By sound, many words are a series of shorter words strung together, the parts often having no relationship in meaning to the whole: QUERIED = QUEER + REED. In the August 1969 Word Ways, J. A. Lindon suggested the name homophone for this type of word play. Notice that it extends the concept of homonym which, strictly speaking, is a single word with one sound but two or more spellings. The homophone is the aural equivalent of the charade, in which the constituent words must be read instead of spoken.

Some words-within-words make an eerie kind of sense. Several of my favorites are COME PASSION, PURR PUSS, NO BULL, GAS SO LEAN, GREW SOME, KING DUMB, PROMISE SORRY, and LOAN SUM.

To add to the word play possibilities, the internal words are often homonymous: NO BULL could equally well have been written KNOW BULL. In building your own words-within-words vocabulary, choose the homonym with the meaning that suits you best. You may elide, too: DEPEND translates as either DEEP END or DEEP PEND, and FERTILIZE, as FUR TILL EYES or FUR TILL LIES.

As J. A. Lindon has demonstrated, homophones can be strung together to form sentences which have a single sequence of sounds but can be interpreted in two different ways. Here are two poems illustrating the art:

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NOT TWO NOT FOUR ONE EYE A DOOR

'Tis not a miss a miss two fined
With prom miss sinner glance, sir;
If miss with miss stir bee come bind,
Then miss chief is the ant, sir.

Alas two idle eyes ice ought
In sum seek lewd dead sex shun;
The no bull ass a lass wood knot
Axe seed too my affect shun.

If few sum made den wood a choir
She may a void dew wall so;
All ads are freak went lea a fire,
All asses oft are fall so.
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NOT TO, NOT FOR, ONE I ADORE

'Tis not amiss a miss to find
With promise in her glance, sir;
If miss with mister be combined,
Then mischief is the answer.

A lass to idolize I sought
In some secluded section;
The noble lass alas would not
Accede to my affection.

If you some maiden would acquire,
She may avoid you also;
All lads are frequently afire,
All lasses oft are false, O.

This article concludes with a rudimentary lexicon of words-within-words for the reader who wishes to try his hand at constructing similar sentences. You are welcome to add to it until your head spins.

a bait, a butt, a choir, a cord, a count, a custom, a door, a fair,
a gassed, a miss, a noise, a pall, a part hide, a peas, a peer, a
rise, a rose, a spire, a tack, a vale, a void, a tract, a tract shun,
act shun, act ave shun, active ate, add dress, add end dumb, add
hear, add door ration, add miss shun, add mitt, add vice, affect
shun, all sew, am end, anchor right, an sir, ant sir, any ma, any
me, ape pecks, are dew us, are son, ark cane, ark key all oh gee,
ark tick, arm a meant, arm me, arm ease, ass cent, ass purr rate,
ass purr ration, ass salt, ass sever rate, ass sever ration, ass so
she ate, aster risk, at muss fear, at rib beaut, at test, auntie dote,
axe cent, axe cent you ate, axe sea oh mat tick, axe shun
back cake, back word, base sick, beau vine, bow well, boy ant
calm meant, can did ate, can sell, can't sell, can sir, can tanker
us, cap it all, cap it you late, camp pain, cap ass it tea, car is mat
tick, car pet, card in all, cat ass trophy, cell dumb, cent tea meant,
cents ate, cents less, cents say shun, civil eyes, climb axe, collect
shun, come and, come bind, come fort, come mute, come mingle,
come mode, come motion, come mute, come pair, come passion,
come peat, come pewter, come plain, come pleat, come ply, come
port, come press, come you nick ate, con cave, con cent, con cent
rate, con cent tray shun, con cord, con sew siege, con dine, con
dish shun, con fuse, con fusion, con some mate, con tent, con tent
shun, con tend, con text, concept shun, condemn ray shun, conned
ducked, cop you late, core pew lent, core respond, core road, core
us skate, core wrecked, counter manned, cream a Tory, cur few,
cur fuse, cur rent, counter man dead
damp plea, deaf in it, dear ride, deed ducked, deem and, deem man
dead, deed plaid, deep pleat, die a disk r

elect eye do:

fact sign ate, face lent, faint shun, gas so:

hall lo, I Tory, idol ex:

