

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor at drABC26@aol.com. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of the issue.

A New Year of the Palindrome

The coming year, 2002, is the first Year of the Palindrome of the third millennium. As announced ten years ago in *Word Ways*, 1991 was the last Year of the Palindrome in the second millennium. And MM (2000) was the last Year of the Roman Palindrome. The word MILLENNIUM has six Roman numerals, and they occur in a palindromic sequence, MILLIM. The first two numerals, MI, and the last two, IM, add up to 2002, add up to 100, signifying that this is the first century of the new millennium. A very special point in time, the Millennium Second, will occur on February 2, 1001 at 2:02:02—abbreviated as 02-02-02, 02:02:02—once in the AM and once in the PM.

September 11

On that date, the unthinkable happened. I didn't hear about it till I went to pick my son up after school. We stayed at the home of one of his friends and watched the news unfold on television. The word TERRORISM appeared on the screen over and over, and the word RETALIATION was spoken over and over. As the horrifying images continued, I made up a palindrome in my head. I didn't know if that was proper under the circumstances. I told it to my son and his friend to see what they'd think. "Wow, you just made that up?" they asked. "Yes," I said. "That's cool!" they said. It seemed to lighten our moods for a moment. The palindrome: NO, I TAIL A TERRORIST, SIR—OR RETALIATION!

The Vowel Triangle

Chris McManus constructed the following incredible triangle in which all the vowels (AEIOUWY) are arrayed in lines that flesh out their numeric relationships. Beginning with the letter O, the 15th letter of the alphabet, the remaining vowels are numbered according to their position in the circular alphabet without starting the count over for A: A = 27, E = 31, and so on. As shown in the triangle at the right, the difference between the values remains the same from one vowel to the other on a single line, but this constant difference changes from line to line in an orderly progression. UWY have differences of 2, AEI have differences of 4, and OUA have differences of 6, OWE have differences of eight, and OYI have differences of 10.

Chris writes "Nicest is the fact that the center point is W, the least often acknowledged vowel. If we ignore W, we still have the other 6 vowels arrayed nicely around the perimeter of the triangle. To realize how special this relation between the vowels is, and their all-odd numbering, consider some other groups of 6 or 7 letters. The plosives (p,b,t,d,g,k), the labials (p,b,f,v,m,w), the alveolars (t,d,s,z,n,l,r)—for none of these sets do any simple progressions suggest themselves.

I'm no linguist, so I won't get into fine points about whether these sets should add any members, but they don't even show the ghost of a neat numbering scheme. Except of course that the plosives shadow the 5 principal vowels: p and b immediately follow two vowels, t and d immediately precede two more, and halfway between g and k is the final vowel."

	O			15
	U	W	Y	21 23 25
A	E	I		27 31 35

Vowel-Rich Words

Mike Keith raises the following problem: "The idea of vowel-rich words is old, but what I'm interested in here are vowel-per-syllable-rich words, i.e., words with a large value for [the ratio] #vowels/#syllables. We can pose the problem for each different number of syllables. Here are the records I've found, but it's entirely possible these can be bettered, or that additional words for the record values can be found."

One syllable $v/s = 4$: squeeze(d), queue(s), league(s), squeaked, squeezed, queened

Two syllables $v/s = 3$: squeteague, moosetongue (both in Webster's Third)

Three syllables $v/s = 7/3 = 2.33$: bourgeoisie, questionnaire (both French borrowings, but still...)

Stacking the Deck

Rich Lederer has discovered an anagram that is destined to become a classic and guaranteed to be banned in Las Vegas: Casino IS A CON.

Tense Word Variations

In the last Kickshaws, Susan Thorpe introduced tense words, which separate into two shorter words that are different tenses of the same very, as SEESAW = SEE+SAW. There are very few tense words since the form relies on short irregular verbs to form the longer words. One way to expand the possibilities is to alter the form. I suggest the following: (1) homophonic tense word SAUCY = SAW+SEE; (2) overlapping tense word DIDO = DID+DO and its plural DIDOES = DID+DOES.

