

Nothing in Common – Let’s Solve One Together

These puzzles call for us to create a cycle of 16 words of five letters each, drawing on a pool of 12 letters. Adjacent words in the cycle must have no letters in common. I adapted a puzzle which called for a cycle of twenty words which I found to be much more difficult.

This puzzle appeared in the May 2023 [Word Puzzle menu](#) (#105). I nicknamed it BVD. The pool:

A, B, D, E, I, L, N, O, R, S, T, and V

I always make a bank of words which may prove useful, but it is a targeted bank. I list words that employ a single vowel, for example TREND, BLIND, and BRANT. The use of one of these permits a wider choice of vowels for adjacent words. Looking at the consonants, I see R, S, and T, and they appear in many words, so I make a list which avoids all three. BLADE, VINED, and ANVIL were in this part of my bank. I also list words in sections headed no RS, no RT, and no ST.

Next I consider the vowels: A, E, I, and O in this case. Due to the Nothing in Common requirement, these vowels often alternate in pairs through a good portion of the cycle. For example, ... ALERT, VOIDS, LATER, BISON, ... may be part of a solution.

Finally, I look for anagrams. You may have spotted ALERT and LATER above. I use them sparingly because they force you to use the same set of seven letters a second and maybe a third time for neighboring words. Where the anagrams come in handy is at the finish when you must join the ends together. I’ll explain.

I usually put my first word in slot #4. That’s quirky, sure, but I’d rather not join the cycle ends at the top of the loop. A good strategy in avoiding anagrams at first is to make a one-letter difference in the words two apart. In this puzzle, I began with 4. TRADE, 5. LOINS, 6. AVERT. I continued to fill in from 4 through 16 and across to #1. My plan in this case was to save an anagram of TRADE for #2, leaving me the maximum seven letters to make the join at slot #3. Guess what? It didn’t work out. I had to use an E for #1.

That final join is the most difficult step, and it often calls for back-tracking to make letter adjustments. Keep a record of what you tried because you may want to change back. Another thing to try is plowing ahead and making changes in your original steps. I have at times had to change my #4 and maybe the next few to avoid common letter collisions.

Well, some or all of these suggestions will assume more meaning when you try these puzzles. Have a dictionary handy because I find Nothing in Common to be a vocabulary builder, e.g., an uncommon word like BRANT can be a game-saver. OK. Let’s see what’s in YOUR bank!

UB’s cycle is: 1. lives, 2. brant, 3. viols, and then – trade, loins, avert, blind, raves, blond, sitar, loved, barns, devil, roast, 15. liven, and 16. broad.

Note that the first and last words also have no letters in common.