AN AEIOU EXAMINATION

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We have often seen comments on words that have all five vowels AEIOU, usually in alphabetic order. I decided to take a particular dictionary and list all the words I could find with AEIOU in any order, eliminating those words in which a vowel was repeated, such as AdvEntIl-IOUs with two I's. The dictionary I selected was the Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary (1973 printing) which I use frequently in the game of Scrabble.

To my surprise, I found 283 words; the editor subsequently provided me with 80 more for a total of 363. At his suggestion, I have listed the words that were found according to the order of the vowels. There are 120 possible permutations of AEIOU, of which 68 are represented by one or more words (about 60 per cent of the total).

Of course, the list could be greatly expanded with the use of other dictionaries. In the November 1969 Word Ways, the editor gives examples of words for 104 permutations, and dictionary words for nine more were later found.

The alphabetic-order pattern AEIOU is represented by AbstEm-IOUs, fAcEtIOUs, and pArEcIOUs, but the reverse alphabetic-order pattern UOIEA is realized only by UnnOtICeAbly (is it really unnoticeable?). Of the five possible circular alphabetic patterns, all but UAEIO are represented in the listing; contrariwise, the only other reverse circular alphabetic pattern to be found was AUOIE, in AuthOrIzE and other words.

Such a list as this ought to prove useful in solving a cryptogram by the vowel-spotting method, familiar to cryptanalysts. If a word is found with five different vowels, none repeated, this list will reveal which one of 363 words will fit by length and pattern or non-pattern.

My final observation is that the shortest words with AEIOU have at least two consonants, and the longest words have sixteen letters (such as nOnUndErstAnding). One word, mIAOUEd, has its vowel pattern clustered together uninterrupted by any consonants.

AEIOU abstemious, facetious, parecious
AEIOU aerobium, archegonium, pandemonium
AEIOU warehousing
AEIOU maleruption
AIEOU ambidextrous, calciferous, glaireous, glandiferous, gramineous, jaspideous, lactiferous, lanigerous, spadiceous, stramineous
AIOEU carillonneur
AIOUE captiousness, factiousness, gladioluses, graciousness, grandiloquent, radiolucent, spaciousness, variousness
AOEIU androecium, apothecium
AOEUI manoeuvring
AOUIE agouties, favourite, jalousie, labourite, malnourished, patchoulies, savouriness, tabourine, tambourine, vapourize
AUEOI albumenoid, aureomycin
AUOIE aluminothermy, auctioned, audiometry, audiphone, cauliflower, lanuginose
AUOEI autoecism
AUOIE authorize, autopsies, glauconite, sautoire, staurolite
EAIQU behaviour, edacious, feracious, gelatinous, gregarious, keratinous, mendacious, nefarious, precarious, predacious, tenacious, veracious, vexatious
EAOIU crematorium, pelargonium
EAQUII belabouring, preannouncing
EAUIO exhaustion, preassumption, precaution
EIAOUI fetiparous
EIOUA semivoluntary
EOAIU endocarpium, leprosarium, mesogastrum
EOUAI encouraging, expostulating
EOUIA preconnubial
EUAIOI decussation, degustation, denudation, deplumation, depuration, deputation, despumation, detruncation, education, emulation, equation, eructation, exculpation, exhumation, expurgation, excudation, exultation, fecundation, menstruation, mensuration, peculation, permutation, persuasion, perturbation, refutation, regulation, reputation, speculation, sternutation
EUAOI pneumatolytic, regulatorship, rheumatoid
EUlAOI denunciatory, elucidator, enunciator, renunciatory, resuscitator
EUlOAI delusional, equivocal, reductional
EUlOAII duentplastic, deutoplastic, edulcorating, leucocratic, neuropathic, pneumodynamics, pneumogastric, pseudoclassic
EULOIA euphonia, euphonous, euphoria, euphoria, neuroglia, neuropsychiatry, pneumonia, sequoia
EAEQU diadelphous, diathermous, filamentous, intraserous, intravenous, ligamentous, micaceous, pineaceous, spinaceous, vitaceous
IAEOU chivalrousness, dialogue, disfavoured, infamousness, miaoued
IEAOU bicephalous, dicephalous, dipetalous, tripetalous
IEOAI interglobular, interocular
IOEAIU micro metallurgy
IOEUA bimolecular, incommensurably
IOUAE bicornuate, biloculate, bivouched, discountable, discourage, dismountable, importunate, impoundable, impoundage, incommutable, incomputable, inconstruable, inconsumable,
inoculable, inoculate, inopppugnable, inosculate, involucrate, thiosulfate

