

The Play Of Words

Welcome to a playground of English words. Step right through the gate and watch some of our strangest and most whimsical words as they clamber over jungle gyms, bounce up and down on seesaws, swing on rings, careen down sliding boards, and merrily whirl around on merry-go-rounds.

Most consecutive vowels. Words like *aqueous* and *sequoia* contain four consecutive vowels. *Queuing* contains five in a row, and the word *queue* has the distinction of being the only English word that retains its original pronunciation even when the last four letters are dropped. One word strings together all five major vowels: *miaoued*.

Vowels in order. At least five English words contain the five major vowels in order: *abstemious*, *abstentious*, *adventitious*, *facetious*, and *parecious*. At least six contain the five vowels in reverse order: *duoliteral*, *quodliteral*, *subcontinental*, *uncomplimentary*, *unoriental*, and *unnoticeably*.

Most letters with one vowel. The longest common word in English that contains but a single vowel is the nine-letter word *strengths*.

Repeated vowels. The longest common English words that contain one repeated vowel, and no other vowel, are *defenselessness* (15 letters, five *e*'s) and *strengthlessness* (16 letters, three *e*'s). The longest such state names are *Tennessee* (nine letters, four *e*'s) and *Mississippi* (11 letters, four *i*'s). The 16-letter word *indivisibilities* contains seven *i*'s and one *e*.

Most consecutive consonants. Six consonants in a row crowd the word *latchstring*. **Most letters with one consonant.** Several five-letter words tie for the title. *Eerie* is the best example.

Alphabet words. The words *overstuffed* and *understudy* contain four consecutive letters of the alphabet—*rstu*—in order.

Most consecutive letter pairs. The best-known example of a word containing three double letters in a row is *bookkeeper*. Perhaps a person who works for a *bookkeeper* should be called a *subbookkeeper*.

Most consecutive dots. *Beijing*, *Fiji*, *hijinks* (a variant spelling of *high jinks* in some dictionaries) each contain three consecutive dotted letters.

Letter words. A number of words, when pronounced, consist entirely of letter

sounds—*essay* (SA) *enemy* (NME), *excellency* (XLNC). The longest such letter string is *expediency* (XPDNC).

Pronoun word. Has there ever been another word like *ushers*, which contains five personal pronouns in succession?—*us*, *she*, *he*, *her*, *hers*.

Longest palindromic words. A palindrome is a word, sentence, or longer statement that is spelled the same when its letters are read in reverse order, as those who read on will see. The longest palindromic word entered in English dictionaries is *redivider* (nine letters), although some chemistry handbooks include the 11-letter palindrome *detartarated*. The longest palindromic cluster embedded in an English word is composed of the first 11 letters in *sensuousness*.

Bilingual reversal. Back in March, 1866, there appeared in *Our Young Folks* magazine an extraordinary English-Latin pairing that reads forward in English and backward in Latin, retaining the same meaning in both languages and both directions.

Anger? 'Tis safe never. Bar it! Use Love!
Evolves ut ira breve nefas sit; regna.

Binades. In a binade, a longer word is divided into two shorter words by taking alternate letters in order. Examples include *lounge*: *lug* (odd letters) and one (even letters) and *schooled*: *shoe* (odd letters) and *cold* (even letters).

Snowball words. Snowball words gain bulk as they roll along, one letter at a time. A three-layer snowball word is *damage*: *d am age*. A four-layer example is *fatherless*: *f at her less*. A crystalline five-layer snowballer is *temperamentally*: *t em per amen tally*.

Pyramid words. Words that contain one use of one letter, two uses of a second letter, and so on are called pyramid words. Two examples from our everyday vocabulary are *Tennessee's* (one *t*, two *n*'s, three *s*'s and four *e*'s) and *sleeveless* (one *v*, two *i*'s three *s*'s and four *e*'s).

Pair isograms. Some words consist entirely of pairs of letters, each pair occurring once. Among the best examples are *teammate* (eight letters, four pairs), *intestines* (10 letters, five pairs), *shanghaiings* (12 letters, six pairs).

Most meanings. The hardest-working word

This Is The "I'll Make You Famous Form"

Yes I Want to Be Famous Now!

Here is my 26-letter pangram, which does not consist of names or initials and most importantly makes sense!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

in the English language is *set*, which in some unabridged dictionaries has almost two hundred meanings. Run usually runs a fairly close second.

Most difficult tongue twister. Many people consider the *sixth sick sheikh's sixth sheep's sick* to be the serpentine tongue twister in English.

Typewriter words. When we seek to find the longest English word that can be written on a single horizontal row of a standard typewriter keyboard, we naturally place our fingers on the top row of letters—*qwertyuiop*—because five of the seven vowels repose there. From that we can type four 10-letter words: *proprietor*, *perpetuity*, *repetoire*, and, with delightful appropriateness, *typewriter*.

Shortest pangrams. Many typists know the *quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog* as a 33-letter sentence that employs every letter at least once. Such sentences are called pangrams. Here is a sampling of the best pangrams of even fewer letters:

Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.
(32 letters)

Jackdaws love my big sphinx of quartz (31)

How quickly daft jumping zebras vex (30)

Quick wafting zephyrs vex bold Jim (29)

Waltz, nymph, for quick jigs vex Bud (28)

Bawds jog, flick quartz, vex nymph (27)

Mr. Jock, TV Quiz Ph.D., bags few lynx
(26)

If you can come up with a 26-letter pangram that makes sense and does not resort to names or initials, rush it to me and I'll make you famous.

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