

# WORD SQUARES? NO, OBLONGS!

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The Holy Grail of word grids is the elusive ten-square. Squares as a class are the overwhelming focus of word grid study. But squares are only a special case of the generalized word grid universe.

Besides squares such as the 5x5 and 8x8 and 10x10 varieties, there are many more word grids of non-square dimensions, such as 5x3 or 8x5 or 10x12. In the present article, I will examine only the most elongated of word grids. These are grids of ten or more letters across, and only two or three letters down.

The longer candidate words for this study were all found as lower case entries in an electronic spell-checker based on Stedman's Medical Dictionary (26th Edition). Medical dictionaries offer a rich trove of longer words. The number of words of length nine in the spell-checker are 23,275, of length 10 are 17,212, of length 11 are 12,673; of length 12 are 9,062; of length 13 are 6,263; and of length 14 are 3,923. Much larger word troves could have been achieved by merging several dictionaries, and by adding word phrases and proper nouns into the mix, but I wanted to see what results could be obtained from a single source. For two- and three-letter words, the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (OSPD), 3rd Edition, was used as the exclusive source. The OSPD provided 96 words of length two and 973 of length three.

The number of word grids found of size 2x9, 2x10, 2x11, 2x12, 2x13 and 2x14 were, respectively, 4467, 854, 167, 16, 1 and 1. For 3x10, 3x11 and 3x12 word grids, the corresponding numbers were 80972, 5110, 187 and 7.

## 1. Two Letters Down

A few of my favorite nx2 word grids are:

H O N O R A B L E  
A N O R E X I A S

E L E M E N T A L  
M A R I H U A N A

P O I N S E T T I A  
I N T U I T I O N S

A B O M I N A B L E  
S E N A T O R I A L

U N I M O D A L I T Y  
S A T Y R O M A N I A

H I E R O P H O B I A  
I N F E R I O R I T Y

The sixteen 12x2 grids found from the candidate words included

E M O T I O N A L I T Y  
H E M O S P O R I D I A

U N I M A G I N A B L E  
M U T A R O T A T I O N



The only 13x2 and 14x2 grids found in this study were, respectively,

P S E U D O S T O M A T A  
I O N T O P H O R E S I S

U R E T E R O U T E R I N E  
S E D I M E N T O M E T E R

## 2. Three Letters Down

A few nx3 word grids whose down-words are primarily common are

E L A B O R A T E  
G E N E R A T O R  
G A D G E T E E R

N O N S O C I A L  
A V O I D A N C E  
P A T T E R N E D

A R S E N I C A L  
D U P L I C A T E  
S T A M P E D E D

A S T R A G A L A R  
D E R A C I N A T E  
O X Y G E N A T E D

P A R A M E D I C S  
A N A L O G I C A L  
L A M P O O N E R Y

E R A D I C A B L E  
N O M I N A T I O N  
D E P E N D E N T S

R E C A P P A B L E  
E V A L U A T I O N  
D E P E N D E N T S

C E L E B R A T O R  
O V A R I O C E L E  
B E M A D D E N E D

P A P E R B A C K S  
A G A L O R R H E A  
P E R M E A T I N G

E R A D I C A T I N G  
A U R I C U L A R I A  
T E M P E R A T E L Y

I R R E P A R A B L E  
R E I T E R A T I O N  
E M B A N K M E N T S

E N C O M P A S S E S  
L E U K O R R H E A L  
K E R A T O M E T R Y

Among the 12x3 grids found in the study are

S E R O P O S I T I V E  
P R O L I F E R A T E S  
A N C E S T R E S S E S

U N F A T H O M A B L E  
M O R P H O L O G I E S  
P H O T O G E N E S I S

## 3. Conclusion

As I have suggested, word grids form a continuum from the very elongated to the perfectly square. Much more study remains to be done among less-elongated word grids (nx4, nx5, for example) and among near-squares (9x7, 10x8 or 10x9, for example). Additionally, larger and combined word lists can be combed to find 14x2, 13x3 and larger word grids of the very elongated variety. The present article is not a final report, but an invitation to broad avenues of further research.