

THE SUET ALPHABET REVISITED

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In the August 1997 *Word Ways*, Nyr Indictor posed the Suet Alphabet problem. Namely, can each of the 26 letters be added in turn to SUET, and rearranged to provide a real word? Examples were given for 25 of the letters, but the rearrangement of SUET and Z was problematical.

There was limited Colloquy response to the poser. The February 1998 *Word Ways* referred to the coined term ZU-SET, but that didn't seem like a particularly robust response.

There are two ways to proceed. One, fill the SUET+Z gap. Two, find an alternative to SUET—namely, find a different set of four letters to which all the letters A-Z can be added in turn.

First off, fill the SUET+Z gap. I note the existence of the place-name UTZE in Germany, given in the *Times Index Gazetteer*. (The proper spelling has an umlaut accent over the U.) One can conceive of the plural form UTZES, towns such as UTZE, and the possessive form UTZE'S, of or belonging to the town of UTZE. Not a brilliant solution, I have to admit.

Unimpressed with my UTZES solution? How about dispensing with SUET and finding a different set of four letters? As indicated in the original article, it makes sense first to find a word that can be created from Q plus the four letters. Initially, I tried words like QUARE, QUIRE and QUITE, but all gave difficulties. How about a Q-solution that didn't use the letter U? I noted the existence of QERES and QERIS in Webster's Third, the plurals of QERE and QERI respectively.

In the case of the letters EIRS, it's easy enough to find solutions for 23 of the additional 26 letters. The three letters I, J and Y posed some difficulties, but these were soon overcome by checking the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The obscure words IREIS, RIJSE and any of IYRES, YIRES and YREIS allowed the three gaps to be filled. Meanings for these words? IREIS, a capitalised main entry, is a 13th-century spelling of "Irish"; RIJSE is a 14th-century spelling of the verb "rise" listed at that verb; IYRES and YIRES are the plural forms of IYRE and YIRE, both 16th-century Scots variant spellings of the noun "ire" listed at that noun; and the capitalised main entry YREIS is a 13th-century variant form of "Ireis", Irish. All rather old words, I know!

In the case of the letters EERS, solutions for 25 of the additional 26 letters are fairly easy to track down. The difficult letter is again the Z. Turning to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, I note the existence of the verb REZE, an obsolete form of the verb "raise". I see no problem with allowing the simple -S form of the verb, thus REZES.

On the next page is my full set of solutions for both the EIRS and EERS problems. Are there alternative solutions to EIRS and EERS which rely less on obsolete spellings plucked from the pages of the *Oxford English Dictionary*?

EIRS + 1 EERS + 1

A	RAISE	ERASE
B	BIERS	BEERS
C	CRIS	SCREE
D	RIDES	REEDS
E	SIREE	RESEE
F	FIRES	FREES
G	GRISE	SERGE
H	HIRS	SHEER
I	IREIS	SIREE
J	RIJSE	JEERS
K	SKIER	REEKS
L	RILES	REELS
M	MIRS	MERES
N	REINS	SNEER
O	OSIER	EROSE
P	PRISE	SPREE
Q	QERIS	QERES
R	RISER	SERER
S	SIRS	SEERS
T	RITES	STEER
U	SIEUR	REUSE
V	VIRS	VEERS
W	WIRS	SEWER
X	SIXER	SEXER
Y	IYRES, YIRS, YREIS	EYRES
Z	SIZER	REZES