ALPHABETIC TRIGRAMS AND TETRAGRAMS

JEFF GRANT
Hastings, New Zealand

Many words contain a trigram comprising three consecutive letters of the alphabet. The most commonly occurring are DEF (DEFine, DEFeat, DEP, etc.) and STU (STUck, STUb, paSTUre, etc.).

However, alphabetic tetragrams are far rarer. There is probably only one everyday word that has such an orderly foursome: undeRSTUdy.

For the purposes of this exercise, only a single example is given for each alphabetic group. Proper names are acceptable, but not initialisms like KLM (airline) or QRS complex (Web 3). Foreign words like the Flemish lIJKLake, mentioned in the OED etymology of the noun 'leech', and the early Dutch GHIJl (OED, under 'gyle') are not allowed, either.

Also, the relevant letter set cannot be broken by a hyphen or space, which disqualifies terms such as staR-STUdded and fiLM NOir.

If you know of examples for any of the missing combinations, or can improve an existing one, please let us know. Beware of misprints, though! For instance, the US PhoneDisc records people supposedly surnamed PQRebski, PQRtell, PQRtorreal and SiNOPQli. These are almost certainly errors for Porebski, Portell, Porreal and Sinopoli, but with apparently genuine names like Funofpbupk and Przypyszny, it makes you wonder.

TRIGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigram</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>crABCatcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>any of several herons that eat crabs, for example the boatbill (Web 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCD</td>
<td>aBCDarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an early variant of 'abecedarian,' one engaged in teaching the alphabet (OED, 1691 quotation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDE</td>
<td>eCDEmic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pertaining to a disease observed far from the area in which it originated (RHD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>graDEFinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>any instrument that measures grades or slopes (Web 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFG</td>
<td>trEFGordd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in old Cymric law, a single community constituting a taxable unit--typically nine houses, one plough, one oven, one churn, one cat, one cock, and one herdsman (Web 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGH</td>
<td>aFGHani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a coin and monetary unit of Afghanistan, equal to 100 puls (RHD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHI</td>
<td>dunGHIll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a heap of dung; a vile abode, or any mean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HIJ  HIJinks

IJK  rIJKsdaalder

JKL  teJKL

KLM  WinKLMann

LMN  aLMNer

MNO  staMNOs

NOP  moNOPode

OPQ  pOPQuiz

PQR  saQRS

QRS  12 listed in PhoneDisc

RST  liverwuRST

[Note that this word has R,S,T,U,V,W within the space of only ten letters]

STU  teSTuDo

TUV  TUValuan

an inhabitant of the Commonwealth State of Tuvalu, formerly the Ellice Islands (OED)
surname of T. Zuvwilla of San Francisco, in the 1997 Phone Disc [Is this name genuine?]

UVW  zUVWlla

VWX

WXY

XYZ  hydroXYZine

an antihistaminic compound used to treat allergies, nausea and anxiety (RHD)

ABCD  ABCDarian

BCDE

CDEF

DEFG  DEFGnée

EFGH  dEFGHi

FGHI  baFGHI

GHIJ  GHIJsen

HIJK  sHIJKa

IJKL  rIJKLand

situation, condition or thing (Web 2)
boisterious celebration or merrymaking;
unrestrained fun (RHD)
a cupronickel or silver Dutch coin equal to 2 1/2 guilders (RHD)
a surname listed 30 times on PhoneDisc
a surname listed 16 times on PhoneDisc
variant of 'almoner,' an official distributor of alms to the needy (OED)
a widemouthed Greek vase with handles on the shoulders (Web 2)
one of a fabulous race having a single foot, used as a sunshade (Web 2) [see illustration]
a quiz given without prior announcement or opportunity to prepare (Web 3)

persons with the surname Saqr, such as the 12 listed in PhoneDisc

a sausage containing lots of liver (Web 2)

a movable shed to protect soldiers engaged in siege operations (Web 2)

a surname listed six times in the 1991 Brussels, Belgium telephone directory

surname of the alphabetical Ab.C. Defghi, a former resident of Villa Park IL, according to Ripley's Mammoth Believe It Or Not (1956) [this name looks contrived]
surname of Abbas Bafghi of Carson City NV, in PhoneDisc [Is this name genuine?] 
a surname listed four times in the 1994 Amsterdam, Netherlands telephone directory
the surname of three Michigan residents listed on PhoneDisc
the surname of U.A. Rijkland in the 1994 Amsterdam telephone directory, and of H.F. Rijkland in the 1995 Rotterdam directory

see BCD
town in north-central Poland (TAW)
a mixture of the hydrochlorides of the opium alkaloids (OED Supplement)
a man of (reputedly) superior sexual potency or accomplishments (OED)
early form of 'stiver,' a small Dutch coin (OED)

REFERENCES

Web 3 Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1976