Letter 27

The best questions have no answers. What is poetry? What is the meaning or purpose of life? What is the 27th letter of the alphabet? The last question is particularly good because it's simple to answer in many ways, none of which are correct or incorrect. That is, the answers have their own logic that makes them correct, but the higher logic of the alphabet pulls the rug out from under their correctness. In *Beyond Language*, Borgmann included the 27th letter question as Problem 95. He offered four answers: (1) Hornbook—the ampersand, which appeared in the old hornbooks, was sometimes considered the 27th letter, (2) Orchard—A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words by James Orchard has a section after Z that lists words beginning with a 27th letter that looks like 3, a corruption of the Old English "g," (3) Llama—some languages use the roman alphabet with additional letters such as the LL in Spanish which would make Y the 27th letter in that alphabet, (4) Circle—when the alphabet is written along the circumference of a circle, A follows Z and becomes the 27th letter.

Here are four other possible answers that might shed light on the mysterious Letter 27:

1. *Slash* is the most recent candidate. In Webster's 10th Collegiate, several words use it as smoothly as any other letter as in he/she, his/her, etc. There are three ways it is pronounced (or not)—silent, "or," and "slash."
2. *Apostrophe*. Used to shorten words or to form plurals, it is the "free agent" of the alphabet. Since it has power to affect how words are spelled and spoken, it should be given the place of honor at the end.
3. *Capital A*. The alphabet has 26 small letters and 26 capital letters. They have their similarities and their differences, both in looks and in usages. Written in a row with small letters first, the letter A is the 27th letter.
4. *Blank*. The invisible letter called "blank" or "space" is used to form the individual words of text. Otherwise they become a string of letters that have to be separated to form words. If the alphabet is written as a string, the blank occupies not one but two positions of honor, the zeroth and the 27th.

What other letters might occupy the space beyond Z?

Ajjaxxx

Iowa City is the home of the first recorded business establishment name (or word) spelled with three Xs in a row: Ajjaxxx Liquor Store. This triple-X name breaks new ground, just as the hoax word zzxjoanw broke new ground for double-Z words. Are there any other triple-X words or names out there? Is Ajjaxxx really the first? Go, Hawxxx!

Editor's Note: The February 1969 Word Ways reported the existence of Monsieur Jxxx, a retired constable in the village of Harly, in the Department of Aisne, France, according to the February 6 1968 issue of France-Soir.

Quadruple Reduplication

In *Little Nicky*, the devilish comedy starring Adam Sandler, one of the characters (whose mind is taken over by one of the devil's) says the following lines that conclude in a rare example of a quadruple reduplication:

Jesus this, Moses that, Abraham hit me with a whiffle ball bat.

Yep, the Lord sure did say a lot of hibiddy-jibiddy-bibiddy-squibiddy.

Worldplay

The nine planets of the solar system hold worlds of wordplay. To begin with, their names are spelled with 52 letters, the total number of uppercase and lowercase letters in the alphabet. There are 9 unused letters, BDFGKQWXZ, one for each planet. The first list below presents each planet name followed by a letterplay property unique to that planet. The second list shows some of the more remarkable properties involving the conjunction of two or more planets.

MERCURY letters zigzag back and forth in the alphabet

VENUS line letters on left, curved letters on right

EARTH vowels on left, consonants on right

MARS first half letters on left, last half on right

JUPITER even and odd letters alternate
 SATURN longest alphabetic string (RSTU)
 URANUS consecutive bigrams begin and end it (UR,US)
 NEPTUNE same bigram begins and ends it (NE)
 PLUTO consonants are tall letters, vowels are narrow letters

EARTH's letters have alphabetic values that add up to 52, which are the number of weeks in a year and the number of letters in the planet names. It's all in the cards, also spelled with 52 letters.

MARS and EARTH, the only two planets that could possibly support life, have consecutive alphabetic values, 51 and 52.

SATURN, URANUS and NEPTUNE begin with letters that spell SUN, which sustains life. Their alphabetic values are also consecutive: 93, 94, 95.

EARTH and VENUS are close to each other in the solar system, but when the planets are alphabetized they are seven worlds apart, EARTH first and VENUS last.

VENUS is the only planet spelled entirely with letters that are the initials of planet names: Venus, Earth, Neptune, Uranus, Saturn.

MARS, VENUS and URANUS are the only planet names that end in the same letter. They are also the only planet names written in lowercase with all narrow letters: mars, venus, uranus. SUN and MOON both end in N, and both are made of narrow letters, too: sun, moon.

