

THE PROTEAN *PASTER*N

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Scientifically, a PASTERN is the part of a horse's foot between the fetlock and the top of the hoof. In his influential *Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson famously misdefined the word as "the knee of a horse." When a woman asked Dr. J to explain why he had botched the definition, he replied, "Ignorance, madam. Pure ignorance."

Logologically PASTERN is, in my view, the most charadeable of all words in the English language. That is, when you sextuplely cleave PASTERN at any point in the word, you will come up with two words.

As you look at the changing two halves, bear in mind that all letters are entries in dictionaries and hence qualify as words, that ERN is a variant spelling for a long-winged species of sea eagle, that a PASTER is someone who pastes, and that an RN is a registered nurse:

P ASTERN PA STERN PAS TERN PAST ERN PASTE RN PASTER N

Because of this extreme charadeability, PASTERNS can be formed by working from left to right and adding a letter at a time to P:

P
PA
PAS
PAST
PASTE
PASTER
PASTERN
PASTERNS

Viva PASTERN!