

THE MOST FECUND CONSONYMS

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Words that have the same pattern of consonants, such as BeTRaY and oBiTuaRY, euTHaNaSia and aThENS, SPoNGe and eSPioNaGe, KNOW and oKiNaWa, iCHNeuMoN and CHiNaMan, and oRCHeSTRa and Ro-CHeSTeR, are known as consonyms. One can distinguish between strict consonyms, in which Y is regarded as a consonant, and permissive consonyms, in which Y is a vowel. Little study has been made of consonym groups. Consonym groups based on two, three or four consonants are numerous, but for six or more they become somewhat rare. What is the largest number of consonants in a consonym pair consisting of two essentially different words, not merely variant spellings, inflections and the like?

This article proposes that the consonant-pair LN produces a larger number of consonyms than any other. If one considers words from the first, second or third editions of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, there are at least 100 such words (those with * from the Gazetteer, and with + from the Biography):

Aalen*	aline	ileon	leno	lone	linie
Aelana*	aln	Ilian	Leon	loon	
Aelian+	aloin	ilion	Leona	loun	
Aeolian	alone	Laane*	leone	Luian	
aeoline	Aulon*	lain	Leonia*	Luini+	
aeolina	Eileen	laine	Leuna	Luino*	
Aialon	elaein	lan	liana	luna	
Aileen	elaeine	lana	lien	Luni*	
aional	elain	Lanai*	lienee	lune	
Alain+	elaine	Lanao	liin	Olean*	
alan	elan	lane	lin	oleana	
alana	Elean	Laon*	lina	olein	
alane	Elena	lauan	line	olen	
alani	Eliau	laun	linea	olena	
Aleian	Elienai	lean	lino	Olin	
alen	Elioenai	leen	lion	Olinia	
alien	eloin	Len	loan	olona	
aliene	Elon	lena	loanee	ulan	
alienee	Eolian	Lenaea	loin	ulna	
alin	Ilano	lene	Lon	ulnae	

In addition, the well-known given name Loni (as in Loni Anderson) exists.

More tentatively, this article suggests that BRN and SPRT are the most fecund choices among consonant-triples or consonant-quadruples, respectively. No doubt those having Webster's Second on

tape can quickly identify potentially better combinations: however, many words must still be laboriously dug out of the dictionary (usually below the line) as well as the Gazetteer and the Biography by hand:

Abaran	barn	Boran	bran	Bruno
Abaron	barne	Borana	Braun	buran
aberne	baron	Boranai	brauna	Burano
abiron	Baronio+	Borani	Braune	Burauen*
aborne	Barouni	borean	bren	burian
abourne	Béarn*	boreen	Brian	burin
Abran	beeearn	borine	brin	burion
abrin	berain	born	brine	burn
abron	Beraun*	Borna*	brinie	burnie
Abronia	Berean	borne	Brioni*	eburine
abrune	bern	Borneo	broon	eburn
aburn	berne	Bornu*	broun	Eburna
auburn	Berni+	boron	bruin	Iberian
Baarn*	berun	Boronia	Brun+	obarne
bairn	birn	bourn	brune	obarni
bairnie	Birni	bourne	Bruneau+	Oberon
barauna	Biron	brain	Brunei*	O'Brien+
barin				

asperate	esprit	soap root	spirit	sproat
asperite	Espirito*	soporate	spirt	sproot
aspirata	Espiritu*	spart	sport	sprot
aspiratae	sap rot	Sparta	sprat	sprout
aspirate	seaport	sperate	spret	spruit
asport	separata	sperit	sprit	spurt
asprout	separate	spirate	sprite	superate
esparto				

Note that the common nickname Bernie can be added to the first list. The words Espirito and Espiritu are only found as parts of two-word phrases, Espirito Santo and Espiritu Santo.