

COMPLEMENTARY LETTERS AND WORDS

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1. Words With Complementary Letter Pairs

In "Complementary Letters" in the November 2001 Word Ways, Anil defines complementary letters as those whose ordinal places in the alphabet add to 27, e.g., A and Z, or L and O. He asks for words and phrases composed solely of such pairs, giving EVOLVE as an example, and asking whether LOVERISH is a word (I cannot find it). Such words must be of even length, say $2n$, and have n pairs of letters. My findings are presented below. As can be seen, such words are scarce. An asterisk denotes words that have this property in extremis: every one of the $(n-1)$ pairs of letters 1 and 2, 2 and 3, etc., is complementary. That clearly requires the same two letters to alternate.

The source of all words is the OED, except where noted otherwise. Pcon = Palindromicon, Peevish = Peevish Dictionary of English Slang, TEA = The Electronic Alveary. Vf denotes an OED variant form.

Words with complementary letter pairs, length 6

BYLOVE (vf)	EVAZIR (evade, Pr)	EVOLVE	
LORIOL (l'oriol woodwall 1325q, or De Loriol Sequanian 1881q)			RIVEIR
RIZARI (writer, Old High German)			
SHAZZA (familiar form of forename, Peevish)			
SHEVRI (Web2)	SHIRAZ (city, wine, etc. in Persia)		SHOLVE
SHRIVE	*SHSHSH	VEVERI	ZARISH

Words with complementary letter pairs, length 8

RIVERISH	*SHSHSHSH (sh 1848q)
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2. Word Pairs With Corresponding Letters Complementary

Anil further asks for complementary word pairs, giving the example GLIB-TORY in which corresponding letters are complementary. Here is a selection from over 600 four-letter pairs, and over 100 five-letter pairs, plus all the six- and seven-letter pairs found. There are some interesting examples, such as ARGH ZITS (though argh actually means cowardly), AZAZ ZAZA (both from the Bible and mutual reversals), CORE XLIV (Roman numerals), EVIL VERO (evil in truth?), ULLO FOOL, a GIFT of a TRUG, GILD TROW (boat), a GIRL TRIO, TILT GROG (storm at sea), HOLY SLOB, the Bond baddie OLGA LOTZ, ELIZA VORAZ (Bond goodie?), and the new graduate's LITB (degree) ORGY, in addition to the excellent GLIB TORY found by Anil.

4-letter complementary word pairs (form OED unless stated)

ARGH—ZITS	ARKS—ZIPH	AVVY (= pm Peevish)—ZEEB (Judges 7:25)	
AZAZ (1 Chronicles 5:8)—ZAZA (1 Chronicles 2:33, and other sources)	BLOB—YOLY	BLOW—YOLD	BLIP—YORK
	BRIM—YIRN		BOLD—YLOW
BRIN—YIRM	BROW—YILD	CORE—XLIV	DIRT—WRIG
DRIB—WIRY	DRIP—WIRK	DROP—WILK	DROW—WILD
DRUG—WIFT	ELFS—VOUH	ERGS—VITH	EVIL—VERO
FIGS—URTH	FIRM—URIN	FOOL—ULLO	GAZI—TZAR
GIFT—TRUG	GILD—TROW	GILT—TROG	GIRK—TRIP
GIRL—TRIO	GIRN—TRIM	GIRO—TRIL	GIRT—TRIG
GIVE—TREV (Trevor or modern Welsh tref 1889q)		GLIB—TORY	GLIM—TORN
GLOP—TOLK	GLOW—TOLD	GLUG—TOFT	GROG—TILT
GROO—TILL (grow & till are associated)		GROW—TILD	HOLD—SLOW
HOLK—SLOP	HOLS—SLOH	HOLT—SLOG	HOLY—SLOB
HORN—SLIM	HOZE—SLAV	III (Roman 4)—RRRR	KILD—PROW
KILL—PROO	KILN—PROM	KILT—PROG	KIRN—PRIM
KLIP—PORK	KLOP—POLK	KOLK—PLOP	KROO—PILL
LEVI—OVER	LITB (LitB degree)—ORGY		
LOTZ (Linguistics author, inbreath 1956q)—OLGA			

5-letter complementary word pairs (OED unless otherwise indicated)

ARMTH—ZINGS	BLOTS—YOLGH	BRIGS—YIRTH
DIRTS—WRIGH	DROGH—WILTS	DROOB (TEA)—WILLY
	DROOL—WILLO	ELIZA (Web2)—VORAZ
(Pulliam)		
ERIZO (Web2)—VIRAL	ERLO-Z (= earl)—VIOLA	FRITZ—UIRGA (yard 1000q)
GIFTH (benim 1200q)—TRUGS		GIFTS—TRUGH (trough)
GILDS—TROWH (vf)	GILTS—TROGH	GROGS—TILTH
HOLDS—SLOWH	HOLGH—SLOTS	HORNY—SLIMB (slim)
	KRAAL—PIZZO (Pizzo, attorney, advisement 1984q)	
KRAAZ (Kraaz, chemistry author, isoeugenol)—PIZZA		LARVI (Longman)—OZIER

6-letter complementary word pairs

AAAAAA (Pal)—ZZZZZZ (Z 1966q)	DROOGS—WILL'TH (sharp 1598q)
GIBURO (boor, Old High German precursor)—TRYFIL (trifle)	
GIRVIN (J Girvin spring 1799q)—TRIERM (by Scott, see arch 1813q)	
HELOTS—SVOLGH (swallow)	IVIIVI (Pcon)—RERRER (Pcon)
KILERG—PROVIT (simonite 1508q)	

7-letter complementary word pairs

AAAAAAA (Pcon)—ZZZZZZZ (Z 1967q)