat is just Wordle.” said AP and honors Physics teacher Jordan Mack when asked about his own experience with the competitive nature sparked from the raving game. Wordle has created a sense of camaraderie between friends, families, and colleagues across the globe.

With Wordle’s unstoppable momentum since its rise in popularity back in January, the New York Times recently created WordleBot, a tool that automatically analyzes your completed Wordle and gives you a breakdown of your luck versus skill. The New York Times hopes the tool will assist players in effectively guessing the Wordle in as few tries as possible.



Out of 75 students, 49.3% indicated that on average, it takes them four out of the six given attempts to correctly guess Wordle’s word of the day.

What some people may not know is that Wordle is not actually Wardle’s only digital venture that united the internet across the globe. As an artist at Reddit and one of the company’s first product managers, Wardle created collaborative games on the site, one of them being “Place” in 2017 on April Fools’ Day. This social experiment project provided a blank, 1000x1000 pixel canvas on the subreddit, “r/place” where users could place a pixel

anywhere with a 16-color palette. The catch was that you could only place down a single tile every five to twenty minutes.

With this limit, communities on the site banded together to create art pieces on this canvas and even formed alliances with other subreddits to protect their work from others. Concluding after two days, Wardle's experiment was a success and returned recently for the first time after five years on April Fools' Day 2022. This time around, Place lasted for four days and expanded the canvas and color palette each day. In 2017, the canvas accumulated over 16 million pixel tiles from one million users, whereas in 2022, there were over 72 million tiles in the first three days from over six million users. Between Wordle and Place, Wardle has undoubtedly solidified his impact on internet culture.

"I think it's gotten people into spelling in a different way," said Acosta. "They see words and may lose and not know what they are, but they take the time to look them up and expand their vocabulary which I think is very important because we don't learn until we know."