VENUS, URANUS and JUPITER are the only planet names spelled with alternating consonants and vowels.

Tony Chestnut

"Tony Chestnut knows I love you..." begins a song my son said the kids sang in P.E. What is so special about that line?

Ambidextrous Words

One day, while looking at AMBIDEXTROUSLY, I noticed that if the suffix LY were dropped off, the base word AMBIDEXTROUS has an interesting, ambidextrous quality. Its definition, "using both hands with equal ease," is a good description of how the letters occur in the word and in the alphabet. The six letters on the left-hand side, AMBIDE, appear in the left half of the alphabet (A-M), and the six letters on the right-hand side, XTROUS, appear in the right half of the alphabet (N-Z). A perfect ambidextrous word, it divides into two equal parts. Not only that, but it is spelled with all different letters. However, it isn't the only kind of ambidextrous word. In general, a word is ambidextrous if it can be divided into two parts of any length so that the letters in the left part occur in the left half of the alphabet, and those in the right part occur in the right half. However, if the left half letters occur in the right half of the alphabet, and vice versa, then the word is antidextrous. In Webster's 10th Collegiate, the alphabetically first and last of both kinds are AN and MY (ambidextrous) and NAB and ZILCH (antidextrous). Longer ambidextrous words include DECID/UOUS and DECAHED/RON. DECALCIFIE/S favors the left side, and its past tense, DECALCIFIED, is completely left-handed. PROV/IDED, ROOT/LIKE and QUOT/ABLE are perfect ambidextrous words, dividing into two parts having an equal number of letters. Ambidextrous and antidextrous words of 12 or more letters are scarce. PUZZ/LE-HEADED is a 12-letter antidextrous word. Chris McManus found HEMAC/YTOZOON, a 12-letter ambidextrous word. He also found the following words that would qualify as perfect but for a single letter that doesn't belong on the same side as the others: DEACCE/SSiONS, mONOSY/LLABLE, OUTSPR/EADInG, POSTPR/AnDIAL, STORYT/ELLInG. What is the

longest ambidextrous or antidextrous word, perfect or not, that can be found? What is the longest that has no letters repeated?

From Dromes to Primes

David Woodside writes "You'll appreciate this true incident that really happened to me. After showing me my new Post Office Box number (171343), the postal worker asked 'Can you remember this?' Feeling clever, I said 'Sure. It's two sets of three-digit palindromes—each group of three numbers reads the same backwards as forwards.' To my amazement she immediately replied with a yawn 'It's also three sets of two-digit prime numbers.'"

Mississippi Highball

The Mississippi River, the biggest river in North America, is 11 letters long, but those 11 letters weave a watery tale. By a magical spell of wordplay, MISSISSIPPI has the sentence I SIP formed by 14 different arrangements of letters without changing their order of occurrence (mISsIssiPpi, mISsIssipPi, ... missIsSIpPi), and IPPISSISSIM, the river's name in reverse, has the sentence I PISS, also formed by 14 different arrangements (IPpISSissim, IPpISSiSsim, ... IpPissISSim). No wonder a glass of water is called a Mississippi Highball!

Double-AEIOU Words and Phrases

Rex Gooch sent the following words and phrases in which the five vowels appear exactly twice each to add to those examples in the November 2000 and February 2001 Word Ways:

AUDIOMAGNETOTELLURIC (Transactions, American Geophysical Union, Feb 13 1979)

CUBOIDEONAVICULARE (Sted)

MULTIPLE-STATE MODULATION (Telecomms Dir 1991)

PSEUDAUTOHERMAPHRODITISM (Borgmann coinage)

PSEUDOHEMAGGLUTINATION (Sted)

PSEUDOINTRALIGAMENTOUS(LY) (Sted)

RADICULONEUROPATHIES (Sted)

TO EQUIVALIZE ACCOUNT (OED)

TO SIT UP AND TAKE NOURISHMENT (OED)

UNIMOLECULAR REACTION (Bloomsbury Thesaurus)

Editor's note: The first word was noted by Andrew Griscom in the Feb 1972 and May 1980 Word Ways, and the fifth and sixth words were reported by Darryl Francis in the Aug 1970 issue. Alan Frank passed along PULSE-INTERVAL MODULATION from Sam's Dictionary.

