A beheadment is the removal of the first letter of a word to generate a new word: WHERE - W = HERE.

Ordinarily, beheadments are of little interest for short words unless there is a dramatic or unexpected change in meaning or pronunciation: SLAUGHTER - S = LAUGHTER. On the other hand, beheadments are of interest when there is no change of meaning: ALONE - A = LONE, LONE - L = ONE.

Of immediate concern here, however, are the longest beheadments. In this article, by "longest" we mean "none longer than"; for in many instances there are ties which generally will be resolved arbitrarily by selecting just one example. Except for some obvious special cases, we shall only consider words of four or more letters.

What, then, is the longest beheadment? We offer our candidate: PREMISREPRESENTATION - P = REMISREPRESENTATION. No, you won't find either of these words in Webster's Third Unabridged. However, both words are in Webster's Second Unabridged, below the line. Thus, reader, beware. We shall consider any dictionary entry as fair game. We shall not, however, worry about the ordinary inflectional forms. If you want a still longer example, simply add an S at the end to form the plurals.

What is the second longest example? We really had to scramble for this one: METHYLHYDROCUPREINE - M = ETHYLHYDROCUPREINE. The full unbeheaded word is found in Dorland's Medical Dictionary, but the beheaded version is in Webster's Second. As this example illustrates, we do not hesitate to draw our two words from different dictionaries. To put some bounds on ourselves, we shall be wary of words (particularly in Webster's Second) that are clearly archaic and obsolete.

Rather than bore the reader with shorter and shorter examples, we now make the big jump. What are the longest examples for the removal of each letter of the alphabet? Our candidates are:

- Aquintocubitalism
- Blissomeness
- Chemotherapeutics
- Demulsification
- Emotionlessness
- Frightfulness
- Gastrophotography
- Hedrophythalous

Certainly all the 26 entries can be made.

According to each word in the lists, in many such beginning are perfection of Webster's Second. Further, of Webster's Second.

Identif
Japaco
Kinases
Limita
Methyl
Neopal
Oesoph
Premi
Quinta

Ahorse
Ametac
Aquinta
But, as some
In the list

Adiador
Preab~
Panher
Tence
Outfany
Wheel
Predis
Oesoph
----

Accord
each word
in the lists
many such
beginning are
perfection
Webster's Second.
Further, of Webst
Identification
Japaconite
Kinaesthetic
Limitableness
Methylhydrocupreine
Neopaleozoic
Oesophagostenosis
Premisrepresentation
Quinta

Revolutionally
Selectiveness
Treasnableness
Utopographer
Vindictiveness
Whenceforward
Xanthosiderite
Yourselves
Zoosporaliferous

Certainly an impressive list. But we are disturbed by having 12 of
the 26 end with the letter S.

We now consider the longest beheadments ending in each alphabetical letter. Unfortunately, we were unable to find examples for
words ending in the rare letters J and Q that were beheadments of
more than three letters. But the rest of the alphabet yielded to our
search. Considering the limitations placed upon ourselves, we are
pleased that so many are of commendable length:

Adiadochokinesia
Preabsorb
Panhematopoetic
Thenceforward
Methylhydrocupreine
Outfangthief
Wheelmaking
Predistinguish
Oesophagi
-----
Ahorseback
Ametachromophil
Aquintocubitalism
Premisrepresentation
Thitherto
Swordsmanship
-----
Predistributor
Chemotherapeutics
Preacknowledgement
Flambeau
Spiv
Preinterview
Atriplex
Gastrophotography
Aveloz

But, as soon as we focus on one end, the other end becomes distorted!
In the list above, one-half of the words start with either A or P.

Accordingly, we now require that the initial and final letters of
each word (before beheadment) be the same. The only such example
in the lists above is SELECTIVENESS - S = ELECTIVENESS. Yet,
many such words exist. Not unexpectedly, there are blanks for words
beginning and ending with J, Q, V, X or Z. To make up for these im-
perfections, we offer a new A-beheadment, equal in length to the pre-
vious example, but certainly noteworthy because both words are in
Webster's Third, a source not known for its unusual and long words.
Further, only the beheaded RHYNCHOBDELLIDA appears in Web-
ster's Second. The doubly-alphabetical beheadment list:

Arhythnochobellida
Blab
Chemotropic
Dunderhead

Emollescence
Fluff
Gunstocking
Hairbrush
By this time, the casual reader may wonder how we were able to scrape up so many examples of long beheadments, especially with the alphabetical restrictions placed upon them. The explanation is simple: we merely collected the longest beheadments starting with and ending with each alphabetical letter (a possible $26 \times 26$ combinations).

