

## NEW FIVE-LETTER PALINDROMES

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In "My New Pals" in the May 2003 Word Ways, Susan Thorpe exhibited a list of 459 five-letter palindromes not recorded in *Palindromicon II* (Jeff Grant and Dan Tilque, Word Ways Monograph Series 6, 2002). These were found on the Web using the search engine Google.

The first task was to check Susan's list, and her warnings to "beware of the minefield of spelling mistakes" proved to be good advice! With Dan's help, I carefully analysed each entry and soon found that many on the list were errors and had to be rejected. A large number were just a letter out, e.g. GIEIG for GREIG, AOBOA for AOBA, and BOMOB for BOMBO, while others were more mixed-up, e.g. ALYLA for AYALA, YUFUY for YUSUF, and MEAEM for BEAM (as in Jim Beam whisky!). Some had lots of hits, but were nevertheless wrong, e.g. AIWIA for AIWA.

We also rejected trivial coinages like BINIB and BOXOB, as well as dubious single-site hits that just didn't look right, e.g. EITIE (probable error for ETTIE). We did, however, accept a few single-hit examples where the site looked authoritative and the word seemed genuine.

Some letters fared better than others, but overall the rejection rate was high. In fact, only five letters (A, O, Q, X, Y) had more words accepted than rejected. Out of the 459 entries on the list, only 177 were finally accepted. Nevertheless, Susan has made a significant contribution to the Palindromicon collection, and also provided the inspiration for me to carry out an intensive six-month search for additional five-letter palindromes on the Internet—something I had been thinking about for a while.

This search was very successful, with a further 343 five-letter examples found. Adding these to Susan's 177 makes a grand total of 520 new five-letter palindromes.

My thanks to the many email correspondents in various countries who have helped confirm or deny the authenticity of dozens of foreign words. Often these terms turn out to be slang or dialect, or an inflection not listed in dictionaries. As on English sites, spelling mistakes are rife, and different systems of transliteration confuse the issue in languages like Russian or Hebrew.

A few errors may have crept in, but I've tried to keep them to a minimum by carefully checking each palindrome before including it.

The next job will be a similar exercise involving six-letter palindromes on the Internet. In the meantime, here is an A-to-Z sampling of new 'dromes found in the five-letter search.

AAHAA the title of a Tamil movie released in 1997

BEGEB singular imperative (familiar) form of the verb *begeben*, 'to do, commit' (German)

CYGYC a Spanish firm selling cleaning products

DUAUD variant form of the French surname 'Duault'

ENYNE a molecule with an alkene and an alkyne present

FLOLF coined word for golf played with a flute instead of clubs ('Jam' magazine, Jun/Jul 1997)

GUSUG 'chilly, frozen (of a person in cold weather)' (Alvdalen dialect of Dalarna, Sweden)

HAQAH in 'Haqah Company', a tea importer in Karachi, Pakistan  
 IPEPI wife of Memu, an ancient Egyptian overseer of boats  
 JEZEJ a colloquial word for 'they bristle' (Czech)  
 KIQIK a word for 'small' in the Uyghur language  
 LIUIL variant of *liuthail*, 'bathing' (Gaelic)  
 MAFAM a Costa Rican snack food company  
 NOEON newsletter of the Mega Foundation, derived from *noesis*, cognition  
 OOMOO a brand of Australian wine (an Aboriginal word meaning 'good')  
 POPOP pet name for a grandfather  
 QOLOQ 'backward' (Uzbek)  
 RIAIR Riga Airlines of Latvia  
 SPOPS army slang for 'special ops'  
 TIGIT neuter form of *tiginn*, 'distinguished' (Icelandic)  
 UJEJU 'a meeting' (Igala language of Nigeria)  
 VALAV gerund of *valama* 'to cast or pour' (Estonian)  
 WESEW in 'Wesew International', a draperies firm based in Bishopdale, South Carolina  
 XIDIX in 'Xidix Technologies Inc', an information technology firm based in Las Vegas, Nevada  
 YUBUY an online shopping guide  
 ZAFAZ a male given name