Healthy Words

In the February 2001 Kickshaws, I listed vitamin letters, which are the 12 letters used in naming vitamins (ABCDEFGHIJKLP), and I mentioned CABBAGE-HEADED at 13 letters as possibly the longest healthy word, spelled entirely with vitamin letters. Rex sent several words that qualify as the longest for different reasons. PEBBLE-BEACHED, also 13 letters, is the longest with the letter P. The longest solid words use 11 letters each: ADDLEHEADED (Web 2), BLACK-BALLED (OED), BLACKHEADED (Chambers), CABBAGEHEAD (Web 2), DEPLACE-ABLE (Web 2), GALLEGALAGH (vf), PACKAGEABLE (OED). The longest healthy phrase uses 15 letters: BALD-HEADED EAGLE (OED).

First-Half Words

CABBAGE-HEADED is not the longest word spelled with only letters from the first half of the alphabet. Rex provided the 14-letter solid word HAMAMELIDACEAE (Chambers) and the 15-letter IKI-IKI-IKI-IKI-IKI (Palindromicon) of the many hyphens to top it, and awarded the laurels for longest phrase to the 16-letter A FACE LIKE A FIDDLE (Chambers).

A Presidential Word Square

Chris McManus notes that the small country of Tensk has had only ten presidents in its brief history. As a mnemonic for remembering them, he devised the presidential word square below:

George	WASHINGTON,	father of his country
Rene	ARTINAREAU,	first French-born President
Harry	STORYBOARD,	was an advertising executive
Hiram	HIRAMOSPIS,	was of mixed extraction
Adam	INYMUKSASK,	first Eskimo-born President
Vladimir	NABOKOVSKI,	whose First Lady was Lolita
Herman	GROSSVATER,	Grandfather of His Country
Percy	TEAPASTIME,	known for his afternoon parties
Sven	OARISKEMEN,	first Scandinavian President
Janet	NUDSKIRENO,	first female President

Personal Name Word Grid

Chris put together the 5x6 grid below, adding that "I have been playing some more with word grids, and found one that might amuse you. This is the only word grid I know that incorporates your name. CAUDAL, ASRAMA (a Buddhist concept), ATAVIC, arider (more arid), URARI (old form of curare, amice and lacer are all found in the Scrabble Dictionary. CAAMA is found in online search engines as (1) the Cape hartebeest, *alcelaphus buselaphus caama*, or (2) a type of fennec, also called chama or cama or kama according to the online Britannica. That leaves ASTOR, as in John J. Astor, and DAVID and MORICE, two words frequently found in the pages of Word Ways."

C	A	U	D	A	L
A	S	R	A	M	A
A	T	A	V	I	C
M	O	R	I	C	E
A	R	I	D	E	R

Related Word Square

The two squares below have some words that are related in some way—as synonyms, antonyms, members of the same set, etc. The first square begins with a SPADE and ends with a HEART, two of the four playing-card suits. As a bonus, HEART is related in another way to the word TIMER in the row above it: both are "tickers." (IRONE is in Webster's Second, and MUREX, PURIE and DENER are in the OED.) The second square has three number names across and a word, a suffix and a prefix going down.

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

S I X
 O N E
 T E N

Funniest Intersections

Like a Good Neighbor, State Farm Insurance has made a list of the top five funniest intersections in the country. Of course, the company couldn't have checked all the intersections. In fact, I live within a half-block of an award-deserving funny intersection, HOTZ and CLAPP (as in "You got the Hotz, but I got the Clapp"). State Farm's list seems a little less than side-splitting. I would require that the intersections not refer to the names of famous people, such as the first and the last on the list, which don't strike me as funny anyway. The third and the fourth are funny, but they were obviously contrived. They are cute/funny, an ideal intersection for craft shops and collectible stores. I would require that the intersections be unintentional acts of fate, or at least seem to be. My choice for first is second on the list, but the problem is, it's too predictable, and it isn't that funny. Ultimately, I vote for Hotz and Clapp. Do you know of any funny intersections in your home town?

