

VOWEL TRIGRAMS

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In the August and November 1969 Word Ways, Ross and Faith Eckler presented a list of common trigrams that can be found in English words. They deserve congratulations, along with their helpers, for undertaking what, initially, must have appeared to be a Herculean task. They managed to track down 6,500+ of the 17,576 possible trigrams.

Prior to the publication of their list of trigrams, we had embarked on a similar task, though, we must admit, it was on a much more modest scale. We had singled out the five vowels A, E, I, O, and U and had then set out to find examples of words and names displaying all 125 (= 5x5x5) vowel trigrams. These trigrams range from AAA, AAE and AAI through to UUI, UEO and UUU. We should point out that we are somewhat more liberal than the Ecklers when it comes to choosing examples. We decided that any word or name in the Unabridged Webster dictionaries (both the Second and Third Editions) would be fair game. We are not at all averse to including proper names (i.e., those spelt with an initial capital letter) in our list. For example, there is a sea-bird called an IOA, spelt with a small I; we could have included this in our list as an example of an IOA word, but we didn't. We felt that it wasn't so well-known as OHIOAN, spelt with a capital O. We can see very little point in excluding capitalized words from our considerations when this may force us to include less well-known words in our list.

Of the 125 possible trigrams we have found examples for 99 of them in the two Webster dictionaries. Can anyone make it a round one hundred?

AAE baaed	AIA Isaiah	AOU auodad
AAI Raaia	AIE gaiety	AUA Eskimauan
AAU Blaaubok	AII Hawaii	AUE sauerkraut
AEA paean	AIO baiocco	AUI beauish
AEE palaeethnologist	AIU Maius	AUU auu
AEI Chaldaei	AOA Laoag	EAA reaal
AEO Aeolian	AOE logaoedic	EAE deaerate
AEU scarabaeus	AOI daoine	EAI peai

EAO kareao	IEA Carnegiea	OOE cooey
EAU bureau	IEI Nasiei	OOI wooing
EEA Tennesseean	IEU lieutenant	OOU achroous
EEI beeish	IIA diiamb	OUA bivouac
EEO peeoy	IIO diiodide	OUE Rouen
EEU Palaeedyptes	IOA Ohioan	OUI Louisiana
EIA cockneian	IOE bioelectric	UAA quaa
EIE Jeiel	IOI dioicous	UAE quaestor
EII Pompeii	IOO dioon	UAI quaint
EIO deionize	IOU impervious	UAO guaraguao
EIU Dromiceius	IUA Niuan	UAU luau
EOA eoan	IUE Niue	UEA queasy
EOE paleoecology	OAE koae	UEE queen
EOI geoid	OAI coaita	UEI blueing
EOO Gepeoo	OAU coauthor	UEO aqueous
EOU hideous	OEA diarrhoea	UEU lagueus
EUA euaster	OEE cooee	UIA colloquial
EUE queue	OEI canoeing	UIE quiet
EUI feuille	OEO Boeotian	UII Quiina
EUO euonym	OEU manoeuvre	UIO obsequious
IAA baviantje	OIA paranoia	UIU colloquium
IAE diaeresis	OIE moiety	UOA quoad
IAI liaison	OII Boii	UOI Iròquois
IAO tiao	OIO comboloio	UOU vacuous
IAU fabliau	OOA pooa	UUA Nuuanu

What of the remaining 26 trigrams? Possibly examples for a number of these exist in the Webster dictionaries (please let us know of any that do), but we would be most surprised, nay, astonished, if examples for all 26 trigrams can be found in these august works. In attempting to conquer these 26 errant trigrams, we turned our attentions to wider horizons. Or, in plain English, we searched other reference works. 22 of the 26 were found after but a little research. Because some of the sources from which we took the words may not be easy for the reader to come by, we shall define each of the 22 words. Also, at the end of the article we shall reference the sources.

- AAA Kaaawa, a town on the island of Honolulu
- AAO Haaopu, a place somewhere in the South Pacific
- AOO Baooli, a town in Liberia
- AUO Pauoa, a town on the island of Honolulu
- EUU Neusiooc, an unclassified Indian tribe of North Carolina
- IEE Jiee, one of the Marshall Islands in the West Pacific
- IEO Kieoux, an Indian tribe of Washington and Oregon
- IIE Hiilinn, a town in the U. S. S. R.
- IIU Hiiumaa, an island of Estonia
- IUI Piui, a town in Brazil

- IUO Siuono, a mountain of the, South Pacific
- OAA Ooaa, a Hawaiian bird
- OAQ Oaonui, a town in New Zealand
- OIU Leucoium, a genus of Old World plants
- OOO Cookkoooose, the tribes of the Kusan Indian family
- OUO Ouossou, a town in West Africa
- OUU Couueta, an Indian town of Alabama
- UOE Muoe, an Indian village of California
- UOO Puuoo, a place on the island of Hawaii
- UII Puuiki, a place on Maui Island, Hawaii
- UOO Puuohala, a place on Maui Island, Hawaii
- UUU Nuuli, a town of Samoa

121 of the 125 trigrams have now been successfully located. The four outstanding trigrams are EEE, III, IUU and UUE. What can the reader offer us in the way of examples for these trigrams? The reader might start with the Websterian word SEE-ER but we dislike this because of its hyphen obtruding in the EEE trigram. Still, we shall bear it in mind as an imperfect example is better than none at all.

Perhaps the reader would care to undertake a task complementary to ours, videlicet, that of extending our list to include the letter Y in the vowels considered. From six vowels there are 216 different trigrams possible; 125 of these are the ones already discussed in this article. The other 91 will all contain the vowel Y at least once. We trust that a list of 91 examples will be forthcoming from some reader.

REFERENCES

- Funk & Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, 1956
- Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide, 1967
- The Times Index-Gazetteer of the World, 1965
- Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary, 1965
- Frederick Webb Hodge, Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, 1965