SUCCESSIVE DE(LE(TI)O)NS

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For those unfamiliar with the concept, a successive word deletion is best defined by example. From a base word (PANTODON), excise a set of consecutive letters from the interior which form a word (TO). Join together the loose ends (PANDON) and repeat the process (AND). The letters remaining after the second excision (PON), containing the initial and terminal letters of the original word, form a third word. The number of words (in this case, three) into which the original word has been split is k; thus, PANTODON (TO, AND, PON) is a triple deletion.

We can approach the base word PANTODON from a different direction and successively form the words TOD, NO and PAN, all of which differ from the original TO, AND and PON. This makes it a two-way triple deletion; in general, a deletion into k words can be performed in n different ways.

Successive (n,k) word deletions first claimed the limelight a number of issues back in Word Ways. The quality of creations and contributions in this specialized field quickly reached a certain plateau of quality, where it has remained ever since. When the state of the art was last reviewed in the November 1974 Kickshaws, the Ecklers had attained the pinnacle with a two-way triple deletion in which the base word was split into common words all three letters or more in length: PILGRIMAGE into GRIM, LAG, PIE and RIM, GAG, PILE. Other readers had experienced some degree of success with three-way doubles and a one-way quadruple. Our genial Kickshaws editor pleaded with readers to produce another two-way triple, a one-way quintuple, and a four-way double. His statement, "We really don't expect any responses on this", turned out to be correct.

Let's blast away these barriers and extend the vistas more than asked for. My ground rules are: (1) all words from Webster's Second or Third (no esoteric sources); (2) all words boldface entries (no inferred or inflectional forms, or assumed plurals); (3) short base words when possible (to enhance the challenge). Even with these restrictions, one-way deletions can be extended well beyond the quintuple level:

5 Asterochiton: ro, ech, tit, so, an
6 antiposition: os, pi, it, ti, no, an

7 parthenogonidium: og, no, en, hid, ti, ru, pam
8 metanitroaniline: ro, ta, in, ni, al, ti, en, ne
9 stereophotomicrography: om, ti, oc, pho, og, er, rap, eh, sty

We're now ready to move up to the two-way level. Two-way triples are so easy to find that an additional challenge must be formulated: short base words (seven or at most eight letters long) beginning with each letter of the alphabet:

albacea: ac, be, ala; bac, le, aa
Bedawee: daw, ee, be; de, ew, bee
capable: pa, ab, cle; pab, al, ce
dewanee: an, ewe, de; wa, en, dee
Etheria: he, tri, ea; er, hi, eta
frisado: is, rad, fo; sa, id, fro
granada: na, ad, gra; an, rad, ga
Huetare: eta, ur, he; ta, er, hue
Ibadite: ad, bit, ie; di, at, ibe
Jararaca: ara, arc, ja; ar, ra, jaca
Koasati: as, oat, ki; sa, at, koi
Lemanea: an, eme, la; ma, en, lea
malaria: ar, li, maa; lar, ai, ma
neorama: ora, em, na; ra, om, nea
ordinee: in, de, ore; din, re, oe
peloria: lo, eri, pa; or, li, pea
Quakerlet: ker, al, quet; aker, ule, qt
Ratitae: it, ata, re; ti, at, rae
Semeria: me, eri, sa; er, mi, sea
Tagaloa: al, go, taa; gal, ao, ta
Uranian: an, ria, un; ni, aa, urn
vaimure: mu, ir, vae; imu, ar, ve
whalery: al, her, wy; le, ar, why
xerotes: ro, et, xés; rot, ee, xs
yagenine: en, gin, yae; gen, ain, ye
Zabadia: ba, ad, zia; bad, ai, za

How about a three-way triple? CALAMINE yields mi, an, cale; am, li, cane; ami, aln, ce. As for the four-way double, let's start through the alphabet once again:

Albanian: ani, alban; ban, alian; bani, alan; an, albian
barterer: er, barter; ter, barer; arter, ber; tere, barr
calamite: alam, cite; amit, cale; lam, caite; am, calite
danalite: anal, dite; alit, dane; lit, danae; al, danite
estamene: tame, esne; amen, este; tamen, ese; stamen, ee
ferthere: ther, fere; erthe, fre; the, ferre; er, ferthe
Galenist: alen, gist; lenis, gat; len, gaist; nis, galet
Haroseth: rose, hath; roset, hah; ose, harth; os, hareth

To continue in this vein, I risk boring all readers to tears, even the staunchest devotees. Let's bring this surfeit to a stuttering close by

a truly worthy example: a four-way quadruple from PIETOSAMENTE.

sam	os	sa	same
toe	tamen	om	Eton
een	et	ete	it
pite	pie	pinte	pe

I yield the floor -- but retain the option of entering the field again if someone challenges with a fresh "unbeatable" example.

COMMENT (Ralph G. Beaman): One way to enhance the challenge of successive word deletions is to insist that all words deleted must be three or more letters long. Readers may enjoy solving the following conundrum, jointly devised by me and the editor:

A fifteen-letter word? Mais oui,
In Webster's Pocket, look for me --

Remove a bug of letters three,
Then join my ends, invisibly;
Next, listen to my anguished plea --
Excise a tramp with brevity;
Extract a drink (low-quality) --
Though short and sweet, it isn't tea;
Take out a coin (which, you'll agree,
Will hardly buy a potpourri);
This leaves a female deity
(Women's Lib, please note with glee).

Five words deleted -- now you see
I'm empty, a nihility.