

# A RHAPSODY OF WORDS

DARRYL FRANCIS  
London, England

**Word Ways** is a journal devoted to language, names, speech, spelling, pronunciation, dictionaries, etymology, linguistics -- but above all, words. A rhapsody of words, as Shakespeare said in Hamlet.

I was wondering recently how many words and terms there are which actually use the four magic letters W-O-R-D. For example, **buzzword**, **catchword**, **password** and **wordplay** are a few to spring to mind. How many others are there? I decided to compile a list of such items. The list is given in this article, and was built up from reference sources in my possession -- a baker's dozen of them.

To how many of the 250 items here can you attach precise meanings? What is an **ayword**, a **telescope word**, a **word-bregger**, and a **word-grubber**?

Plurals have been excluded from this list, but verb forms and comparative and superlative adjectives have been included. Spellings differing only by the presence or absence of a hyphen or a space have also been included. Does anyone have any additions?

3 afterword	4 ghost-word	4 rnyne-word
4 a good word	4 ghost word	2 rhyme word
4 all-changing-word	1 God's word	3 swearword
4 ayword	3 good word	3 telescope word
2 backward	3 guide word	1 ten words
3 blend-word	7 hard words	1 the eternal word
3 bug's word	3 headword	2 the last word
4 bug-word	7 homophonous words	1 the seven last words
3 bug word	3 household word	1 the seven words
5 buzzword	1 last word	4 the word
3 byword	4 latest word	1 the word of Christ
3 catchword	3 loanword	8 the word of God
3 catchword entry	8 machine word	1 the word of grace
3 catchword title	3 nayword	1 the word of life
3 comfortable words	4 nonce-word	1 the word of the
3 counterword	3 nonce word	Father
3 crossword	4 o'erword	1 the word of the
3 crossword puzzle	3 overword	Lord
6 crossword-puzzle-itis	4 owreword	4 vogue word
3 cussword	3 password	3 watchword
3 direction word	4 portmanteau-word	4 weasel-word
2 fair words	3 portmanteau word	4 weasel word
3 foreword	2 precatory words	2 wordable
3 four-letter word	3 reword	2 wordably

