

THE PALINDROMIC SLIDE RULE

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The Palindromic Slide Rule makes palindromes--ten thousand of them. To set it up, photocopy the four boards labeled A, B, C and D on the outside back cover. After cutting them out, place the A board on a table, and lay the B board on the A board, positioning it between the two columns of words. In similar fashion, put the C board on the B board, and the D board on the C board. When the words in the rows are lined up, they make palindromes. To pick a specific palindrome, select a four-digit number (from 0000 to 9999) and slide the boards up and down with respect to each other so that the appropriate small digits in the word boxes line up in a row. Some of the dromes are disgusting (9923), some obscene (0251), and some political (3496).

Not all the palindromes make everyday sense, but that's the nature of the beast. It was difficult finding enough words to construct it. At first, I made lists of phrases that were palindromic, but it was impossible to arrange them in groups that could combine in grammatically correct lines. I decided to make lists of palindromic word pairs instead. Each list included pairs composed of the same parts of speech: verb-verb, noun-noun and verb-noun were the commonest. When I had 15 to 20 pairs in those three lists, I set up a four-word palindrome with ten alternating words in each position (see the columns headed Regal, Pens, Snap and Lager). To expand the length to eight words, I added two words on each side. Because of a limited stock of words, it was necessary to let the seventh column (Melon) use nouns as adjectives (for example, **melon** in **melon mood**), and to have some nouns that can be read as verbs (for example, **trap** in **trap tide**). Thus, the last two words can be interpreted as direct addresses, modifiers, or in some cases as verb and direct object. Finding the last five satisfactory pairs took almost as much time as arranging all the others!

Spot lemon. Regal pans snap lager, melon tops.
Nab deer. Mad nuts stun dam, reed ban.
Swap loot. Straw pots stop warts, tool paws.
Doom pit. Ten bats stab net, tip mood.
Mar rats. Snug paws swap guns, star ram.
Edit bus. Sore naps span eros, sub tide.
Wed pool. Live buns snub evil, loop dew.
Flog part. Sleek tips spit keels, trap golf.
Emit gats. Drab pals slap bard, stag time.
Tug rail. Raw pins snip war, liar snip.