INITIAL-FRIENDLY AND FRIENDLY INITIAL LETTERS

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Which letters form words with the most added initial letters? Excluding abbreviations, proper nouns and affixes, I answer the question for monograms to tetragrams. I used only Collins Scrabble Dict. (CoSD), Websters Third New International Dict. (Web 3) and Merriam-Webster's Pocket Dict. (MWPD), so any of my lists might be enlarged from other sources.

Palmer Peterson ('72-120) presented one incomplete study of initial variations, 10 cases of xAT trigrams (plus three proper nouns). Adding on the 11 common words he excluded (bat, cat, etc.), presumably taking them for granted, gives a total of 21. Jeff Grant brought the list to 24, mostly from OED, or a full 26 including proper nouns. I thank Jeff for additional help as well.

Alan Frank ('84-37) and Jeff ('84-83) asked a similar question to mine but allowed transposals. Recently ('16-137) Ross Eckler explored the much broader question of N-crash word lists (= same-slot variation word ladders), limiting his study to the MWPD. The longest common-word initial-friendly bigram he found was AY with 14 examples (bay, cay, etc.).

To save a lot of space, I mostly give only list sizes without examples, but I name all the letters that do *not* form words with the given ending (because they are many fewer). Add the endings to the unnamed letters for the examples. Their meanings can be found in at least one of my sources. The generally much sparser MWPD results are given in [ ] brackets for popularity's sake.

Friendliest Monograms

These monograms form the given numbers of 2-letter words in CoSD or Web3 when preceded by the unnamed letters.

19 [0]: **A** (welcomes as initial all letters but IOQRUVX; i.e., aa, ba, ca', etc., are listed words)
18 [5]: **E** (not IJKLQUXZ) (U had only 10, Y only 8.) [MWPD had BHMWY.]
17: [1] **I** (not CEFIJNUYZ); [5] **O** (not ACEFQRUVX) [MWPD had only P.]

Friendliest Bigrams

24 [10]: **AT** (not IJ): 19 + Jeff's 5 gap-fillers (3 in Peterson): aat (oat), dat (daut), uat (witen), yat (gate), zat (zax, or 'howzat'), plus 2 proper names, I'at (Lebanon) and Jat (people), for 26.
19 [1]: **ES** (not EKNQSUZ)
18: [2] **AS** (not CIJOQSUX); [9] **IN** (not CEIMNOUX); [1] **IS** (not EFIJRUYZ)
17: [10] **AG** (not AEIKOPQUX); [10] **AP** (not AIEKOQUVX); [8] **AW** (no ABEIOQUXZ); [14, Eckler] **AY** (not AEIOQUVXZ)
16: [7] **EE** (not AEHIKOQUXY); [10] **ET** (not ACDEIOQUXZ); [8] **IT** (not EIJMOQUVXY); [7] **ON** (not AJLPQRUVXZ); [10] **OW** (not AEFGIOQUXZ).

Treating any part of speech as a word per se (ie, a noun) for "nonce plurals" of listed bigrams gives:
22: **ES** (19 above, listed, + 3 nonce plurals: ees, nes, 'ses)
21: **AS** (18 above + 3 nonces: ca's, jas, sas)
19: **IS** (18 above + 1 nonce: ris)
18: **OS** (15 words + 3 nonces: jos, tos, yos > all but AEFQRUVX).

Friendliest Trigrams

22-24 [0; 9 inferred]: **ATS** (22 of above bigrams + 2 nonce plurals: uats, zats; not IJ)
19 [12]: **ILL** (not AEIOQUX)
18 [9]: **INE** (not GIJOQUXY)
16: [9] **ARE** (not AEIJKOQUXZ); [10] **EST** (not ADEIMOQSU)
19-16: Adding nonce (or legit) plurals or possessives to any friendly bigram above gives the same result for its trigram. In two cases adding S produces additional, non-plural words:
20-23: **ESS** (19-22 -ES bigrams + J, jess) But counting possessives of nonce plurals is reaching.
17: **ONS** (16 ON bigrams + P, pons)

Friendliest Tetragrams

19 [0; 12 inferred]: **ILLS** (All the -ill trigrams above have listed plurals.)
17-18 [0; 9 inferred]: **INES** (17 listed words + nonce plural aines)
15-16 [0; 8 inferred]: **ARES** (15 listed words + nonce plural yares)
15 [8]: **IGHT** (not CGIJOQUVXYZ)
14-15 [0; 9 inferred]: **ATES** (14 listed, not AEIJKOQUVWXZ; + nonce plural wates)

Friendliest Initials

Turning the other check, which initials are friendly to the most second letters? Web3 and CoSD combined gave these results for initials with the most second letter friends in listed words (any length)—minus or plus abbreviations, proper nouns, and words with a hyphen after the first letter.
26: [26] **A**, [24] **O** (These two form words with any second letter.) [For O, MWPD lacks JQ.]
25-26 [24]: **E** (no Z) > 26 with proper nouns (Ezra, Ezekiel, eztc.) [MWPD lacks HZ.]
25-26 [14]: **I** (no Q) > 26 with proper nouns (Iquito [people]) [MWPD lacks AEHIJKPQUWXZ.]
24-25 [17]: **S** (no SX) > 25 with initial hyphens (S-shaped) [MWPD lacks BDFGJRSXZ.]
22 [11]: **U** (no OQUY) [MWPD welcomes only BDGKLMNPRST.]
20-22 [7]: **M** (no CFJKQT) > 22 with proper nouns and hyphens (McCarthyism; M-Q developer)
18 [5]: **Y** (no HJKQVXYZ) <[MWPD has AEIOU; Λ has AEINOUY.]; V has AEHIORSUWYZ.]
17-20 [11]: **T** (no BDGKPQTVX) > 20 with propers and hyphens (t-bone; t-tube; TV as a word)

Jeff Grant, who happens to be working on a dictionary of initial bigrams ("From Aasvogel to Zzyzx"), filled in many of the above gaps from OED. Most are obsolete forms or variants.
25> 26: **I** add Q (iqueme, in a quotation under 'i-queme') > 26 without capitals or hyphens
22> 25: **U** add OUY (uox, uuenan, uylie) (no Q)
22> 23: **M** add CT (mcleod [Web3 under mac-], mtepe) (no FJK)
18> 24: **Y** add HKQVYZ (yhere, yknow, yqueme, yveresce, yye, yzard) (no JX)
19> 21: **T** add PV (tphrowh, tvorog) = 21 without caps but with hyphens) (no DGKQX).