As computerized word lists become readily available to the logicologist, many of the previously difficult problems that have filled the pages of *Word Ways* become trivial. It is therefore interesting to begin researching problems that cannot be solved with word lists. A dictionary provides four pieces of information about a word: spelling, pronunciation, etymology and meaning. This suggests three types of problems for systematic logological research, in ascending order of difficulty: pronunciation (homophones, refractory rhymes, syllables, etc.), etymology (this article) and meaning (homographs, autonyms, contronyms, etc.). Although these topics have appeared in *Word Ways*, they have not received the kind of systematic treatment accorded spelling.

As a step in the right direction, I now attempt to answer the following question: "What acronyms have become common English words?" I define a common English word to be a word that appears uncapitalized in Merriam-Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary. The Ninth defines an acronym as "a word formed from the initial letter or letters of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term." Note that a blend is "a word produced by combining other words or parts of words." Therefore, every acronym is a blend but no vice versa. However, blends usually are constructed from phonemes, while quality acronyms are constructed from initials.

Since I do not yet have access to a computerized dictionary complete with etymologies, and I am too lazy to scan all 160,000 entries in the Ninth, I needed a method. After much experimentation, I noticed that the word "acronym" was coined in 1943. In fact, in the Second Edition of the New International, such words are called "acrostics." This implies that most acronyms were formed since the turn of the century, and can be located by scanning the addenda to the various Merriam-Webster dictionaries. My other method was to ask members of the National Puzzlers League; I received help notably from Eric Albert, Philip Cohen and Murray Pearce.

Entries in the following table include the year in which they first entered the language (according to the Ninth), and the Merriam-Webster dictionary that first contains them. The following symbols are used:

- **NI1** New International (1909)
- **NI1+** New Words section of the New International (1931)
- **NI2** New International, Second Edition (1934)
- **NI2+** Addendum section of the Second (1959, same as 1954)
**Quality Acronyms**

- asdic: Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee (1940, NI2+)
- dew: Distant Early Warning (1953, 9C)
- dopa: DihydroxyPhenylalanine (1917, NI3)
- fido: Freaks + Irregulars + Defects + Oddities (1966, 12W)
- laser: Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation (1957, NI3)
- lidar: Light Detection And Ranging (1963, 12W)
- maser: Microwave Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation (1955, NI3)
- nitinol: Nickel + Tin + Naval Ordnance Laboratory (1968, 12W)
- radar: Radio Detection And Ranging (ca.1941, N12+)
- rem: Roentgen Equivalent Man (1947, NI3)
- scuba: Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (1952, N13)
- snafu: Situation Normal — All Fucked (Fouled) Up (ca.1940, N12+)
- sofar: Sound Fixing And Ranging (1946, N12+)
- sonar: SOUND NAVIGATION Ranging (1945, N12+)
- tepa: Tri-Ethylene Phosphor-Amide (1953, 12W)
- zip: Zone Improvement Plan (1963, 12W)

**Blends That Technically Are Also Acronyms**

- alnico: ALuminum + NICKel + COBalt (1935, N12+)
- boff: BOX OFFICE (1946, NI3)
- ceramal: CERamic ALloy (ca.1948, NI2+)
- cermot: CERamic METal (1948, NI2+)
- comsymp: COMMunist SYMPathizer (ca.1961, 12W)
- cyborg: CYBernetic ORGanism (ca.1962, 12W)
- elhi: Elementary school + High school (1948, 12W)
- gox: Gaseous OXYgen (1959, 9C)
- heli: HElen Lane (1953, 12W)
- linac: LINear ACcelerator (1950, 12W)
- loran: LONG-RANGE Navigation (ca.1932, N12+)
- mascon: MAXimum + MINimum (1951, 12W)
- minimax: MINimum + MAXimum (1918, 12W)
- modern: MODulator + DEModulator (ca.1952, 12W)
- motocross: MOTOR + CROSS-country (1951, 12W)
- napalm: Naphthenic and PALMitic acids (1942, N12+)
- parsec: PARallax SECond (ca.1913, NI1+)
- selsyn: SELF-SYNchronizing (1936, N12+)
- shoran: SMOnt-RANGE Navigation (ca.1932, N12+)
- silvex: SILVs + EXterminator (1961, 12W)
- sitcom: SITuation COMedy (1965, 12W)
- teleplan: TELEvision-RADar Navigation (1946, N12+)
- telex: TELEprinter EXchange (ca.1943, 12W)

**Acronyms**

- AGround truth program
- FLake
- Gestapo
- Gulag
- Moped
- SAMbo
- Near [Nearby
- Atherosclerosis
- AWOL
- Benday
- Deet
- Fibre optic
- Jeep
- OP-ed
- Nazi
- Sci-fi
- Silox
- Tokamak
- Veep

**Support Acronyms**

- Biochip
- FIFO
- LIFO
- Quagmire
- Shazam
- Tacna
- Support
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<th>Acronyms From Other Languages</th>
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| Acronyms That Should Be In Webster's Ninth |
| biopic | BIographical PICture (12W) |
| fifo | First In, First Out (NI2+) |
| lifo | Last In, First Out (NI2+) |
| quango | QUasi-Non Governmental Organization (12W) |
| shazam | Solomon Hercules Atlas Zeus Achilles Mercury (12W) |
| tacan | TACtical Air Navigation (12W) |

| Supposed Acronyms |
| posh | Port Out Starboard Home |
| tip | To Insure (should be Ensure) Politeness (or Promptness) |