ANTONIO and BANDERAS (Rancho Santa Margarita CA)
 GRINN and BARRET (West Chester OH)
 HO and HUM (Carefree AZ)
 HICKORY, DICKORY and DOCK (Harahan LA)
 BLAND and GORE (Pueblo CO)

A-to-Z Word Pairs

An A-to-Z word pair consists of the first dictionary entry and the last that fall into the same category. Together the two words represent the range of entries. For instance, Webster's 10th lists occupations from ABBÉ to ZOUAVE (which surprisingly enough are both French terms). Depending on the category, the part of speech may or may not matter. Occupations had to be nouns, but the second pair of A-to-Z words below includes an adjective and a noun. What categories and examples can you find?

For occupations: ABBÉ to ZOUAVE
 For chemical words: ABACTERIAL to ZYMOSAN

A Sexy Story

When two people are first married, they find each other SEXY. As time passes, the Y drops off, but they still have SEX. If that doesn't keep them together, they might get divorced. The S drops off, and each becomes the other's EX. If they get back together, the E drops off, and they start over with a kiss, an X.

Lah-De-Dah, Lah-Dee-Dah, Lah-Di-Dah

The three words composed of three short parts connected by hyphens form a single main entry in Webster's 10th Collegiate. The definition is "*var* of LA-DI-DA." The entry for **la-di-da** is "**la-di-da** *also* **la-de-da** *adj* [perh. alter. of *lardy-dardy* foppish] (1895) : affectedly refined in manners

or tastes : PRETENTIOUS, ELEGANT.” In previous editions of the Collegiate, only **la-di-da** was used, but the addition of another entry and four new spellings shows the spread of lah-de-dah to all social classes.

Disastrous Nicknames

Some nicknames refer to disaster and doom in one way or another, names like SHIPWRECK KELLY (flagpole sitter) and his brother-in-name MACHINE-GUN KELLY (gangster), TYPHOID MARY (disease transmitter), DR. DEATH (wrestler), and THE KILLER (Jerry Lee Lewis, musician). What other disastrous nicknames are there?

Cabaret

Moving its first letter to the end and changing the spacing gives a perfectly good definition of CABARET as A BAR, ETC. This is a special type of anagram called a cyclic transposal. It is also one of the most well-known anagrams, because it defines the original word so simply and clearly and makes use of the common abbreviation ETC so handily. Other anagrams can work this way. A cabaret often keeps its stock of liquor in a cabinet, and CABINET is A BIN, ETC.

Right Triangularity

The right triangle is a special kind of triangle, both geometrically and logologically. There are nine different letters in RIGHT TRIANGLE which can be arranged to form the familiar right triangle whose sides measure 3, 4 and 5 units. In this case, the units are letters. They spell THE across the top side. Starting at the T again, they spell TRIANGLE going down the left side and up the diagonal side. Starting with R and reading the highlighted letters counterclockwise to T, they spell RIGHT. (Next lesson is on PI.)

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T H E
R  L
I  G
  N
  A

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Pi For Dessert

Pi is the two-letter name for the transcendental number beginning 3.14... It is also the 16th letter of the Greek alphabet. Multiplying 16 by 2, the number of letters in pi, gives 32. Placing a decimal after the 3 converts it to 3.20, which is close to the value of pi. On the other hand, squaring the first digit of 3.14 gives 9, and squaring the last digit gives 16. The two squares are the alphabetic values of P (16) and I (9), spelling pi. Adding 16+9 give 25. The square root of 25 is 5, the alphabetic value of E. Attaching that letter to the end of pi turns it into pie. A pie is a circle. Pi is necessary to calculate the area of a pie. It's as American as apple pi.

Shakespearean Christmas Sonnet

Thomas W. Ross sent a pastiche of lines from Shakespeare selected and arranged as a sonnet in sonnet form with the initial letters spelling Merry Christmas—as you like it.

Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time,	(16.2)
Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:	(68.8)
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme;	(32.7)
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May	(18.3)
Yet when the best is, take the worst to be.	(137.4)
Some in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;	(90.6)
Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,	(41.13)
Receiving nought by elements so slow.	(44.13)
I will not praise that purpose not to sell:	(21.14)
So should the lines of life, that life repair	(16.9)
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,	(5.2)
Making a couplement of proud compare--	(21.5)
And fortify yourself in your decay:	(16.3)
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	(18.1)

Gaza Frequens Libycos Duxit Karthago Triumphos

Jim Reeds of AT&T Labs—Research passed along to the editor this Middle Ages Latin-alphabet equivalent of “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog,” used as a writing exercise and as a convenient plaintext for cryptographic purposes. It can be translated as “Crowded with treasure, Carthage held Libyan triumphal processions.”

