

RUN FOR THE BIGGEST WORD

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Much has been written in Word Ways about the longest word. I've asked the question differently and come up with an answer that is far removed from those giant but unmemorable chemical and medical terms logologists are so fond of. The latter might take up a few lines in the dictionary, but the biggest word in my dictionary, Macquarie Australian Dictionary, Revised 3rd Edition 2001 (M), takes up more than a page. And the answer is ...**RUN!** Two other words exceed one page, **GO** and **TAKE**. The value of this exercise is to note which words are the richest—or 'biggest'—in different uses or subtleties—and/or the hardest to define!

Below is a survey of all the really big words in M. Word with more than one root—eg go¹ and go²--are not added together. For completeness I list the biggest word under each letter, plus any other words that exceed half a page (one column) in M. All the half-pagers are in bold type, while many letters have no words as big as half a page and are given in fine type. The numbers of lines in M are given. In parentheses for comparison are the number of lines in Webster's New International 3rd Edition 1961 (W) and Random House Unabridged 1966 (R), respectively. I didn't check all of R and W for additional big(ger) words, but at the bottom are noted cases exceeding M's biggest for some letters. RUN is still tops in R but the next biggest are **BREAK** and **TURN**. Biggest in W is TURN (run T!), with TAKE a close second, while RUN runs a distant sixth after **BREAK**, **SET** and **GO**. I'm surprised at how much the ratios vary.

Biggest M(W,R)	W/M	R/M	Biggest M(W,R)	W/M	R/M
A all 49 (87,67)*	1.78	1.37	O open 89 (232,133)	2.61	1.49
B break 144 (549,262)	3.81	1.82	P put 118 (182,139)	1.54	1.18
back 100 (188,139)	1.88	1.39	pull 97 (232,70)	2.39	<u>0.72</u>
C cut 150 (318,164)	2.12	1.09	play 93 (338,153)	3.63	1.65
come 120 (233,126)	1.94	1.05	point 86 (299,136)	3.48	1.58
call 118 (204,134)	1.73	1.14	pass 83 (306,143)	3.69	1.72
D do 78 (168,93)	2.15	1.19	Q quarter 65 (117,85)*	1.80	1.31
E eye 70 (174,116)	2.49	1.66	R run <u>208</u> (370,366)	1.78	1.76
F fall 84 (305,118)	3.63	1.40	round 96 (246,127)	2.56	1.32
G go <u>175</u> (417,206)	2.38	1.18	S set 126 (449,219)	3.56	1.74
get 164 (264,166)	1.61	1.01	stand 91 (180,193)	1.98	<u>2.12</u>
H hand 128 (213,211)*	1.66	1.65	strike 85 (363,172)	4.27	2.02
head 126 (171,165)	1.36	1.31	T take <u>168</u> (845,240)	5.03	1.43
hang 93 (134,121)	1.44	1.30	turn 154 (<u>907,261</u>)	5.89	1.69
I in 49 (219,56)*	4.47	1.14	U up 104 (344,147)	3.33	1.41
J jump 70 (228,133)	3.26	1.90	V voice 37 (54,55)*	1.46	1.49
K kick 60 (104,63)*	1.73	1.05	W work 113 (255,136)	2.26	1.20
L line 110 (265,178)	2.41	1.62	X xerography 8 (7,11)*	<u>0.88</u>	1.38
M make 90 (318,191)	3.53	<u>2.12</u>	Y year 31 (~60,33)*	1.94	1.06
N number 48 (286,83)	<u>5.96</u>	1.73	Z zone 27 (73,39)	2.70	1.44

* advance 38(128,67), have 69(282,104), issue 37(150,64), irony 11(13,62), keep 59(257,112), quality 14(140,35), value 26(99,42), x 6(27,27), yield 16(184,43), yoke 21(75,47).