

# TWENTY-TWENTY VISION

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Playing with 2x2 and 3x3 squares constructed from word chains made me curious as to how far the exercise could be taken; the table on the next two pages is the result. Each horizontally-adjacent pair of words makes another word (many of these are hyphenated) or a two-word phrase, reading either from left to right or from right to left (follow the arrows). Each vertically-adjacent pair of words is similarly linked upwards or downwards. Some adjacent word pairs make one word/phrase when read from left to right, and another word/phrase when read from right to left (similarly upwards and downwards); these two-way pairs are indicated by double-headed arrows.

In constructing the table, I set two parameters: (a) no word to be repeated, (b) words must have three or more letters. I started with a 2x2 square and worked outward to 3x3, 4x4, 5x5, etc. As the squares became larger I often found the only word I could use had already been used; this meant going back into the square, undoing some of the words and building new links. At 20x20 I stopped, partly through exasperation and partly because this is the largest size that fits onto a double page.

The 400 words are joined by 760 links. Almost 70 per cent are in the OED or can be inferred from words therein. I also used Webster's Second and Third Editions, Bloomsbury Thesaurus (1993), Chambers English Dictionary, Chambers Phrase File by Roger Prebble (1993), The Complete Word Game Dictionary by Pulliam and Carruth (1984), Stedman's Medical Dictionary, and the United Kingdom Advanced Cryptics Dictionary. Two personal names (Churchill, Rosewall) are included along with several UK placenames (Chestfield, Coatbridge, Ironbridge, Park Street, Clayton, Parkside, Shotton, Stonebridge, Stonehouse). Ings is in Cumbria.

By following the arrows, it is possible to make a few three-word and even four-word phrases: dark brown colour, high church service, library book stand, soft fruit season, spring seat belt, shoulder blade bone, and post office phone book. Going further, one can look for overlapping chains of phrases. The editor asks: what is the longest such chain that can be found without revisiting a word? (His candidate, 22 words long, is given in Answers and Solutions.) For more games of this nature, see Leonard Gordon's "Getting Around in Wordland" in the Aug 1994 Word Ways, in which he likens the grid to a set of one-way city streets.



