

NEW GERMAN TRIPLE-LETTER WORDS

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A supplement to *The Pocket Oxford-Duden German Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1997) reports that the governments of Germany, Austria and Switzerland agreed in 1996 to reform the spellings of about two thousand words in the German language. Of logological interest is the fact that the spelling changes resulted in the creation of over one hundred new triple-letter words. These oddities came about in three ways. First, a number of formerly hyphenated words were consolidated: "See-Elefant" [elephant seal], e.g., becomes "Seeelefant." Secondly, letters dropped from some words in earlier consolidations were restored: "Bettuch" [sheet], for instance, was stretched into "Betttuch." Why? Because under the old rules, words such as "Bettuch," when divided at the end of a line, would regain their lost letters ("Bett-tuch"), a practice which complicated electronic text manipulation. Lastly, the eszett (ß) character was replaced by a double-s in hundreds of words, with the result that a number of words such as "Mißstand" [a deplorable state of affairs] now more than ever seem begging to be hissed: "Ein Missstand!"

Eleven different letters occur as triplets under the new spelling rules; here are all of the instances reported by Oxford-Duden:

E Armeeeinheit, Kaffeeernte, Kaffeeersatz, Kleeeinsaat, Kleeernte, Schneeeifel, Schneeule, Seeelefant, Teeei, Teeernte

F Dampfschiffahrt, griffest, Großschiffahrtsweg, Kunststoffolie, Küstenschiffahrt, Luftschiffahrt, Personenschiffahrt, Schiffahrt, Stofffarbe, Stoffetzen, Stofffüle, Tuffelsen, Werkstoffforschung, Zelstoffabrik

I Hawaiiinsel

L Balllokal, Bestelliste, Eisschnellauf, Falllinie, Fußballländerspiel, helllicht, hellila, Kontrolllampe, Kontrolliste, Kristalllüster, Metalllegierung, Mulläpschen, Nullage, Nulleiter, Nullosung, Rollladen, Schallehre, Schalloch, Schnellläufer, schnelllebig, Schnelllebigkeit, Stallaterne, Stilleben, stilllegen, Stilllegung, Wollappen, Wollaus, Zechenstilllegung, Zellehre

M Kammacher, Kämmaschine, Kammmuschel, Klemmmappe, Programmmusik, Rammmaschine, Schwimmmeister, Stammutter, Stemmmeißel

N Brennessel, Gewinnnummer, Kennnummer

O Zooorchester

P Krepppapier

R Geschirreiniger, Sperrriegel

S Bassänger, Dassatz, Delikatessenf, Einschussstelle, Flusssand, Flussspat, Fresssack, genussüchtig, Haselnussstrauch, Imbissstand, Komisssteifel, Kongressaal, Kongressstadt, Lössschicht, Messstab, Missstand, Nassschnee, Nusschale, Nusschinken, Nusschokolade, Nussstrudel, Ölmessstab, Passstelle, Passstraße, Presssack, Pressschlag, Pressspan, Reißverschlussystem, Schlusssatz, Schlussspurt, Schlusstrich, Schlusswäche, Stresssituation, Verschlussache

T Balletttänzerin, Bettuch, Bittag, Schmuckblatttelegramm, Schritttempo, Werkstatttage, Wettteufel, Wettturnen

The only double-triple-letter word to occur is "Flussschiffahrt" which means "river navigation."