The Logic of Upside Down

Upside down means “in such a way that the upper and the lower parts are reversed in position.” This raises a cornfield of questions:

- If a perfect cube existed with all six sides exactly the same, could it ever be upside down?
- If “The Upper Part” were stenciled on each side, would the cube always be right side up?
- What if “The Lower Part” were stenciled on each side instead?
- If someone didn't know English, would the words still apply?
- If a perfect sphere existed what would it be? Would it be right side up at one point or every point?
- Would there be no upside down on the sphere?
- Is it possible to make something that can't be right side up?
- If it can't be right side up, can it still be upside down?
- Can something be upside down in outer space?
- If the upper part is supposed to be on the bottom, is it upside down when it's at the top?
- If the upper part of something is removed from the lower part, does the lower part become upside down?
- In losing its lower part, does the upper part become permanently right side up?

These are some of the questions that the upside down definition doesn't answer.

Identical Word Palindromes

Bill O'Connor asks the following question: “What is the longest sequence of identical words one can use in one side of a PD consistent with the reversal turning into a similar number of distinct words, the latter making some sort of consecutive sense? Probably my three best efforts [shown below] suffer from the defect that they use proper nouns. The third example (Pooh Bear

expressing his disapproval of poor little Ava's four hoops) is a cheat, since there is no overlap on the reversal." Can you come up with examples that don't include personal names?

Madam Ada mad as Adam! Adam! Adam?

"Miry mirror rimy, Amy Ra!" Myra—my ram, Mary Mary Mary, may mirror rimy rim

"Pooh!" Pooh pooh-poohs Ava's hoop, hoop, hoop, hoop!

Selected Palindromes

Bill has written an incredible number of palindromes that range from the short brisk quip to the long surrealistic fantasy. In the selection that follows, I am particularly impressed by the basic truth of the first one.

Pets nip instep
 No nursemaid? I, Ames, run on
 Tell imp at Otto Neil's elm, Leslie, not to tap millet
 We panic, I'm so cosmic in a pew!
 Sail had no dew, Adam! Nine men in mad awe don dahlias
 Anita! No sonata data, no sonatina!
 Damsel, a male's mad
 Dismal Sharon sees Norah slam Sid
 Dora, no lie, vanilla ball in a veil on a rod!
 Ed, I spotted a clam in an animal cadet topside
 Norah's rat saw a predawn wader paw a star, Sharon
 No yarn in rayon?
 Start relaxed; Nina can index alert rats
 We see bee sew
 Yak not on kayak? Kayak not on Kay?

Two Oxymorons

Bill sent a label with a maritime oxymoron that's a good follow-up to the much-heralded JUMBO SHRIMP. The new ox on the block appears on a can of FANCY PLAIN SARDINES. By coincidence, I was watching *The Exorcist* the night after I got the label in the mail, and I heard an oxymoron that falls into the same category as MILITARY INTELLIGENCE. In the movie, someone uses the phrase REASONABLE PSYCHIATRIST.

A to Z Games

John Langdon, creator of ambigrams (see his book *Wordplay*), writes "I indulge on occasion in what I call A to Z games where I try to come up with 26 examples on a particular theme. Here's one that (with a little help from my friends) is complete."

Ajax	Gore-Tex	Latex	Qualitex	Velux
Borax	Hydrox	Minwax	Rolex	Windex
Clorox	Imax	Nynex	Spandex	Xerox
Desenex	Jack-in-the-Box	Outbox	Timex	Yonex
Ex-Lax	Kleenex	Pyrex	Unix	Zerex
FedEx				

State Name Abbreviations

David Robinson has tallied up state name abbreviations that seem to have been formed by similar rules. He has also provided comments relating the tallies to the question that has appeared in *Word Ways* before: what is the logic behind the Post Office's choices?

Over one-third of the states retained their pre-zip abbreviation: DC, GA, KY, LA, ME, MD, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA. WV follows the example of using initials of a two-word name.

