

ff



1,339



FACTS

To Make Your Jaw Drop

ff

A QUITE INTERESTING BOOK

1,339 QI FACTS

TO MAKE YOUR JAW DROP

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FABER & FABER

Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[1,339 Facts](#)

[A Note on Sources](#)

[Index](#)

[About the Authors](#)

[By the Same Authors](#)

[Copyright](#)

Introduction

Truth is the daughter of search.

ARABIC PROVERB

When we came to write our first volume of facts – *1,227 Quite Interesting Facts To Blow Your Socks Off* – we set ourselves the modest goal of producing 1,000 nuggets of information that seemed to us unforgettable. We pooled ten years of extraordinary comparisons (there are 1,000 times as many bacteria in your gut as there are stars in the Milky Way); astonishing statistics (a single male produces enough sperm in two weeks to impregnate every fertile woman on the planet); unexpected truths (the Bible is the most shoplifted book in America) and memorable absurdities (Richard Gere’s middle name is Tiffany), and then counted up what we had. It turned out we had a file of 1,227 facts, which seemed both more interesting and more appropriate than the 1,000 we’d originally targeted.

In the course of editing and arranging that material we discovered something surprising: the facts seemed to have a mind of their own. Far from being inert pieces of trivia, they behaved much more like molecules, bristling with energy and a desire to form strong attractions with other facts to make longer and more meaningful sequences. All we had to do was keep trying the best combinations.

As well as being deeply satisfying, this process of fact-matching also meant we needed to create a much deeper pool of truth in which to dip our editorial spoon. And before we’d finished, we realised that the new pile of strange and wonderful facts we hadn’t been able to sequence was already forming the core of a new book.

We always tell our researchers that to find the best stuff, all you have to do is to look longer and more closely. That has been our guiding principle in compiling this second volume. Once you are in the Fact Zone, everywhere you look, astonishing *new* facts seem to wave and demand inclusion. We hope you find the combinations that we – and they – have made as satisfying as last time.

And, to adapt a line of Groucho Marx, if you don’t like them – well, we’ve got others.

JOHN LLOYD, JOHN MITCHINSON

& JAMES HARKIN

*Facts are to the mind
what food is to the body.*

EDMUND BURKE (1729–1797)



There are 1,339 bank branches in Peru.

There are 1,339 outdoor sculptures in Texas.

There are 1,339 Christian churches in Wenzhou, China.

There are 1,339 illegal factories in Samanabad, Pakistan.



Pakistan means
'Land of the Pure'
in Urdu.

The most commonly used
word for 'detergent' in Urdu is 'Surf'.

It is illegal in China
to show TV ads for
haemorrhoid cream
at mealtimes.

One in seven UK banknotes
carries traces of
anal bacteria.



Babies are born
with no bacteria
in their bodies

in their bodies.

The word 'infant'
is from the Latin for
'unable to speak'.

'Bow-wow', 'Ding-dong' and 'Pooh-pooh'
are all names for different theories about the origin of language.

Winnie the Pooh's
real name is
Edward Bear.



The offspring of
a polar bear and a grizzly bear is called a pizzly bear.

A baby pterosaur
is called a flapling.

Cockroaches
appeared 120 million years before the dinosaurs.

The Himalayas were formed
25 million years after the last dinosaur died out.



All the mountains
on Saturn's moon Titan
are named after peaks in
The Lord of the Rings.

J. R. R. Tolkien and Adolf Hitler both fought at
the battle of the Somme.

During Hitler's years in power, *Mein Kampf* was given away free to every newly-wed couple.

Mussolini described *Mein Kampf* as 'a boring tome that I have never been able to read'.



The most-read publication in the UK is *Tesco* magazine.

A pint of milk in a supermarket can contain milk from over a thousand different cows.

The average Briton consumes 8 cows, 36 sheep and 36 pigs in a lifetime.

A raw carrot is still alive when you eat it.



Half the food produced in the world is left to rot.

Every hour, the UK produces enough waste to fill the Albert Hall.

If the Albert Hall were a freezer, it could hold all the galaxies in the visible universe if they were the size of frozen peas.

Howard Hughes kept a ruler in his hotel room to measure any peas he ordered, sending back those that

were 'too big'.



CCD
(canine compulsive disorder) is OCD for dogs.

In German,
'*Dogging*'
is jogging with your dog.

Bloodhounds' noses
are 100 million times more sensitive than human noses.

