

# Txtonyms

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Ever noticed how your mobile phone always seems to pick the wrong word when you're using predictive text messaging? I call these 'txtonyms', and have made it my mission to identify why and how they present so many opportunities for embarrassing misunderstandings...

Despite its ubiquity, txt messaging is still infuriatingly fiddly. A hurried txt often results in a confused mess of letters. Even if you are the ultimate precision-texter, there is still the spectre of the predictive text synonym (coined here as the 'txtonym') to contend with. A txtonym is a set of words in English that are made up of the same sequence of key-presses. For example, *pub* and *rub* are both 'spelt' 7-8-2.

Noticed how you never get the word you want? Who would ever rank 'nun' as a more likely choice than 'mum'? Or how often have you found yourself txtting a friend that you're just leaving 'good' rather than 'home'?

For now txtonyms are a firm feature on the hazardous landscape of mobile communication. So, in the interests of helping you avoid the worst pitfalls of txtonymns, as well as to show up some of the more humorous coincidences, I felt it my duty to undertake exhaustive research into possible txtonyms.

How did I do this, you may ask. I wrote a computer programme that reads-in an enormous word list, and translates each English word into its corresponding sequence of mobile phone key-presses. The programme then performs a pattern-matching search and outputs a long list of all the words that share identical codes. Good, hey?!



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## So what are the most common txtonyms?

Some sequences possess far more txtonyms than others. For example, there are twenty different sequences that spell more than eight words each. 4-6-6-3-7 spells ten alternatives, and 7-2-8-3-7 spells as many as eleven txtonyms. But the clear winner is 2-2-7-3-7, which spells a grand total of twelve different txtonyms:

*acres, bards, barer, bares, baser, bases, caper, capes, cards, carer, cares, cases*

## What's in a name?

Ever texted *Amy* only to find you'd inadvertently called her a *cow*? This can be particularly difficult to explain away if she's a recent ex!

The word *demon* contains 666, the number of the beast, but then so too does *Simon, Tommy, and Monica...*

Don't be surprised if *Anna* is a bit boring, as she is synonymous with *coma*, but strangely enough also *boob...*

*Mike* might be *mild*, but *Tom* is definitely numero *uno*

Does *Alan* often *clam* up in social situations or *Heather* always irrationally think she's putting on weight, whilst *Adam* is as thin as a *bean--stalk*?

*Arnold* and *Brooke* are almost certainly crippled with identity crisis as they are the exactly same person!



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## Two of a kind

Some txtonyms seem particularly appropriate, for example:

*Eat* and *fat* are both spelt 3-2-8

An overly *heroic* act on the football pitch can so often result in a *hernia*

*Golf* and *hole* are both 4-6-5-3

Most *hotels* are *hovels*

Every good hooligan knows that *pints* and *shots* inevitably lead inevitably to *riots* (all 7-4-6-8-7)

But by far the most satisfying is that *kissing* and *lipping* are both 5-4-7-7-4-6-4...

While *tongued* is the same as *vomited* (8-6-6-4-8-3-3)!

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## Oxymoronic homonyms (text that!!)

Other txtonyms come out with completely opposite meanings:

2-2-3 spells both *ace* and *bad*

5-6-9-7 spells both *joys* and *lows*

*Runs* and *stop* are both 7-4-6-8-7

*Polar* and *solar* are both 7-6-5-2-7

The longest oxymoronic homonym is *rejected* and *selected* (7-3-5-3-2-8-3-3)

## Time on your hands? Try some of these...

Txtonyms also raise another novel kind of word game – trying to find sequences of identical key-presses that spell words with every letter different. *Ever* and *duds*, *pubs* and *star*, and *pasta* and *scrub* are all good examples, but the longest I've managed to find is 2-7-8-7-4-3-3, which spells both *astride* and *crushed*. Can you beat it?

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## For lazy txters...

Some words are particularly convenient to write, because they either involve an easy sequence of letters, or a long repetition of the same key. *Ceiling* begins with the sequence 2-3-4-5 and *empty* completes the key-press flush with 6-7-8-9. The prize for longest single run is shared by *filmstrip* (beginning 3-4-5-6-7-8) and *ventriloquy* (ending 4-5-6-7-8-9). The words with the longest repeated sequence are shown in the table below.

Sequence of five 2s	<i>cabbage</i>
Sequence of five 3s	<i>needed</i>
Sequence of five 4s	<i>gigging</i>
Sequence of three 5s	<i>folklore</i>
Sequence of seven 6s	<i><u>nonmonotonic</u></i>
Sequence of four 7s	<i>overspread</i>
Sequence of four 8s	<i>stutter</i>
Sequence of three 9s	<i>fuzzy</i>

Have you noticed any particularly funny txtonyms that I've missed? Email them into NOISE and they might make it onto the website!

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