

# CENTURY WORDS

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In the use of alphanumeric scoring (A=1, B=2, etc.), attention has been given to the discovery of the 'lightest' and 'heaviest' words of a given length (Darryl Francis, 'Lightweights and Heavyweights', November 1972; Charles Bostick, 'Word Weights', May 1974; and Tom Pulliam in the November 1979 Colloquy). An alternative exercise, also based on alphanumeric scoring, is to discover the longest and shortest words having a given score, in this case 100.

The longest words I have come across have 14 letters and both appear in Webster's Third Edition:

**BATRACHOIDIDAE** a family of marine fishes having the head large and depressed and the mouth very wide and including the common toadfishes

**BIDDULPHIACEAE** [listed under Biddulphia] a large genus (the type of the family Biddulphiaceae) of rectangular diatoms having winglike or hornlike projections at the corners of the valves and being locally abundant in the marine plankton

Other long century words, both boldface dictionary entries in the Oxford English Dictionary, include

**ADIABATICALLY** pertaining to a condition where no heat enters or leaves a system

**HAEMOPHILIAC** a person with a tendency to bleeding

The shortest century words (selected definitions only) are probably those with five letters. There appears to be no four-letter word in the English language which totals 100; this is reinforced by Darryl Francis's 'heavyweight' word ZU-ZU totalling 94. All words below except TUTTS and STUTT are boldface OED entries.

**BUZZY** buzzing; rough and hairy; fuzzy

**NUTTY** queer; not right in the head

**PUSSY** a cat

**STRUV** dial. past tense of 'strive'

**STUTT** a form of the obsolete STUT, to stutter, stumble

**TOTTY** unsteady, shaky, tottery

**TOUSY** dishevelled, unkempt, tousled, shaggy, rough

**TUTTS** inferred plural of TUTT, an alternative spelling of TUT, an ejaculation expressing impatience or dissatisfaction

**YOUST** obsolete form of JOUST, to join, to meet

I STRUV with these words and, in spite of being a cat lover, came up with "...BUZZY, TOUSY, TOTTY, NUTTY PUSSY ... TUTTS!"