Astronauts' helmets
contain a small piece of Velcro so they can scratch their noses.



According to
Velcro's official website, there is no such thing as Velcro.

Splenda was an insecticide that became a sweetener
when an assistant misheard an order to 'test' it as 'taste' it.

Samsung's
first product was
dried fish.

Wrigley's
originally made
soap.



Chewing gum costs

Chewing gum costs
3p a stick to buy
but 10p a blob
to clean off the pavement.

Second Street is the most common street name in the USA.
First Street is the
third most common.

The oldest bridge in Paris is the Pont Neuf,
or 'New Bridge'.

More than half
the fish in the USA
labelled as tuna
is not tuna.



Half of all animal and plant species live in only one country and nowhere else.

Half of British adults
don't believe in evolution.

Most clams begin life as males, but half of them
turn female when older.

The Green Zone Golf Club
is on the border of Finland and Sweden: half the holes are in one country and
half in the other.



The first woman to play golf was Mary Queen of Scots.

Agatha Christie
was a keen surfer.

George W. Bush
was a college cheerleader.

Bruce Lee
was Hong Kong's 1958
cha-cha dance champion.



The oldest dance
still performed is
the Austrian shoe-slapping dance.

The oldest animal ever found was a 405-year-old Icelandic clam.
It was killed by researchers trying to work out its age.

Women
look their oldest
at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Nudiustertian means 'relating to the day before yesterday'.



The word 'journey'
is from the French *journée*
and once meant the distance one could walk in a day.

The Swahili for 'journey'
is *safari*.

The *Express*, the *Telegraph*, the *Economist*, the *Times*, the *Star* and the
Independent
were all London-based stagecoaches in the 1830s.

The Solar System is travelling round the galaxy at more than half a million miles per hour.



A Manx shearwater
flies over 5 million miles in its lifetime.

Zugunruhe
is the restlessness of caged birds in the migration season.

Urban birds have learned to line their nests with cigarette butts.
Nicotine is a powerful insecticide that wards off mites, lice and fleas.

The nectar of citrus plants contains caffeine
to attract bees.



David Cameron
used to be president of the Oxfordshire Bee Keepers' Association.

Pannage
was a tax on keeping
pigs in royal forests
that was paid in pigs.

Henry VIII
put a tax on beards in 1535, but made sure his own was exempt.

King David I of Scotland
gave tax rebates to subjects with good table manners.



William the Conqueror

William the Conqueror
had been in England for a fortnight before the battle of Hastings.

King John
was named 'Softsword'
for his feeble military activities.

In the Hundred Years War, the French called the English 'godons'
because they were always shouting 'God damn'.

Lalochesia is using swearing to
relieve stress or pain.



The words
proctalgia, *proctodynia*, *pygalgia* and *rectalgia*
all mean 'pain in the backside'.

In Exodus 33:23,
God shows Moses his backside: 'And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt
see my back parts.'

St Martin of Tours
exorcised people
by shoving his arm down their throats and forcing the devil out of their anus.

500,000 Italians
visit an exorcist every year.



'The devil's port-gate'
was an Elizabethan euphemism for the vagina.

In the 18th century,
'hum-fodder' and 'arse-wisn'

Sanitizer and also wasp
both meant toilet paper.

On an average day,
Britons spend
14 hours and 39 minutes
sitting down.

Before dentists' chairs were invented, the patient's head was clenched between
the surgeon's knees.



The electric chair
was invented by a dentist.

The first guillotine
was built by a harpsichord maker.

The first private detective agency was started by a criminal.

Speed dating
was the brainchild of a rabbi.



The quickest possible
round-the-world flight time by commercial airline
is 44 hours.

The remains of birds
hit by aeroplanes
are known as
'snarge'.

80% of plane crashes
occur in the

first three or last eight minutes of a flight.

Only 5%
of the world's population has ever been on an aeroplane.



Before Amy Johnson flew solo from Britain to Australia, the furthest she had flown was from Hendon to Hull.

Nearly half of all airline pilots admit they have fallen asleep on the job.

The first man-made object in space was the German V2 rocket.

Russian cosmonauts
routinely took guns into space in case re-entry landed them in the Siberian wilderness.



In 1905,
the city of Birmingham
banned rifle shooting in pubs.

The gun laws
in Tombstone, Arizona,
are less strict today
than they were at the time of the OK Corral.

In Kennesaw, Georgia,
gun ownership is required by law.

There is only one gun shop in Mexico: 90% of the country's firearms are smuggled in from the USA.



