

THE SUET ALPHABET

NYR INDICTOR

Chappaqua, New York

Take the word WORD. Add an N, and you can make DROWN, add an S and you can make WORDS or SWORD. Add a J and you get...well, nothing, actually, because no combinations of the letters WORDJ make a word. Are there any words that can combine with a J to make a new word? Of course: SAW + J = JAWS; BAA + J = BAJA, etc. Are there any words that can combine with any of the 26 letters to make a new word? Such a word would be a universal recipient, like someone who has type AB blood, and therefore we can call such a word an AB-word.

What would an AB-word look like, I wondered. Well, it would have a U in it, if it was at all likely to combine with Q. I started with the word QUEST, and worked backward: QUEST - Q = SUET. Is SUET an AB-word?

SUET + A = SAUTE
 SUET + B = TUBES
 SUET + C = CUTES
 SUET + D = DUETS
 SUET + E = SUETE [var. of sweet]
 SUET + F = FUTES [fute = to whistle]
 SUET + G = GUEST
 SUET + H = SHUTE [a shot, var. of shoot]
 SUET + I = SUITE
 SUET + J = JUTES
 SUET + K = STUKE [stucco]
 SUET + L = LUTES
 SUET + M = MUTES
 SUET + N = SNUTE [a product of flax processing]
 SUET + O = TOUSE [=tousle]
 SUET + P = SPUTE [=dispute; =spit]
 SUET + Q = QUEST
 SUET + R = TRUES
 SUET + S = SUETS
 SUET + T = STUTE[to stop; =stutte]
 SUET + U = STUUE [=stew]
 SUET + V = VUSTE [dial. var. of fist]
 SUET + W = STUWE [=stew]
 SUET + X = TUXES
 SUET + Y = ETUYS [=etuis]
 SUET + Z = ?????

Help! I can't find a single word listed in the OED made from the letters ESTUZ! You would think that STUZE or STUEZ would be a variant

spelling for STEWS, or UZEST for USEST, or SUETZ or ZUETS for SUETS or SWEETS, but I can't find any attestations. There's a word TUZ(Z) meaning mussed-up hair, with plural TUZZES, so why not TUZES? There was a guy on the former TV show "Hope and Gloria" whose last name was UTZ who always talked about "we UTZES" but this is forced, at best. ZETSU means a number of things in Japanese compounds, from "tongue" to "absolute" and in unconventionally romanized Chinese, it is not hard to attach meanings to SZUTE and SUTZE. Combinations like USZET and TEUZS probably mean something in some central European language, but none of these are at all satisfactory. I checked all 120 permutations in the OED and not one is listed, though I can't be sure that some variant form isn't lurking in a citation, waiting to be discovered. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to find a better AB-word, ideally one that produces less-obscure words than STUKE and VUSTE.

VALE, VERBATIM

Word Ways end-of-pagers ordinarily introduce new books, magazines or software relating to logology. Rarely, it is our melancholy duty to note the cessation of a logological landmark. Verbatim, a distinguished word-magazine self-published by Laurence Urdang for nearly 23 years, nicely complemented Word Ways, laying primary emphasis on etymologies, word abuse, and specialized jargons (i.e., words-as-carriers-of-meaning rather than collections of letters to be manipulated). One of its strongest features were the insightful book reviews by the editor. Urdang noted with pride the fact that Verbatim made at least a small impact on the world of lexicography: there are 121 quotations from it in the Second Edition of the OED. He also took satisfaction from the fact that Verbatim was for awhile able to pay its contributors.

Can it be resurrected under a new editor-owner? The asking price for its "name and other assets" is \$100,000. Only well-heeled wordsmiths need apply, for few if any can earn a living in this arena (Richard Lederer and Will Shortz come to mind). There is, of course, a strong argument for purchasing an already-existing magazine (with a circulation of 3100) instead of starting one from scratch; this was the strategy followed for Word Ways, which had been published for two years by Greenwood Publications before they gave up.