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We have an explanation for all 1749 xkcd comics, and only 24 (1%) are incomplete. Help us finish them!

Latest comic

Life Goals

□ Meet Skrillex in Phoenix
□ Study zymurgy
□ Get a pet axolotl named hexxus
□ Observe a syzygy from Zzyzx, California
□ Port the games Zzyzyx and XeXyZ to Xbox
□ Publish a Zzzax / Mister Mzyzptlk crossover
□ Bike from Xhafzodj, Albania to QazaXgbwyl, Azerbaijan
□ Paint an Archaeopteryx fighting a Muzquizopteryx
□ Finish a game of Scrabble without getting punched

Title text: I got to check off 'Make something called xkcd' early.

Explanation

This explanation may be incomplete or incorrect: What does the note section of the table of words mean when it reffers to Proper noun or noun? Similar with "Score (ignoring blanks)" and 50 points...

The first eight primary goals on this to-do list feature one or more strange words containing an excess of the last three letters of the alphabet (X, Y and Z) as well as Q, often using several of them in the same words, even several of the same rare letter in a row. (See Table of life goals below).

All of these words can be looked up in the English version of Wikipedia, but only a few are common nouns, the rest being proper nouns, i.e. names (fictional or animals) or obscure names for places or games. The first goal is the one with fewest of these letters, only using two x's, and only the first word is strange, Skrillex being the artist name of a musician. All later entries have at least three of these letters, and often used in strange words.

The punchline, in the final goal, expresses that the writer of this list often uses these unexpected and bizarre words in Scrabble games, which exasperates his opponents to such a great extent that he has yet to finish a game without getting punched. All of these words would theoretically earn a player many points in Scrabble (see Scrabble points below).

In the title text, a reference is made to the fact that none of these goals have been checked off yet. It also turns out that it is indeed Randall's list, since the writer of the list did manage to check off the goal Make something called xkcd early. Sadly there are neither y's nor z's nor even more than one x in that four letter combo.

This comic was published the week after the what if? Flood Death Valley (http://what-if.xkcd.com/152), which referred directly to the city Zzyzx in one of the pictures. It was the first what if? post in almost three months, the longest break between two posts during 2016 (and third longest of all time at the time of release). This makes it the third comic in a row released after that what if? post that references it more or less directly, the previous two being 1748: Future Archaeology and 1749: Mushrooms. It seems likely that Randall created this comic after doing research for this what if? post, and came across the city Zzyzx as the shortest way to dig a channel to flood Death Valley.

Table of life goals

Root category
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>#Q</th>
<th>#X</th>
<th>#Y</th>
<th>#Z</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet Skrillex in Phoenix</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to meet the musician using the artist name Skrillex in the city of Phoenix. Not that Skrillex has any specific connection to that city.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studyzymurgy</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to study fermentation. Zymurgy (or zymology) is an applied science which studies the biochemical process of fermentation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a pet axolotl named Hexxus</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to obtain a pet salamander (an axolotl) and name it after the malevolent Hexxus from the animated film FernGully: The Last Rainforest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe a syzygy from Zzyzx, California</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to observe and astronomical event where three celestial bodies form a straight line (known as a syzygy, from the Californian city Zzyzx. That city was just mentioned in the last what if? Flood Death Valley (<a href="http://what-if.xkcd.com/152">http://what-if.xkcd.com/152</a>) released less than a week before this comic.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port the games Zzyzyxxx and Xexyz to Xbox</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to port (i.e. adapting software from one platform so it can be used on another platform) two old video games so they can be used on the modern video game platform Xbox. The first game is Zzyzyxxx, a 1982 arcade video game about navigating a labyrinth, and the second is Xexyz, a 1988 game for the Nintendo Entertainment System with platform and shoot-em-up game-play. It would be very difficult to port these to Xbox.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish a Zzzax/Mister Mxyzptlk crossover</td>
<td>A crossover means that two different stories (often comics) are mixed together, mixing either characters from the two, or the world of one and the characters of another story. In this case Randall's goal is to make a cross over of Zzzax, a Marvel comic book villain, with that of Mister Mxyzptlk, a DC Comics villain. Since Zzzax and Mxyzptlk come from different companies, a crossover story involving them both might run into license problems.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike from Xhafzotaj, Albania to Qazaxbayli, Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to bike from Xhafzotaj, a village in Albania in eastern Europe, to Qazaxbayli, a village in Azerbaijan in the Caucasus. The distance between Xhafzotaj (<a href="https://www.google.com/maps/place/Xhafzotaj,+Albanien/@41.3420999,19.5317615z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x4041307bb83f5793:0x30f6c3728844806e!8m2!3d41.1604329!4d46.04033715z">https://www.google.com/maps/place/Xhafzotaj,+Albanien/@41.3420999,19.5317615z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x4041307bb83f5793:0x30f6c3728844806e!8m2!3d41.1604329!4d46.04033715z</a>) and Qazaxbayli (<a href="https://www.google.com/maps/place/Qazakhbayly,+Azerbaijschan/@41.1604329,45.3040337,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x134fd7eb6257dec7:0xc0c17ea9f1d4ef05!8m2!3d41.3421575!4d19.547883">https://www.google.com/maps/place/Qazakhbayly,+Azerbaijschan/@41.1604329,45.3040337,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x134fd7eb6257dec7:0xc0c17ea9f1d4ef05!8m2!3d41.3421575!4d19.547883</a>) is about 2800 km (1700 miles). Doing this trip by bike would be challenging, but possible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint an archaopteryx fighting a muzquizopteryx</td>
<td>Randall's goal is to make a painting of two bird-like dinosaurs fighting. Unfortunately the Archaeopteryx, a famous small feathered dinosaur, and Muzquizopteryx, a pterosaur (the famous flying dinosaurs), lived in different time periods, so such a fight (most likely) could not have ever taken place. The feathered dinosaur was only about half a meter long, but with clear feathers. It is a clear candidate for a transitional fossil between non-avian dinosaurs and birds. It lived in the late Jurassic age about 86-90 million years ago. This means the two dinosaur live as far apart in time as we live apart from the last of the dinosaurs. Since only the bigger one could fly, it seems most likely that the pterosaur would have won such a fight. Randall has previously made several comments on the feathers of dinosaurs, as recently as the comic released a week before this one 1747: Spider Paleontology; see more there.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish a game of Scrabble without getting punched</td>
<td>Randall's final goal is to avoid getting punched during a Scrabble game. As he always tries to use some of these unexpected and bizarre words mentioned in his other goals when playing Scrabble games he exasperates his opponents to such a great extent that he has yet to finish a game without getting punched.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make something called xkcd</td>
<td><strong>Title text:</strong> Here it is made clear that it is Randall's list, as this is his only xyz goal that he has succeeded, and quite early, as he has celebrated 10 years anniversary with xkcd (<a href="http://xkcd.com/">http://xkcd.com/</a>) see 1581: Birthday.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scrabble points**

