



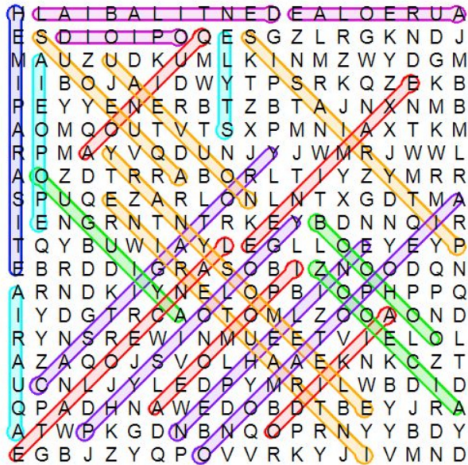
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# Style Conversational Week 1354: Let’s do the twist

The Style Invitational Express on this week’s neologism contest and new-word poetry results.



The 24 vowel-heavy words that the Express fed into the generator at [Puzzle-Maker.com](#). Not shown: lots of other words hiding out in this grid for you to discover – and create – in Week 1354 of The Style Invitational. And you don’t have to stick to those boring straight lines.

By Pat Myers

Oct. 17, 2019 at 4:01 p.m. EDT

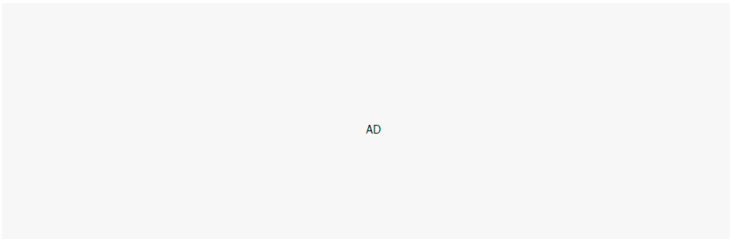
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As I mention in my intro to Style Invitational [Week 1354](#), Hall of Fame Loser Jesse Frankovich noted to me recently that last year’s As the Word Turns word grid, [Week 1294](#), was especially short on vowels, making it harder to “discover” lots of neologisms by snaking through it. So I made an effort to vowel it up this year: For the list of words that I fed into the generator at [Puzzle-Maker.com](#), I looked for ones that were at least half vowels (including Y), starting with “onomatopoeia” (the Royal Consort’s suggestion); then finding a page for Scrabble aficionados featuring words with lots of vowels; then just leafing through a print dictionary (those things do come in handy!); then resorting to the random word generator I’ve used in the past.

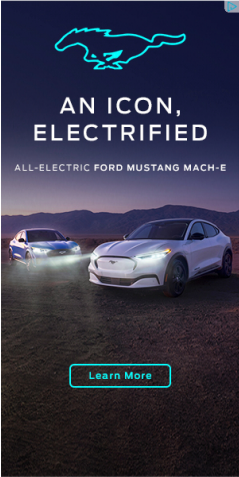
Then I clicked on Build Puzzle and ta-da — a grid that didn’t quite fit the dimensions I needed for the print page in the Arts & Style section. (The tool builds the smallest puzzle it can that accommodates the word list you feed it.)

There must be a setting somewhere to specify instead how big you want the grid, but it was easy enough to just add and subtract words a few times until I ended up with this week’s 20-by-20 square. Here are the words I used — and if you were to produce some hilariously brilliant definition for any of them, you’re certainly free to use it as an entry.

Style Invitational rookie phenom Sam Mertens, who won both first and second place in Week 1349, displays his prize of the Poop Hoop head-basketball game, with the assistance of son Isaac. (Actually, the “basketballs” are poop emoji blobs.) (Lauree Mertens)



examinee, hemiparasite, physiology, eleemosynary, lanceolate, aqueous, ipomoea, nouveau, aquaria, zoocia aureolae quinoa boohoo onicoid aikido nitrylasis intrauterine enonoeia onguiva



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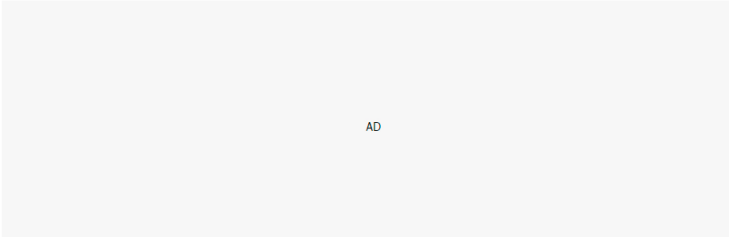
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zooey, alacazam, quincy, secrete, spout, minto, pyg mink, minkmink, spout, saguam,  
castigatory, style (added at the end to make the grid fit *just* right), dentilabial, nepheline

So what’s the upshot? After I posted Week 1354 this morning, Jesse sent me a message: “Grid looks pretty good on first glance. I think the issue with the vowel percentage is that after your words are placed all the leftover spots get filled with consonants. So if you only submitted “cat” there would be that one A and 399 consonants. So you just need to submit enough words to fill up most of the grid and it will naturally work out. Anyhow, choosing vowel-heavy words seems to have worked well too. It’s about 35% vowels (English average is around 40%; I think the past grids may have been something like 20% or less). </dorkanalysis>”

So: My plan didn’t vowel it up as much as I thought it would, because — who knew — all the “fill” is consonants. Next year, then, God willing, what I’ll do is submit lots of *short* words with vowels: pine, rate, ease, aide, etc. The more words, the less fill — and so the fewer consonants.



