

CONSONANT CASCADES

ANIL

Perth, Australia

Concluding a series on meaningful word ladders, here's another special type of ladder. Consonant cascades (CCs) are meaningful cases of "consonant movements" (CMs) in which all substitutions occur at the same position. They are modeled on vowel cascades and vowel movements (02-53), so ideally the ladders are alphabetical or anti-alphabetical. The Word Stool **bake cake**, if a Japanese fish cake, can expand to **Bake cake (fake hake?), make sake**.

Veni vidi vici is maddeningly close to being the prestige example of a CC. So, a nonce desecration: *Vini vidi vici*—I got drunk, I saw, I conquered! (lit, "The wines I saw I conquered.")

No group of letters will yield a word with each and every consonant in the variable position. The most I found bold and lower case in Random House Unabridged (RH) was 17 for bcfghklmnpqrstvwXAT, 15 for bcd fghjlmnrstWzAG and bcdh jlmnrstWYOW. Allowing proper names in RH, slang in Cassell Dictionary of Slang (CDS) and vowel subs, AT has 21 (add ejoy) and acdghjlmnrstvwzAP has 17. The bigram dghlmstwyO has 10, but 19 with such allowances (add bcefijkop). It has 22 counting the unlisted Vo (name of my late aunt, or brand name VO-5), xo (cross out or crossover) and zo (student jargon for zoology). Can readers find assignments for aat dat iat uat zat, or ao qo ro uo, or better ones for vo xo zo? Dat is dialect for "that" but is not listed in RH or CDS. Words labeled as abbreviations don't count.

The longest four-letter examples I found were 14 for bdfghlmnrstwyEAR and 13 for bcd f gklm-pstwyORE. With the above allowances bdfhlmnrstW EAL and dghjklmnrstW ICK also have 14. I haven't probed five or more letters very far. The six-letter bdhklmnrstW ICKER has a possible 11 (is a hillbilly "hicker than thou"?) Allowing charades the CC **In best incest** below has 13, the longest alphabetical CC to date.

Common words are most relevant to CCs, so compare these numbers with those from the smaller Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary. The editor has kindly provided the records Admnstxy, bcd fghjlmnrswAY and bcd fhmprtW ARE for two-, three- and four-letter words, respectively. I challenge readers with search engines and longer word lists to update these figures. What's the longest one-letter-off pair of unrelated origin?

CCs are here subdivided into alphabetical (including anti-alphabetical) and not. Definitions with over three words are called alphabetical even if the word or phrase being defined is not. I occasionally let vowels replace consonants. "Doubles" and bold-vs.-fine are as in the first article.

C.1 ALPHABETICAL CCs / Definitives:

bad "Cad, Dad. Fad had lad mad, rad. (Sad tad.)"

Bash. Dash, gash, hash, lash, mash, rash 'wash'.

Dine. Fine kine line, ... pine 'vine' (wine).

Dicker. Sicker picker-licker **bicker** [picker=buyer, licker=seller (or buyer), whoever outdickers]

Kowtow. Bow low, vow "wow!" **deal real weal-zeal. lag: lax law-lam lad**

Rue. Cue due hue, "Sue!" [Hue and cry: bad enough to sue over (if only it weren't my fault!)]

Clap. Flap-slap. Jab, jar jaw.

gam: gay gas, gag, gab

id: If I'm 'in', is it.

soppy: soggy-**sobby** [Tearjerker; “sobby”, an obvious ‘word’, is n/l. (double-letter swaps)]

“we”: **me / he-me / me-ye / he-me-ye** [4 different definitions, individually alphabetic, revealing the ambiguous inadequacy of “we”.] **mores: yore’s lore’s cores**

Antonyms: **Nod. No’s** “Not now.”

paws maws (jaws)

Hired, tired, fired. [Redolent of the spy story, **Pried, tried, fried.**]

Doubles: **How now, cow? “Sow row, now mow, low.”** [At last the famous brown cow answers our old question—assuming we sow it some grass to mow. Grazing and lowing are two of the ox’s more “defining” traits (cf. cow in Meaningful Word Ladders, part 1). Also a double synonym: the verb “to cow” is to bring someone low, usually accompanying a row.]

Other:

Bull. (Cull, dull. Full gull. *Mull* ‘**null pull**’.) [Mull over & reject this boring, lying, empty wank.]

In best incest, ‘infest,’ ingest in jest, .. in! (Lest in nest, ‘in’ pest in rest, in test, invest in West in zest.) [Incestuous petting, sucking, inning. Rationale, a refuge from the outside world (West), lest, guard down, one be tempted to join the rat race by marrying outside the family.]

Rad rag (“Rah! Ram!” ran “Rap rat raw!” **ray**. [Ray (a rad?) = searchlight, exposé article.]

“Wop-woo won wok-wog woe!” [A racist is warning against wooing or eating with aliens (Italians, Chinese or Indians?) / wog = (a) a bug, illness, (b) an Indian meal, (c) any alien (fits the context but not the syntax).]

C.2 NON-ALPHABETICAL CCs / Definitives:

Bigwig: pig-rig gig [A bigwig is defined as one who can “fix” police matters, e.g. tickets.]

Dust. Oust **dust.**

lull: dull “**null**”

tare: ware-**bare**

Yell. “Tell well.” (Yells = **hell’s bells’ tells!**)

Doubles: **‘jock’ cock-lock** [Synonym (jock strap) vs. antonym (macho athlete, ‘loose’ cock).]

Other: **Hound, found bound, wound sound round pound.** [Works alphabetically: 4567812,3.]

Bigrams Mostly C2.Other, here are some bigram CCs to close out the study, adding to two examples earlier including a shortened “id” in C.1. I’ve made a freer use of abbreviations here because it’s such fun to make sentences of two-letter words (like the definitive anagram in *up/dn*, **“dominate: do me in at”**, a one-letter move and *c.* homophone). Sounds half obscene, doesn’t it, two-letter words? All vowels are covered, but Y needed help—three “-ings” as a starter.

Ah, at an ad am as at an ax, ay? [Most ads are deceptive ‘killers’ in my opinion.]

Te: “Ye” be re “me”, re “he”, re “we”. Se be we! [Te = Taoist virtue; *se* = self (Fr., L.)]

‘bi’ “Si, Vi, Si, GI!” id: ie, if I’m ‘in’ it is id I’m in. [Our ids are ‘deep inside us’.]

Lo, do go to no ‘ho’ Co. Yo, so wo, KO, XO—oo! [“Avoid prostituted companies, they bring woe, even disability or death (cross out)!”] **go, no-go**

Oy! Oh, “ow!” on OD of Oz on ox, on o.j. op., on ol. or on Os or Or oz., OK?

[Bemoan the Australian (Oz) economy’s overweighting in primary commodities like cattle, orange juice operations, oil and metals (osmium, gold).]

UV us up? Un-uh! Ug! [Solarphobia, or ozone holiness (a C.1). This will be a holier-than-thou remark to most readers as Perth is already under the southern high UV hole.]

Vying, lying dying by my Ky. Ry.