Many types of word puzzles depend on manipulating the letters of a particular word or phrase. Anagrams and charades preserve the letter-set of the initial word set; beheadments and word ladders change a letter at a time. Beheadments, charades and word ladders preserve the order of letters in the given word; anagrams alter it.

Word deletions, the subject of this article, also preserve letter order. In a word deletion, a word embedded in another word is deleted, and the ends of the original word are drawn together to form a new one. A typical example: deCREMEntal = dental + CREME. Also, from this article’s title: unfROCKed unfed ROCK, and unscATHINGLY = scaly + THING.

I believe that word deletions should meet three further conditions: (1) the constituent words should each be relatively long, not just two or three letters; (2) the constituent words should be unrelated to the combination, which rules out backBREAKing = back + BREAK; and (3) no proper names should be used. I prefer combinations which also satisfy: (4) the inner word is deeply embedded, so neither division of the outer word is a single letter, and (5) the constituent words form an interesting phrase.

More word deletions which satisfy the five conditions above are: reDISCOvering = revering + DISCO, anAPEstic = antic + APES, be­­TRAYers = beers + TRAY, chANGELess = chess + ANGEL, forTUNate = forte + TUNA, seAFARers = seers + AFAR, suSPENDers = suers + SPEND. There is a ring of truth of prePROGRAMmed = premed + PRO­­GRAM, although this pair violates rule (2).

Word deletions have been known for many years; the editor called my attention to examples from the 1690s in A Key to Puzzledom (1906) by William W. Delaney.

In Beyond Language (1967), Dmitri Borgmann listed 25 word deletions which he termed shell-and-kernel words. These words were each twelve letters long; the center six letters and the outer six letters of each formed new words. Borgmann’s category was broader than mine, in that he also included Latin words, archaic words, proper nouns and words which violate rule (2). However, seven of Borgmann’s remarkable words fully qualify: intRACISTern, lab­­ORATORial, lipOBLASToma, misPOSSEsed, misREHEARSal, recORDERship and resIDENTship. (Lipoblastoma is found in standard medical dic­tionaries; mispossessed and misrehearsal are in Funk & Wagnalls 1971 edition, but not in Webster’s Second or Third.)
The two lists below form a puzzle. Match each word from the first list with a word from the second list to form a word deletion. The puzzle is not difficult, but the matches are amusing. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

apply  pitting  early  carry  reading  emetic
chilly  redness  imply  colons  runs  lumen
coral  sander  mates  course  sights  misers
deities  surer  penny  diary  tries  pies
disable  banes  purrs  embed  center  reaping
flying  cling  resents  innate  comes  safer
marts  cotes  shies  misdeed  curly  skier
monies  deter  thing  piers  dirt  unified
AGED  RENT  LIVER  AUNT  ROUE  NEST
CAME  RUBBER  OLDEN  DELI  SCONCE  PASS
DISH  STILE  PENS  ETCH  THOU  PEAR
FORM  TINE  FORE  LAMA  UTTER  REND
LATE  ASTER  ROPER  MITT  BERM  ROVING
NUMB  CHASE  RUST  OPERA  DIME  SEMI
PATH  DIVERS  STRIP  PENT  FLOW  TIME
FOIND  KNOT  TRESS  RATIO  LAST  VERSION

Whether one finds word deletions aping + PEAL or aping + PALL, this puzzle provides seers + ARCH a porous + TENT forte + ETAS of a phenomenon which may prorate + LIFE in commies + UNIT. As we say family + LIAR: no unwed + ARRANT coming + PLAIN, please!