On the other hand, the Loser Community has risen admirably to the challenge; words don’t *have* to have lots of vowels. And it’s a big, big grid: I guarantee that there are hundreds of pronounceable words in there waiting to be discovered.

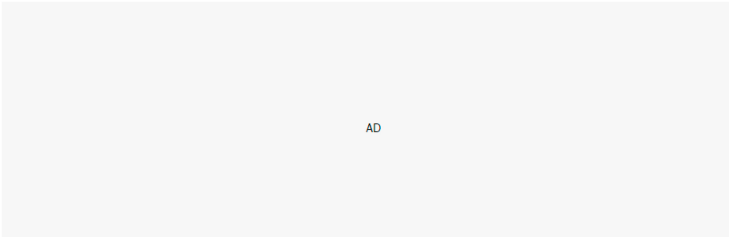
For inspiration and guidance, here’s the Losers’ Circle (a.k.a. Above the Fold) — the winner and runners-up — from Week 1294, featuring someone whose name will quite possibly be cited in Week 1354 entries as well:

Fourth place: *J-4*: ALARMOPATH: An extreme worrywart. “Nellie stayed up all night fretting that she might be an alarmopath.” (Jesse Frankovich)

3rd place: *F-7*: MaTOO: Reminder that sexual harassment did not start yesterday. (Mark Raffman)

2nd place: *P-5*: ZITSEN: The other red-nosed reindeer. (Dudley Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

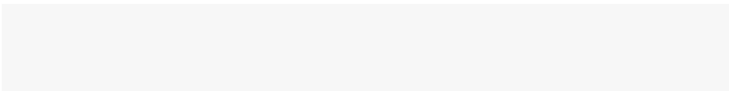
And the winner of the Lose Cannon: *N-16*: DJ DIZZY G: Rudolph W. Giuliani’s secret hip-hop name: “I’m a long-in-the-tooth sleuth for truth-isn’t-truth — kind of goof, like I’m dipped in vermouth or I fell off a roof, trying to prove there’s no proof ...” (Frank Osen)



I stress this in the intro AND atop the entry form, but I’ll give it one more shot here: When I get all the entries together after the Oct. 28 deadline, I’m going to group them, as always, into one anonymous list of what might be several thousand entries. And after that, I would really like to copy them into a Word document and click on Sort. **IF** each entry begins with the word’s starting coordinates — A-1, F-15, etc. — rather than a number, or a bullet, or the word itself, or “Starting on A-1,” or “1-A,” or “This one is my favorite,” I’ll be able to look at all the A-1 words at once, including the ones that are similar to one another. C’mon, help me out here. Don’t you want me to be in a good mood when I’m deciding how funny you are?

## Fabulosity, of course: The new-word poems from Week 1350

I’m expecting lots of entries to Week 1354; pondering the word search grid during a five-minute after-breakfast sitting should make for an entry or three from even an occasional Invite reader. A poetry contest is a different matter, especially one that asks you to use words you might have to look up — and one that requires you to be especially skilled in using the English language with wit, economy and some semblance of an ear. And so I wasn’t exactly shocked that the ink in Week 1350, for poems that focused on words newly added to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary — ended up mostly on the blotters of our veteran Loserbards.



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AD

And sure enough, it's LB Brendan Beary, of the 1,078-ink Brendan Bearys, who earns his whoa 39th Invite win with "Escape Room," a beautifully crafted verse that builds perfectly to its twist ending:

This **escape room's** the worst, everybody agrees;

We feel trapped, with a lingering sense of unease

That we'll never get out of here, try as we may —

We get sullen or spiteful, our nerves start to fray

Till at last we're released, overjoyed to survive ...

And we come every weekday, 8:30 to 5.

I had specified that the poem had to use, or at least acknowledge, the new term's actual meaning. But I was talking about such cases as "haircut" to mean a financial loss, not the term being used, as Brendan does so deftly, as a metaphor. And of course, until the last line the poem makes perfect sense as a reference to the clue-solving on-site game.

AD

The Year of the Rookie Phenom continues with the second-place ink by Bob Kruger; Bob now has a two wins and a second since his debut in Week 1271. In third place is the most occasional Loser to get ink this week: It's just the fifth blot of ink for Michelle Christophorou, who serves up this week's best line in her ode to the sexiness of her "rhotic" American man who, unlike the British, pronounces the R-sound within words: "There is nothing as firm as his R's." Erhotic, I'd say.

And there's ol' Duncan Stevens, with yet another above-the-fold Loss and three for the week. I just looked up my shortlist to check who wrote what, and it turns out that I'd first singled out *eight* of Duncan's poems this week.

**What Doug Dug:** Ace Copy Editor Doug Norwood agreed with my choices for first and second place. He also singled out both Stephen Gold's and Jesse Frankovich's takes on "free solo" climbing, plus Frank Osen's "sesh."

## Last call to march into Gettysburg!

*(Reprinting the following from last week's Conversational)*

AD

Just about every year, a contingent of Losers takes advantage of Loser Roger Dalrymple's tour guide expertise, driving up to Gettysburg, Pa., for lunch in a local pub followed by a drive to various sites where the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg transpired, and perhaps a stroll around the historic town. I can't make it this year, but it's always fascinating and fun. (Except the time I got sick ...) Lunch is at Appalachian Brewing Co., a nice pub. Because Keeper of the Brunches Elden Carnahan is on vacation, it's best to RSVP to Roger directly at rogerandpam[at]comcast[dot]net.

0 Comments



### Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

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