- |                    |                  |                           |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 word-accent      | 1 word-history   | 2 wordness                |
| 3 word accent      | 3 word-hoard     | 2 word of command         |
| 3 wordage          | 1 word-hunter    | 3 word of God             |
| 3 word association | 1 word-hunting   | 3 word of honor           |
| 3 word association | 3 wordie         | 1 word of honour          |
| test               | 3 wordier        | 3 word-of-mouth           |
| 1 word-bate        | 3 wordiest       | 2 word of wisdom          |
| 1 word-battle      | 10 wordified     | 1 word-order              |
| 1 word-bearer      | 10 wordify       | 3 word order              |
| 2 word-beat        | 10 wordifying    | 3 word-paint              |
| 2 word-beating     | 3 wordily        | 2 word-painted            |
| 3 word-blind       | 1 word-image     | 3 word-painter            |
| 3 word blindness   | 3 wordiness      | 3 word-painting           |
| 3 wordbook         | 3 wording        | 2 word painting           |
| 3 word-bound       | 11 wording-hook  | 1 word-part               |
| 1 word-braving     | 3 wordish        | 1 word-pecker             |
| 1 word-breaker     | 3 wordishness    | 3 word-perfect            |
| 2 word-breaking    | 3 wordishly      | 3 word picture            |
| 2 word-bregger     | 1 word-jingle    | 1 word-pirate             |
| 1 word-bridger     | 2 word-jobber    | 2 word-pitied             |
| 3 word-building    | 1 word-juggler   | 2 word-pity               |
| 3 word-catcher     | 1 word-jugglery  | 2 word-pitying            |
| 3 word-catching    | 2 word-juggling  | 3 wordplay                |
| 1 word-centre      | 2 word-keeping   | 1 word-preaching          |
| 2 word-charged     | 3 wordless       | 12 word-recognition       |
| 1 word-chopping    | 3 wordlessness   | 3 word salad              |
| 2 word-clad        | 3 wordlessly     | 13 words-and-music boy    |
| 3 word class       | 2 wordlike       | 2 word-selling            |
| 1 word-coinage     | 1 word-list      | 1 word-shot               |
| 1 word-coining     | 8 wordlore       | 10 word-shy               |
| 2 word-compelling  | 3 word-lore      | 3 word-sign               |
| 1 word-composition | 2 word lore      | 1 word-sketch             |
| 2 word-conjuring   | 2 wordlorist     | 3 word-slinger            |
| 1 word-conjurer    | 1 wordly         | 2 word-slinging           |
| 2 word contest     | 3 word-magic     | 2 wordsman                |
| 2 wordcraft        | 2 wordmaker      | 2 wordsmanship            |
| 2 wordcraftsman    | 2 wordmaking     | 3 wordsmith               |
| 3 word-deaf        | 3 word-man       | 3 words of administration |
| 3 word deafness    | 2 wordsmanship   | 3 words of institution    |
| 2 word-dearthing   | 1 word-master    | 3 words of limitation     |
| 1 word-derivation  | 1 word-meaning   | 3 words of procreation    |
| 3 worded           | 1 word-memory    | 2 words of the wise       |
| 1 word-epicure     | 3 word-men       | 1 wordsower               |
| 3 worder           | 2 word method    | 1 word-spinner            |
| 3 word family      | 1 word-mill      | 1 word-spinning           |
| 1 word-fence       | 3 wordmonger     | 2 wordspite               |
| 3 word field       | 2 wordmongering  | 2 word-splitting          |
| 1 word-flowing     | 3 word-mongering | 13 word-spree             |
| 3 word-formation   | 2 wordmongery    | 3 word square             |
| 3 word-for-word    | 3 word-mongery   | 3 word squares            |
| 3 word game        | 12 word-movement | 1 words-speaking          |
| 1 word-group       | 3 word-music     | 3 wordster                |
| 9 word-grubber     | 2 word musician  | 3 word-stock              |

3 word stress	3 word value	1 word-wood
1 word-stringer	1 word-vision	1 word-wound
1 word-strooken	1 word-war	2 word-wounded
2 word symbol	1 word-warfare	1 word-wrangle
14 word-time	1 word-warrior	1 word wrangle
13 word-tosser	1 word-weapon	1 word-wrangling
1 word-trap	1 word-weigher	3 wordy

The reference sources used for this article were:

- 1 The Oxford English Dictionary
- 2 Webster's New International Dictionary (Second Edition)
- 3 Webster's Third New International Dictionary
- 4 Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary
- 5 Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Eighth Edition)
- 6 Dictionary of American Slang
- 7 The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia
- 8 The Random House Dictionary of the English Language
- 9 A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English
- 10 The English Dialect Dictionary
- 11 A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words
- 12 Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary
- 13 The American Thesaurus of Slang
- 14 Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology

What about my assertion that I used a baker's dozen sources? Thirteen sources (all but Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology) contain the term, and all define it as "thirteen". However, three sources -- A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, The English Dialect Dictionary, and A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words -- additionally define it as "fourteen"!

Editor's Note: Although dictionaries list many words or phrases containing the letters W-O-R-D, few of these appear with any frequency in actual text. The Kucera-Francis sample of one million words taken from United States publications of 1961 lists only one instance each of **by-word**, **catchwords**, **weasel-worded**, and **word-games**, two instances of **wordlessly**, and four each of **wording** and **worded**. (**Word** and **words** were, of course, far more commonly encountered, with 274 instances apiece.) To be fair, one should note that the Kucera-Francis listing makes no attempt to enumerate multi-word phrase frequencies, instead tabulating their components separately. This, however, does not explain the total absence of such words as **crossword**, **password** and **watchword**.