Seven-Letter Words

Have you ever wondered about 7-letter words? Really wondered about them, we mean?

Let's consider these "lucky" words in relation to vowels and consonants, their constituent elements. It is easy enough to find specimens consisting solely of vowels or exclusively of consonants. Thus, OIOUEAE is an all-vowel word. It is one of the tropes or Gregorian formulas for the close of the lesser doxology in church music, representing the vowels in "World without end, Amen." The word is listed as a regular entry on Page 647 of the Music Lovers' Encyclopedia compiled by Rupert Hughes and revised by Deems Taylor and Russell Kerr (Garden City Books, Garden City, New York, 1954). Similarly, we find that Joe BTFSPLK, the world's worst jinx, is a consistently recurring character in one of the most popular of all comic strips, Al Capp's Li'l Abner.

Much more difficult is the search for 7-letter words with only one or two vowels, the remaining five or six positions being occupied by consonants. Mathematically, the one or two vowels can occupy $\binom{3}{1}$ or $\binom{3}{2}$ different positions or combinations of positions, and no one has ever succeeded in putting together a list of 28 English words illustrative of all 28 cases. Our own attempt to solve the problem follows. The numeral or numerals preceding each word in the list indicate the position or positions in which the vowel or vowels are placed.

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Most of the words are commonplace. However, for 5-7, we had to take SCHWEGE, the name of a town in West Germany, from the 1965 Edition of The Times Index-Gazetteer of the World (The Times Publishing Company, Ltd., London). For 6-7, we culled SHTCHEE from Webster's Second Edition. It is an alternate form of the more familiar SCHWEG.

More examples of these words:

Even more difficult is the search for 7-letter words with two or three vowels and five or four positions occupied by consonants.

Again, 28 complete lists of 7-letter words with one or two vowels and five or six consonants have never been compiled.

1 ZOUK
2 UKIY
3   
4 OUA
5 EUAE
6   
7 AIAL
8-2 CHAG
9-3 SEQU
10-4 ROU

Most of these words are uncommon, with the exceptions of ALIGHT and SERIOUS. They are both English words, but they do not appear in Webster's dictionary.

Three excepted cases in the above list are the words ETCHING, ENTHRAL, and THROTTLE. They are all English words, but they do not appear in Webster's dictionary.

Can anyone find the one or two vowels that go in the gap in our list of 7-letter words?

It has always been a favorite pastime of word enthusiasts to find words that will complete the gaps in our list. Unabridged Dictionary, by the American Historical Society, should be a helpful source for this purpose.

WORD WAYS
SEVEN-LETTER WORDS

is an alternate spelling of STCHI, the name for a Russian cabbage soup. It has evidently fallen into political disfavor, as Webster's Third Edition omits it. More seriously, there are three gaps in our list. We have not yet found examples for 1, 6, and 7. Can any of our readers come to our aid?

Even more difficult is the correlative search for 7-letter words using only one or two consonants, the remaining five or six positions being filled with vowels. Again, 28 different positions or combinations of positions exist. Again, no complete list of illustrative examples has ever been compiled. Our own list follows:

1 ZOUAOUA 15 RAOUILIA 55 EULOGIA
2 UKIYOYE 16 SEA OOSE 56 AUREATE
3 ................. 17 MIAOUED 57 AUDAEAN
4 OUABAJO 25 EN QUEUE 45 OOANGIA
5 EUAEMIA 24 EPIKEIA 46 OUAKARI
6 ................. 25 ETAERIO 47 AEOLIAN
7 AIAIAIS 26 ELAEINE 56 .................
1-2 CHAOUIA 27 OLEO OIL 57 .................
1-3 SEQUOIA 34 OOGLOEA 67 .................
1-4 ROULEAU .................

Most of the words in this list, although in Webster's Second Edition, are very uncommon. ZOUAOUA is the name of a tribe of Berbers in the Jurjura Mountains of Algeria, mentioned only in the etymology of ZOUAVE. The inflectional form MIAOUED is explicitly shown only in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1949). EUAEMIA is a sound or healthy condition of the blood, listed as a variant of EUEMIA in the Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York and London, 1945). Three entries in our list (SEA OOZE, EN QUEUE, and OLEO OIL) are two-word terms, for want of anything better. One entry, UKIYOYE, is questionable, for the letter Y is not a true vowel; it is only a semivowel. The number of gaps in our list has risen to four.

Can any one of our readers help us either by plugging the four holes or by replacing some of the inferior specimens in our list with first-rate words?

MISSING WORDS

It has always been a source of wonder to us how dictionary publishers decide which words to include and which ones to exclude in the process of compiling a dictionary. What raises the question just now is our discovery of the fact that Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, lists and defines COULDN'T and SHOULDN'T, but omits the fully comparable WOULDN'T. Were the editors in a hurry to finish the text of the dictionary by the time they got into the W's?