Only a handful of final letters furnished examples for each initial alphabetical letter -- A, E and N. Here are our findings, restricted to those having at least four-letter words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adiadochokinesia</th>
<th>Natremia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brachialgia</td>
<td>Ochroma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cacosmia</td>
<td>Panophthalmia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dejecta</td>
<td>Quinta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emetatrophia</td>
<td>Regna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabronia</td>
<td>Sacrodynia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gliomyoma</td>
<td>Thalesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamella</td>
<td>Utopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iguna</td>
<td>Vanilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagua</td>
<td>Wangara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotlinna</td>
<td>Xenomenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomenta</td>
<td>Yakala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrocephalia</td>
<td>Zamia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azygobranchiate</td>
<td>Noosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladderlike</td>
<td>Oecoparasite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbiculate</td>
<td>Preacquaintance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denumerative</td>
<td>Qere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emollescence</td>
<td>Revolutionise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flabellate</td>
<td>Sexarticulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallocyanine</td>
<td>Telestroscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiatalphoridiae</td>
<td>Uprestore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconoscope</td>
<td>Viridescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japaconitine</td>
<td>Whooplike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knightlike</td>
<td>Xanthophyllite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionizable</td>
<td>Yonside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methylhydrocupreine</td>
<td>Zooxanthine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avascularization</td>
<td>Emasculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleachman</td>
<td>Futilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannulation</td>
<td>Gratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demulsification</td>
<td>Halcyon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the completists: I, O, H, A, E, N.

Our beheadments are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idemergence</th>
<th>Junoide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Klipheid</td>
<td>Lacinidae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magacid</td>
<td>Naviglia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oesophaga</td>
<td>Precipitata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qoreides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet they

| Mucronula | Hydra, |
|-----------| Words, |
| Volving    |         |

Of each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We J</th>
<th>to us:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>very con</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our heart bleeds -- doesn't yours? What does one do when one is beheaded? Simply grow another head! Two examples of long reheadings are:

Renunciatory - R = enunciatory
enunciatory + D = Denunciatory

Iodometrical - I = odometrical
odometrical + H = Hodometrical

Yet they can be bettered by:

Revolutionist - R = evolutionist
evolutionist + D = Devolutionist

Much more interesting are words which we call hydrations. The Hydra, as you will remember, grew two heads for each one severed. Words, too, can more than regenerate themselves. A sequence involving words you might not quickly recognize is:

Morologist - M = orologist
orologist + H = Horologist
horologist + C = Chorologist

Of equal lengths are the more familiar:

Dreaminess - D =reaminess
reaminess + C = Creaminess
creaminess + S = Screaminess

We move up one final notch to one of the longest hydrations known to us:

Morological - M = orological
orological + H = Horological
horological + C = Chorological

But certainly you yourself would quickly have come up with the very common:
Devaluation - D = evaluation
evaluation + R = Revaluation
revaluation + P = Prevaluation

By now you must suspect that one can easily play both ends against
the middle in a beheadment-reheadment-hydration series. And so
true! The longest apparently begin and end with eight-letter words:

Twangler - T = wangler
Wangler - W = angler
angler + R = Rangler
rangler + W = Wrangler

Ramentum - R = amentum
Amentum - A = mentum
mentum + O = Omentum
omentum + M = Momentum

Just above are some examples of double beheadments. Because of
their special character as also being reheadments, they are not the
longest possible. Here are some longer double beheadments:

Devisceration - D = evisceration
Evisceration - E = visceralization
Remancipation - R = emancipation
Emancipation - E = mancipation
Identification - I = dentification
Dentification - D = entification

For a triple beheadment, the longest we have encountered are
the two ten-letter words:

Mathematic
Athematic
Thematic
Hematic

Preversion
Reversion
Eversion
Version

We now attempt to go down to no letter at all. We started this
article with the word WHERE being beheaded to HERE. But note:
WHERE to HERE to ER to RE to E. There appear to be five candi­
dates for the longest complete dismemberment. Here are four:

Aspirate
Pirate
Irate
Rate
Ate
Te
E

Oestrone
Estrone
Trone
Rone
One
Ne
E

Prestamp
Restamp
Stamp
Tamp
Amp
Mp
P

Prestate
Restate
State
Tate
Ate
Te
E

The greatest, however, appears to be: SPLASHER to FLASHER to
LASHER to ASHER to SHER to HER to ER to R. This has a-number
of side branches, for LASHER may also be reached from CLASHER
or FLASHER, or SLASHER; ASHER may also be reached from
And so... words:

Because of not the

We have only looked at this in passing. But we didn't pass:

Here are a couple of examples in which letters are removed three at a time and four at a time:

We confess. Our search for beheadable words was materially aided by the Normal and Reverse English Word List, eight volumes edited by A. F. Brown in 1963 and available from the U.S. Department of Commerce (see May 1972 Word Ways). This list is based principally on Webster's Second Unabridged and a number of smaller technical dictionaries. However, a few words were drawn from sources not available to Brown in 1963 -- the Random House Unabridged, and Webster's Third Unabridged. The Oxford English Dictionary (not used by Brown) was consulted for the word REACKNOWLEDGEMENT.