All of these strange words would theoretically earn a player the prize of many points in Scrabble (Go to the table of words below). However, most of them would not be found in SOWPODS, the combined list of all words valid in either British or North American Scrabble tournaments, and many include too many X's, Y's or Z's (there's 1 X, 2 Y's, 1 Z in a standard set), meaning at least one would have to be substituted for a blank (which is not worth any points). Some words would also be very difficult to play in reality, since there are only 7 letters in a Scrabble hand, so they could only be played in extremely rare circumstances (there are only a couple of ways to play MUSZQUIZOPTERYX: for instance, from MU and OPTER; or MU, QUIZ and ER; or an astonishingly unlikely set of crossing letters). Many are long enough that, in theory, they could net the player the additional 50 point bonus for using all seven letters in a hand if played right.

**Table of words**

- Explanation of the columns:
  - **Word:** With xyz
  - **Definition:** Of the word
  - **Notes:** ??
  - **In SOWPODS?:** Is the word a valid Scrabble word.
  - **Enough tiles (....):** Are there enough tiles in the standards English version of Scrabble to write the word?
- Score: What would the score in Scrabble be for this word. (Without any bonuses.)
- Score (ignoring blanks): ??? If the word can only be written using blanks, and these are set to zero what would the score then be?
- 50 points possible?: ??? Is it possible to use all seven letters writing the word? If so it will give 50 points extra.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>In SOWPODS?</th>
<th>Enough tiles (in English version)?</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Score (ignoring blanks)</th>
<th>50 points possible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skrillex</td>
<td>A dubstep musician</td>
<td>Proper noun, stage name</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>A city in Arizona (or the mythological bird)</td>
<td>Proper noun (but noun for the bird)</td>
<td>Yes (but only because of the bird)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zymurgy</td>
<td>The study of fermentation.</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axolotl</td>
<td>A kind of water-breathing salamander which lives on the bottom of lakes.</td>
<td>Noun, name of animal species</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexxus</td>
<td>An evil spirit from the animated movie FernGully</td>
<td>Proper noun, fictional name</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with a blank as X</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syzygy</td>
<td>An astronomical event where three celestial bodies form a straight line.</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, with a blank as Y</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zzyzx</td>
<td>An unincorporated community in California</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of city</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with both blanks as Z</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zzyzyxx</td>
<td>A 1982 arcade video game about navigating a labyrinth</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of game</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26 (assuming four blanks)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xexyz</td>
<td>A 1988 game for the Nintendo Entertainment System with platformer and shoot-em-up gameplay.</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of game</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with a blank as X</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xbox</td>
<td>A series of home video game consoles developed by Microsoft.</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of game console</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with a blank as X</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zzzax</td>
<td>A Marvel comic book villain.</td>
<td>Proper noun, fictional name</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with both blanks as Z</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister Mxyzptlk</td>
<td>A DC Comics villain.</td>
<td>Proper noun, fictional name</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42 (8 for Mister, 35 for Mxyzptlk)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xhafzotaj</td>
<td>A village in Albania</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of city</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qazaxboyli</td>
<td>A village in Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Proper noun, name of city</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, because it's spelled with a schwa (ə, upper case Ө), this word would be impossible to spell in English-language Scrabble, although you could put an E tile down upside</td>
<td>39 (at least, unclear) 36 for Kazakhbeyli</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Transcript

[A to-do list with a caption above:]

Life Goals
☐ Meet Skrillex in Phoenix
☐ Study zymurgy
☐ Get a pet axolotl named Hexxus
☐ Observe a syzygy from Zzyzx, California
☐ Port the games Zzyzyyx and Xexyz to Xbox
☐ Publish a Zzzax/Mister Mxyzptlk crossover
☐ Bike from Xhafzotaj, Albania to Qazaqbeyli, Azerbaijan
☐ Paint an archaeopteryx fighting a muzquizopteryx
☐ Finish a game of Scrabble without getting punched

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You can read a brief introduction about this wiki at explain xkcd. Feel free to sign up for an account and contribute to the wiki! We need explanations for comics, characters, themes and everything in between. If it is referenced in an xkcd web comic, it should be here.

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If you want to talk about a specific comic, use its discussion page.

Please only submit material directly related to (and helping everyone better understand) xkcd... and
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Categories:

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- This page has been accessed 16,858,620 times.