

FOUR OUT OF FIVE

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Keen Scrabble-player and wordsmith Michael Vnuk of Annerley in Queensland, Australia wrote to me recently:

The most interesting word I've come across lately is GRANDDADDY with its high concentration of Ds. After a quick search I found a few other letters which appear as four out of five consecutive letters in a word, e.g. PEEWEE, VOODOO, ASSESS, MUUMUU and PIZZAZZ. Most other words I can think of involve either E or O. Repeated consonants seem much rarer.

How many different letters is it possible to find example for? Firstly, a few rules:

- The odd letter out in the group must be in the middle, so that an internal 5-letter palindrome is formed. This disqualifies terms with three or more consecutive identical letters, like BRRR, a variation of BRRR, expressing cold (OED)
- Hyphenated words such as TERROR-RIDDEN (Web 2) and WHHI-HHEE, a horse's neigh (OED), are not allowed
- Neither are coinages like HEHHEHHEH and BOWWOWWOW

Additions may be possible by including place-names and surnames. If you find an example for any of the missing letters, or can improve an existing entry, please let us know.

- A RAABAABA a coarse, rough-spoken person, in the Caribbean (DJE)
 B HUBBUBBED mingled into a confused noise (OED)
 C BOCCACCIO a rockfish of the California coast (F&W)
 D GRANDDADDY a grandfather (Web 2)
 E SLEEVEEN a smooth-tongued schemer (Web 2)
 F CUFFUFFLE to toss straw, in northern Ireland (EDD)
 G
 H
 I PIIPII West Indian term for a turkey chick (DJE)
 J
 K
 L PARALLELESS without a parallel, unparalleled (OED)
 M COMMEMMORATION early form of 'commemoration' (OED, ferial, 1563-87 quot.)
 N UNNUNNING removing from nunhood (Web 2)
 O BOOBOOK a small Australian owl (Web 2)
 P UPPOPPED popped up, poetically (Web 2)

- Q
 R ARRARRA a Hokan language spoken by less than 1000 people on the
 NW coast of California (CIWL)
 S POSSESSOR one who owns or holds (Web 2)
 T RATTATTOO a sharp knocking sound (Web 2)
 U MUUMUU a long and loose-hanging colourful dress worn by Hawaiian
 women (RHD)
 V
 W
 X
 Y
 Z PIZZAZZ zest, vim, vitality (OED)

The next step is to look for words with letters appearing at six out of eight consecutive letters in a word, which may or may not produce an internal 8-letter palindrome, for example

- HUBBUBBUBB00 a confused crying or yelling (OED)
 BALLILLILLY-LOO Scots expression for a lullaby (EDD)
 TOOMATOOG0OR00 a spiny New Zealand shrub (OED)

REFERENCES

- CIWL Classification and Index of the World's Languages, C.F. & F.M. Voegelin, 1977
 DJE Dictionary of Jamaican English, 2nd Edition, Cassidy & LePage, 1980
 EDD The English Dialect Dictionary, ed. by Joseph Wright, 1970 edition
 F&W Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, 1924
 OED The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1989
 RHD Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed., 1987
 Web 2 Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1934