BANANANAMES

ANIL
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Words like LOGOLOGICAL which alternate vowels and consonants could use a succinct name. Dave Morice's *The Dictionary of Word Play* cites them only with reference to numbers, as "alternating vowel-consonant number name", a wordful description rather than a handy name. May we suggest "banananames," in the spirit of Agamemnon, Albuquerque and Miami words which are named after prime examples. Banana is the prime example of the every-other-letter type. Indeed "banana word" is the name given to them in Italian (Stefano Bartezzaghi, *Accavallavacca: Inventorio di parole da gioco*, 1992) and in Castilian Spanish (Marius Serra, *Verbalia*, Atalaya, 2000). Battus's Dutch wordplay classic, *Opperlans! Taal- & Letterkunde* (Querido, 2003) calls them "Om-en-om [round and round] Woorden".

Don't confuse banananames with Ed Conti's delightful rhyming bananagrams (May'98–May'03). All the two have in common is that their pursuit is, as Ed noted, capable of driving one bananas.

Running banana and names together does create a problem. When writing it one feels like the little girl who said she knew how to spell banana but didn't know when to stop. (But who's counting? Few'd notice if we over- or underwrote the -na-'s!) The less satisfactory word 'names' was used to mean words because 'words and 'terms' are not banananames. A logological coinage should be self referential if possible, like Agamemnon words. Ours is doubly so, by example and by gestalt.

Dmitri Borgmann (90-161, 95-67) found several 14-letter C and V examples but left it for others to find such words for the other letters. We belatedly respond, but seek not 14s as did Borgmann but the longest such word for each letter. For half the letters we found none ≥ 14. Proper names were allowed. Y counted as a vowel only when it so functioned. Plurals were mostly inferred.

A computer '05 Oxford American Dictionary's handy index eased the manual search. But OAD is only about thrice as big as a pocket dictionary, 180,000 words counting all inflections or about half that many head words. Of Borgmann's words only verisimilitude is listed. But OAD has far more than thrice as many banananames as do three pocket dictionaries, Oxford '69, Collins '93 and Merriam-Webster '06 containing only 5, 1 and 4, respectively, of the 38 (79 inferred/inflections) from OAD below. An Apple spellchecker had 27 of them. But OPD tipped two possible 18-letter bananames. The longest in OAD was 17. Longer ones should occur in larger dictionaries. Webster's Second (Web2) contains GELATINIZABILITY at 16, versus 13 as the longest Gs from OAD. The definitive list of longest banananames could be found quickly by a software-savvy reader with an exhaustive word list such as Project Gutenberg. We hope one will. (Mike? *Pretty please.*)

ALUMINOSILICATES 16
BETACAROTENES, BOROSILICATES 13
CYTOMEGALOVIRUSES 17

† DELEGITIMATIZES 15
ECOTOXICOLOGICAL 16
FORAMINIFERA(L/N), FUTUROLOGICAL 13
GAMETOGENESIS, GYNECOLOGICAL 13
HEPATOTOXICITY 14
IMAGINATIVELY, INEVITABILITY 13
† JUVENILIZES 11
† KERATINIZES 11 (becomes or makes horny) (No, not excited. But it does involve skin.)
† LEGITIMATIZES, LEVODOPAMINES (L-dopas), LEXICOLOGICAL 13
?LEGITIMATI(S/Z)ABILITY 18   (Inferred from -izable in OPD but not in OAD, Google,
Web 3 or Oxford online. Did Oxford renounce this word between 1969 and 2005? If it's a coinage
and not legit, why not go all the way LEGITIMATIZABILITYWISE with a rhyming 22?)
MANIPULABILITY, MANIPULATIVELY 14
NICOTINAMIDES (key biochemicals), NUMEROLOGICAL 13
OXAZOLIDINONES 14 (antibiotics)
PARASITOLOGICAL 15
QABALAH 7 (Kabbalah, Jewish mystical tradition)
RECOVERABILITY 14, REHABILITATIVE(LY) 14-16 (-ly inferred, not in Web3)
SUPEREROGATORY 14 (beyond the call of duty)
TERATOGENICITY (causing freak embryos), TUMORIGENICITY 14
UNIMAGINATIVELY 15 (-ly inferred but is in Web3)
VERISIMILITUDES 15, ?VOLATILI(Z/S)ABILITY 16 (-ility inferred, not in Web3)
WITENAGEMOT 11 (witan, Anglo-Saxon council)
XENOPUSES 9 (frogs)
YEKATERINODAR 13 (former name of Krasnodar, a city in southern Russia)
ZIDOVUDINES 11 (antiviral drugs)
† These four yield five more each by substituting S for Z and/or D or nil for the final S.