IOUEA thiourea
IUOAE circumrotate, insupportable

OAIUE colatitude, odalisque, portraiture
OAUIE coadjutrixes, consanguine, nonculrite, nonplausible
OEAIU overfaithful, overfanciful, overpainful
OEAIU conmeasuring, overhauling, overlaunching, somersaulting
OEIUU nonresidual, nonvesicular
OEUIA coequality, coequating, conceptualism, overquantity
OEUIA nonregualal
OIUAUE foliature
OIUEA continuance, continuate, contributable, orbiculate
OUAEI outanswering, outbantering, outbrazening, outcapering, outchattering, outflattering, outgathering, outostaining, outstrander-
ing, outtraveling
OUAIE boundaries, columbaries, communalize, commutative, conjugative, consultative, consummative, contumacies, copulative, formularize, gourmandize, journalize, obduracies, occupancies, oppugnacies, outcaviled, outlawries, outpatient, outpraise, outrage, outstrained, outwaited, popularize, tourmaline, voluntaries
OUAEI countenancing, counteracting, counterblasting, countercharging, counterclaim, countermanding, countermarching, counterplanting, countersignal, countertallying, countervall, housemaid, housewarming, mouse 

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OUAEI countenancing, counteracting, counterblasting, countercharging, counterclaim, countermanding, countermarching, counterplanting, countersignal, countertallying, countervall, housemaid, housewarming, mouse trapping, nonunderstanding, noumenalism, outdistance, outrivaled
OUAIE communicable, communicate, concubinage, conduplicate, conglutinate, conjunctivae, noncultivated, nondutiable, nonpunishable, nonrequesting, nourishable, outdistance, outrivaled
OUUEA nonuniversal

UAEIO quastorship, cuatrofoil, ultradespotic
UAIOE mustachioed, ultraviolet, unsanctioned
UAOIE fumatories, ultraconfident, un abolished, unsavoriness
UEAIO nucleation, numeration, putrefaction, rubefaction, sustentation, tumefaction, ulceration
UEAOI superabhorring, superastonish, supercatholic, unreasoning
UEOAI questionably, questionary, subregional, subventionary, successional, superdiplomacy, super ignorant, superimportant, unmentionably
UEOAI nucleoplasmic, superromantic, undemocratic
UEOIA questorial, supercordial, superformidably, superlogical, superordinary, superstoical, unheroical, unmethodical, unrecognizably, uterodynia
UIAOE multiramous
UIEIO multipersnal
UIOAE multicostate, multilobate, unicostate, unimportance
Groups of words with closely-related meanings but different spellings and pronunciations have been collected into synonym dictionaries. However, similar dictionaries of groups of words with closely-related spellings or pronunciations have, to my knowledge, never been produced. A first attempt at filling this gap has been made by Adrian Room, in Room's Dictionary of Confusibles (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979; $10), which contains groups of words resembling each other simultaneously in all three attributes: meaning, spelling, pronunciation. With each group, he provides brief definitions designed to bring out the differences in meaning. He does not consider variant spellings of the same word, such as theatre/theater or curb/kerb.

A few samples will, perhaps, give the flavor of the whole. Similarity in spelling alone is not enough: accidental/incidental does not appear, though accidental/incidental and accidental/oriental do. Some of the groups of two words are very good: ingenious/ingenuous, affect/effect, banister/baluster, vice-regent/vicegerent, magnificent/munificent, torturous/tortuous. However, his larger groups are less successful, often linking words with substantially different spellings or meanings:

- babble/rabble/gabble/rabbit/burble/blather
- rigid/urgid/turbid/tumid/torrid
- pagoda/pergola/portico/gazebo
- catacomb/hecstomb/catafalque/cenotaph

Many of these were probably included on the basis of similarity in syllabification.

If one is looking for the right word to convey a particular shade of meaning, this book is no substitute for a good synonym dictionary. As the author recognizes, the book cannot hope to include everyone's pet confusibles, being a personal and idiosyncratic list. Nevertheless, the book does "distract, divert, and even delight" the browser, and serendipitous discoveries can be made: did you know that 'slot' comes from the Old French esclot, 'hollow between the breasts'?