Over one-third of the states used the first two letters of the state name (and of the old abbreviation): AL, AR, CA, CO, DE, FL, ID, IL, IN, MA, MI, NE, OH, OK, OR, UT, WA, WI, WY. Originally Nebraska was NB but I believe it was changed to avoid confusion with New Brunswick. Idaho and Ohio were not previously abbreviated.

Five of the remaining states used the first and third letters when the first two letters were duplicates: MN, MS, NV, TN, TX. I assume Arizona went to AZ instead of AI as it was more distinctive, and that IA was used to avoid possible confusion between IO and the number 10. In the case of MT, the T was the only letter left that was not already used.

That takes care of 47 states (including DC) having abbreviations that make a certain degree of sense or follow established rules, leaving four mysteries.

- AK Why not AS or AA? These letters are all duplicated in Arkansas
- CT The worst! Why not CN according to the original abbreviation, Conn?
- HI Why not HA? No previous official abbreviation for this state
- KS Why not KA?

Unfinished Symphonies

Some companies have names that highlight their main product and leave the rest to the buyer's imagination. In Iowa City, there are three such companies: BILL'S OVERHEAD DOORS AND MORE, CARDS ETC., and TIRES PLUS. In the first case, I'm tempted to say "You've got overhead doors! What more could there be?"

A Word to the Y's

Jeremy Morse writes "Not only does Y have two forms, the consonantal (C) and the vocalic, but the latter can be subdivided into long (L), short (S) and diphthongal (D). Of these four, only S can appear at the beginning, middle, and end of a word."

C yet, beyond, ? S yttrium, myth, any L ?, type, by D ?, eye, day

He adds "Most combinations of two of the types can be exemplified. Some combinations of three types and one of four can, too. Can anyone add to this list?"

- Two Y's
- CC yesteryear, CS yearly, lawyerly, CD yesterday
 - LL cyclostyle, LS slyly, LD byway
 - SL ladyfy, systyle, SS pygmy, synonym, SD everyday, pennyroyal
 - DL mayfly, DS coyly, DD waylay

Three Y's	LLS xylography, LSL hydroxylysine, LSS hyperdactyl, SLS polyhydroxyl, SSS syzygy
Four y'S	SSSS dacryocystosyringotomy

Mathematical Anagrams

In his contradictionary *up/dn*, Anil lists numerous anagrams. The three that appear below are especially interesting because of the way they incorporate mathematics in one way or another. The first on the list below is a dazzling anagram involving number abbreviations; note how the phrase on the left breaks apart charade fashion to yield the three 2-letter endings used in forming the first three ordinal number names. These endings occur in the same order in the words as they occur in the numbers, and the letter A separates them. Rarely are words so perfectly organized!

a standard 1,2,3 a 1st, a 2nd, a 3rd

mathematics aim, set, match (a tennis pun, but also a good definition of the how-to of mathematics)

curlicue U-circle-U

Still More Curious Contronyms

Anil found the following self-opposites that haven't appeared in *Word Ways* before. In some cases, the different meanings involve the same word considered as different parts of speech.

AFFECTED had an effect, influential (v); phony, ineffectual (adj)

IMPREGNABLE not pregnable (as a fortress); pregnable (eggs or females)

NOVEL old standard fiction (n); new, unprecedented (adj)

PRICELESS invaluable, with infinite value; in-valuable, with zero value

RENDER perform or create (vb); one who destroys (n)

STEM spring forth (v.i.); cut off (v.t.)

STRING add; remove strings (e.g., string beans)

SUBMIT give in to an adversary or hostile fate; give out to a publisher

UNDERWATER inundated (adj); allow to dry out (vb)

Count On This

Peter Newby prefers the term *cryptarithmic* as the description of logical statements capable of mathematical "proof" by substitution of different digits for the different letters. He has come up with a simple proposition that uses the Cornish language names for 2 (dew), 3 (tri), and 5 (pimp): DEW + TRI = PIMP. He also believes that it is better to make a witty or logical statement first and then provide a mathematical solution instead of vice versa. "Unfortunately," he says, "trivial differences apart, the existence of a multiplicity of solutions does detract from the wordsmith's attitude." The solution to Peter's cryptarithm is given in *Answers and Solutions*.