in cen pleat, in fill

in gram, in sight, meant shun, sight shun,

Joy us:

kick k:

kick ho:

made man us, miss us:

nay bo:

oh bay:

pa ren knees, gone, gone, gone, ply ant, project, prop purr pur:

purr purr pur pur pur purse

queer
dead, deep art, deep end, deep end den sea, deep lane, deep lore, deep pendant, deep pleat, deep pose, deep press, den knee grate, die a beat ease, die a tribe, die jest, die late, dlm in you shun, disk rim in ate, disk cuss, distinct shun, dock you meant

elect shun, engine ear, exact it you'd, expect shun orate, eye doll a tree

fact shun, fact Tory, fact you all, fault errer, far sick call, fasten ate, false if eye, ferb it you're, few dull, firm a meant, flat you lent, flack's id, form you late, for bld, for go, for gone, for may shun, for nick ate, for sea, for tiff flie, free dumb, fur till eyes

gas so lean, glamor us, glory us, govern meant, grew some

hall low, hay send, hew man, hex a gone, high pot ten use, hiss Tory, hoarse shoo, hook cur, hook key

idol eyes, immune eyes, imp art, imp provident, In cap ass it ate, in cents, in cents ate, in choir, in come, in come ode, in come pleat, in core pour ate, in cur, in curd, in different, in fill trait, in fill tray shun, in for rains, in flay shun, in for may shun, in form, in grate, in knock you late, in know cent, in cents ate, in seek cure, in sight, in sir wreck shun, in speck shun, in specked, in strum meant, in sue late, in sure, in tea grate, in tense, in tent, in ten shun, in tern, in test ate, in test tin, in vent shun, in viol late

joy us, judge meant, junk shun, junked ewer, just if I

kick king, king dumb, knew your cur, know blur, know bull

lick her, lie on eyes, limp plea, loan sum, long guest, low shun

made den, man age, man nip you late, man date, man you mitt, man use crypt, may your, men knee, men tall, mine nor it tea, miss stress, miss shun, miss stake, mobile eyes

nay bore, nay bore lea, nay shun, no blur, no bull

oh bay, oh cur, oh fence, oh shun, off fend, old den

pa rent all, pass tell, pass time, past ore, patron eyes, peak in knees, pen ants, pen net trait, pen net tray shun, pen shun, pent a gone, pend you'll us, ple oh near, plaque card, play gee arise, ply ant, pole light, pole lute, pore shun, pore tall, project tile, project shun, print sip pal it tea, promise sorry, prop a gate, prop purr, protect shun, prior it tea, purr mitt, purr advent you're, purr pet rate, purr pet you all, purr cent aisle, purr miss sieve, purr port, purr puss, purr severe, purr sue, purr sway sieve, purse weighed, purr tin ass it tea, purr view

queer reed, quest shun
rain dear, ramp age, ram pant, ray shun, reap eat, reap lace, reap lies, reap past, reap pleat, reap pose, reap press, reap row deuce, reef form, reef use, reef wracked, reek cap it you late, reek choir meant, reek chord, reek count, reek line, reek ounce, reek west, rest less, rest it you shun, rest or ration, roam ants, roof full, rote ate

sack cram meant, sank shun, scent less, sea dead, sea men, see me, seek cure, seek king, sell dumb, sense sate, sense sore, sense you all, sense you us, sent team meant, sent tea men tall, sex shun, sex all you, sexed ant, shall owe, sick lick call, sigh on, sin cope ate, sin nap seize, sin sear, sinned roam, sir come size, sir pen tine, sir plus, sit tea, sit tease, sit you wait, skill let, some it, special eyes, speck you late, state meant, stay bill eyes, stay bull, stew dent, stew penned us, stew pour, stub born, sty penned, suck core, sue pine, sue purse seed, sup lick ate, sup plant, sup lies, sup posit Tory, sup pure ate

tack tile, Te Deum, ten den sea, ten shun, ten you us, term in ate, thor axe, tin cur, tin sell, tit till late, tore meant, tore rid, tort you us, trance it Tory, tried dent

use you all, use you wall lea

vigil lance, vigil auntie, viol ate, vow well, vulgar eyes

well come, whore or, whore id, wince some, wreck clues, wreck cognition, wreck cord, wretch shed, wrote ate