

WORDS THAT NEVER STRAY

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Hoping to make some clean lucre, we're going to get a discussion in edgewise about a special category of words. Unless we give this topic long shrift, we'll be in rotten fettle and guilty of immoral turpitude. Please don't hurl aspersions at these words. We'd prefer that your dander and hackles be down. Rather than feeling luke cool, you'll be waiting with bated curiosity.

That opening paragraph was pretty weird, wasn't it? In fact, it was anything but in kilter. That's because lucre can never be clean, only filthy, and only a word can be gotten in edgewise. Although some people are given a lot of time to shrive (confess), we can speak about shrift only being short.

Fettle must be fine, turpitude must be moral and aspersions can only be cast, never hurled, spoken or written. Dander can only be gotten up and hackles raised. Luke and bated can modify only warm and breath, and nothing can ever be in kilter.

What is so bizarre about words such as lucre, edgewise, shrift, fettle, turpitude, aspersions, dander, hackles, luke, bated and kilter? The answer is that they are always yoked to one, and only one, other word or phrase. We call them monogamous words because they are always married to one specific word or phrase, and those marriages have lasted a long time.

Let's make a game of it. Here are fifty additional examples of words that never stray. Fill in each blank with the one and only word or expression that completes each idiom. Answers are in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

1. --- amok 2. --- askance 3. --- --- cropper 4. --- roughshod
5. --- --- smithereens 6. --- akimbo 7. --- umbrage 8. --- --- brunt
9. --- aback 10. --- aforethought
11. --- --- tizzy 12. --- haywire 13. --- --- --- dukes
14. --- cahoots 15. --- --- immemorial 16. --- bumpkin 17. --- geezer
18. --- wroth 19. --- --- throes 20. --- loggerheads
21. --- --- trice 22. --- --- druthers 23. --- --- daylight --- --
24. --- dint 25. --- --- offing 26. --- --- behest 27. --- tenterhooks
28. wishful --- 29. wend --- --- 30. wreak ---

31. unsung --- 32. foregone --- 33. scot --- 34. one fell ---
 35. --- the dictates --- --- 36. beck --- --- 37. spick --- ---
 38. hue --- --- 39. vim --- --- 40. kith --- ---
 41. betwixt --- --- 42. --- --- tucker 43. --- --- middling
 44, --- --- --- wherefores 45. --- --- yon 46. --- --- thither
 47. --- --- kaboodle 48. --- --- fro 49. --- --- abet 50. --- --- alack

And here are three special challenges: 51. --- dudgeon 52. --- suasion
 53. suborn ---.

The Mammoth Book of Word Games

The August 1990 issue of *Word Ways* reviewed Peter Newby's book *Pears Word Games*, a collection of 150 word games ranging from old standbys like Hangman and Guggenheim to ones invented by Newby or his friends and family, like Shelling Peas With Gramps (*Word Ways* Aug 1990) or Competitive Word Squares (*Word Ways* Feb 1991). All these, plus a great number of new ones, appear in *The Mammoth Book of Word Games*, a 463-page paperback issued by Robinson Publishing, 7 Kensington Church Court, London W8 4SP for 5 pounds 99 pence. (The American publisher is Carroll Graf, 212-889-8772.) Most of the games have been tested using members of the Pears Word Game Society, plus his family "any one of whom normally destroys Daddy in play".

Although most chapters are devoted to competitive word games, The Solitaire Series presents various solitary amusements which may be regarded as games against Nature. *Word Ways* readers will recognize Afterburners (anagrammed nouns of multitude, as a shower of whores), Triplets (word ladders in which letters are inserted or deleted, as NO-O-OY-OYE-OYES-YES), Listen to the Mocking Word ("I wish you would stop apologizing!" "Sorry"), Qwaints (vwllss, jaIIIl, sur++++), Zu Game (he took the doctor's advice and two aspirin), Initial Reactions (OvErDiffuseness, NoisY), Synonym Chains (true-just-fair-beautiful-pretty-artful-artificial-sham-false) and Things (NEpaled = DEpaled: a friend in need is a friend indeed).

No word game aficionado should be without this book or its predecessor. Even those for whom word games are old hat (old=ald, hat=helm, as in St. Aldhelm, the patron saint of wordplay) are sure to find a game they have never encountered before!