Playing For Time

Peter writes about a British game show "Playing for Time" has the British contestants under pressure to produce the correct answer from a mix of general knowledge, logic, and mathematics thrown at them by the Ulsterman Eammon Holmes. A recent question posed by this self-satisfied mouthpiece for the inventiveness of the production staff came across as 'How many R's in six days?' Only Thursday, Friday, and Saturday contain a letter R. But where does one commence a

run of six days—and why six? Should one waste one's precious time asking this exponent of fractured English to repeat his question? It was only when he explained that 6x24 gives one the solution that one realized that an English speaker would have said 'How many hours in six days?'"

Prose Poser

Here are four prose posers by Peter: Is JANE a modified JEAN? Did DAVE rewrite the VEDA? DIET—is it influenced by the turn of the TIDE? Do anagrammatists make GARNETS STRANGE?

Charade Poseur

Peter writes "Darby Belsire, the rhyming couplet laureate, wishes to pioneer a rival to the prose poser, basically an incomplete charade which attempts simultaneous sense in both readings, however tricky. Here is his solitary contribution to the genre: Are pikemen the subjects of STAND OF FISH aggression?"

Tiddly Bits

Here are some observations by Jay Ames on the ways that the names of famous people sometimes connect in meaning:

- If Tom Cruse and Penelope Crus had kids, would they be known as Aquanauts/Aquanuts or Day Trippers?
- The only thing linking the Kennedys and the Capones is their names, which originally meant "odd-shaped head/big head, bull-headed, obstinate, stubborn"
- The first Cagneux/Cagney was bowlegged or knock-kneed but no more so than the first Cruik- or Crookshanks, Krumbeins, Krivinogas or Tortagamba-Gambatori ancestor

Toise Voice An' Woise

Jay Ames notes that

Deodorants work fine for some,
Repellants work for others.
So when you're on a date, me son,
Don't emulate yer brothers (just bathe an' smell clean)

Gr! Eek!

Bill Webster wonders how many of the English names for the Greek letters can be anagrammed into other English words. His initial attempt resulted in the following lucky 13: BETA abet, bate, beat, GAMMA magma, DELTA dealt, lated, EPSILON pinole, ETA ate, eat, tae, tea, MU um, NU un, OMICRON moronic, SIGMA agism, TAU Uta, UPSILON pulsion, PHI hip, and PSI sip.

Not Yellowstone!

Bill asks "What national park name contains the abbreviations of four states?" I can give a clue by asking a different question: "What board game for young children can be made by adding a single letter to the four abbreviations as they appear in the national park name?" Tricky, eh?

A Question of Taste

Jeff Grant sent the following poser concerning the five senses: "If you can't see you are *blind*, and if you can't hear you are *deaf*. If you lose your sense of smell you are *anosmic*, and if you lose your sense of touch you are *insensate*. What word is used to describe losing your sense of taste? (It isn't *tasteless*!)"

Why Fly, Nymph? Tryst!

Nick Montfort says that the ampersand in the following poem should be pronounced 'n'. He adds "I hope this poem makes for good reading at the gym."

Nymph, thy sly rhythms
Stymy trysts.

Thy flyby:
spy sylph.
my cry, &
psych!

My try, my try...my nth try

Why fly wryly, nymph?
Lynx, why pry dry crypts?
Why lynch my myrrh?

Spryly
synch my hymn
& thy hymn
ply the sky
& my sky:
syzygy.

Haiku Error Messages from Microsoft

Your file was so big / it might be very useful / but now it is gone
The website you seek / cannot be located / but countless more exist
Chaos reigns within / reflect, repent and reboot / order shall return
Program aborting / close all that you have worked on / you ask far too much
Windows NT crashed / I am the Blue Screen of Death / no one hears your screams
Yesterday it worked / today it is not working / Windows is like that
First snow, then silence / this thousand-dollar screen dies / so beautifully
The Tao that is seen / is not the true Tao—until / you bring fresh toner
Stay the patient course / of little worth is your ire / the network is down
A crash reduces / your expensive computer / to a simple stone
Three things are certain / death, taxes and lost data / guess which has occurred
Having been erased / the document you're seeking / must now be retyped
Serious error / all short cuts have disappeared / screen, mind, both are blank