The only longer OAD listing was a phrase, MILITARY POLICEWOMAN at 19. Borgmann cites three monster banananames in passing, MONOVINYLACETYLENE, an 18 (plural 19), Shakespeare's *HONORIFICABILITUDINITATIBUS*, a staggering 27 letters, and HONORIFICABILITU-DINITY, 22, Funk & Wagnalls' Anglicisation of Shakespeare's Latin word. The longest Italian banana is *coronarodilatatore* at 18, the longest Dutch are *telemanipulatoren* (17), *ademanalysatoren* (16), and the delightful coinage *kamikazepiloten* (15), and the longest Castilian are *ovoviviparidad* and *unilateralidad* at a mere 14 letters.

The examples of numerical banananames Dave gives, by the way, are ONE, TEN, ELEVEN and NINETY-SEVEN. Can you think of others? In fact, eight of the first twelve numbers counting ZERO are. Over two-thirds of all three-letter words are banananames. Many fewer long words are. For example: of all OAD's 10,740 D words (6% of the dictionary) only 5.4% are banananames of 7 or more letters, 3.1% of 9 or more, and about 0.08% of 14 or more, mostly de-'s and heavily weighted by the six forms of every -ise/-ize(d/s) verb. Various other suffixes contribute to the prevalence of banananames: -ability, -ate, -ative, -atory, -ely, -ical, -inal, -ity, -ology, -wise.

Using an over-simplified model assuming that 40% of all letters are vowels and that English word

letters are generated randomly, the probability of a single CV pair is 0.24, and that of CVCVCVCV-CVCVCV is the seventh power or 0.00005. Adding in the complementary VCVCVCVCVCVCVC, the predicted probability of a 14-letter banananame is 0.0001, compared to an actual frequency of 0.002 of 14 (or more) letters in the above OAD list alone, and ~0.0008 in the D result. However, the D result was untypically low and there is even stronger evidence that vowel-consonant alternades are far commoner than this random model would suggest. The 362 14-letter words from the M-W Pocket Dictionary yielded 5 (frequency 0.014) instead of the 0.04 banananames predicted (0.0001)—an error factor of over one hundred! Of 1339 12-letter words from MWPD, 22 were banananames (0.016), as were 140 of 2138 10-letter words (0.065).

Extrapolating from the 30,400 M-W Pocket Dictionary words to the 268,000 in Web2, one expects approximately 44 14-letter banananames (5x268/30.4). For every two-letter increase in word length words appear one-third as often, and the corresponding number of banananames can be expected to decrease by a factor of ten, leading to 4.4 of 16-letters and 0.44 of 18-letters. But this compares well with the inclusive 25-30 14s, 3-9 16s and 1-3 17-18s in the above list, so Web-2 probably has even more than this extrapolation predicts. In any case, in contrast to the random model, English actually seems to prefer having vowels alternate with consonants. This accords with expectation, as a basic function of vowels is to connect or syllable consonants.

BANANANAME PALS   ANIL

By lacking awkward diphthongs and double consonants like -ph-, banananames tend to be more amenable to palindroming. Here is a swindler's dozen of pals based on words from the above list.

Palindrome	Setting or translation
Hey, 'til I bat I've nil inevitability, eh?	star baseballer, on his Hall of Fame prospects
Legitimatisability?	Not legit 'til I sit the BA exam tomorrow morning
A nay 'til I BA sit AM, it I gel.	and pass it (make it all congeal).
Manipulate, get a lupin. (Am!)	Genetic engineering has turned me into a plant!
Parasitology: "go" lot is a 'rap.	fecal examination, a common parasitology method
Qabalah "A" lab, a Q:	an advanced Hasidic practical exam question
Rehabilitate: get at "I lib a her."	I free her from her affliction or failing.
Supererogatory? Rot, a gore, re pus!	low opinion of this Catholic concept
Evita nig, a minus, unimaginative!	Nig [renege, Web3] on Evita, she's a dummy.
To mega-net, I witenagemot.	I go to the Witan Council to connect up big time.
Xenopuses? Let, else sup on → ex!	Leave 'em alone or else eat 'em and die! (not)
Rad on ire, take Yekaterinodar!	Napoleon or Hitler seeks revenge against Russia.

Dave Morice's review of the longest words in palindromes (95-54) lists five examples of 19-letter words or longer, bettering legitimatisability above. Add J.A. Lindon's 18, undenominationally. Only one of these six is a banananame, the longest one of all at 27, the Latin *honorificabilitudinatibus*. And only one exceeds ours in elegance and can be cited without explanation, another Lindon 19, {"Ungastroperitonitis—is it I? Not I." reports a gnu.} But is his coinage believable? Less so than legitimatisability, I'd say, being biased.