On 18th February 1913,
Pedro Lascuráin resigned
as president of Mexico
after holding office
for less than an hour.

The Marianas Trench in the Pacific is so deep that a coin
dropped into it from the surface will take more than an hour to reach the bottom.

Spiders can survive for hours underwater by entering a self-induced coma.

A bite from the
Brazilian wandering spider results in an erection
that lasts for several hours.



In Britain,
spiders outnumber people
by more than 500,000 to 1.

The Natural History Museum in London has 22,000 drawers filled with beetles.

If dung beetles
disappeared from the plains of Africa, its human inhabitants would be up to their
waists in excrement within a month.

Until biological softener was invented in 1908,
the standard way to soften leather was to smear it with dog faeces.



Entrance to the Tower of London used to be free if you
brought a dog or a cat

brought a dog or a cat
to feed to the lions.

The Eiffel Tower
was scheduled to be
pulled down
in 1909.

The Louvre
was built in 1190
as a defence against Viking raids.

The Statue of Liberty
wears size 879 shoes.



Charles II of England
wore stilettos to his coronation.

Samantha Cameron is the
great-great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Charles II's mistress,
Nell Gwyn.

David Cameron is a
great-great-great-great-great-grandson of King William IV.

At least 170 civil servants in the UK are paid more than the prime minister.



The House of Commons chamber can only seat three-quarters of the country's
MPs.

In July 2013,
more people in Britain
believed in ghosts than

believed in ghosts than
supported the Labour Party.

More people in Britain
describe their religion as 'Jedi Knight'
than are members of the Tory party.

Since the 2001 census,
the number of people in Britain claiming to be Jedi
has fallen by more than half.



Harrison Ford used to be a carpenter.
He was fitting a door when George Lucas asked him
to audition for *Star Wars*.

Ozzy Osbourne
worked in a morgue
and a slaughterhouse.

Warren Beatty
worked as a rat-catcher.

Danny DeVito
is a qualified hairdresser.



The average woman
has 150 different hairstyles in her lifetime.

In 1950,
7% of American women
dyed their hair.
In 2013, it was 75%.

Healthy hair
can stretch by 50%
when wet.

Your hair grows
more quickly when
you're anticipating sex.



Plants grow more quickly
if you talk to them
in a Geordie accent.

Magnolias are the oldest
surviving flowering plants; they first appeared
100 million years ago.

The rarest flower in Britain is the lady's slipper orchid: a single specimen lives
on a golf course in Lancashire under police surveillance.

The symbol of the
Alzheimer's Society of Canada is the forget-me-not.



The existence of
photographic memory has
never been scientifically proven.

A decapitated
planarian flatworm
grows a new brain
complete with all its old memories.

A human liver

can grow back even after
75% of it has been removed.

95% of all avocados on sale today are descended from one tree grown by a
Milwaukee postman in 1926.



In French, *avocat* means both ‘lawyer’ and ‘avocado’.

In German, *Strauss* means both ‘ostrich’ and ‘bunch of flowers’.

In Norwegian, *pålegg* is ‘anything that could conceivably be put in a sandwich’.

In Old Norse, *kveis* meant ‘uneasiness after debauchery’.



Gambrinous means ‘being full of beer’.

Hops contain antioxidants, but you’d have to drink
118 gallons of beer a day to see any health benefit.

French wrestler
André the Giant
once drank 119 beers
in six hours.

In 1876,
the Munich Health Department ruled that breastfeeding women only needed to
drink
two pints of beer a day.



Edgar Allan Poe’s poem ‘The Raven’

~~Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven"~~
was originally going to be about a talking parrot.

The last speaker
of the Amazonian Ature language was a parrot.

Parrots
can live for 80 years.

There are whales alive today that were born before
Moby-Dick was written in 1851.



If a dead whale is found
on a British beach,
the head belongs to the king and the tail to the queen.

The first two police officers sworn into the Metropolitan Police were both later
sacked for 'drunkenness in the streets'.

The 'de-militarised' zone between North and South Korea is the world's most
militarised zone.

The 1784 'Kettle War'
between the Netherlands
and the Holy Roman Empire involved only a single shot.
It hit a kettle.



21% of British households don't possess a kettle.

One in eight British adults owns a onesie.

Two-thirds of British children aged 5 to 13
can work a DVD player,

but fewer than half
can tie their shoelaces.

60% of British meals
are eaten in front of the TV.



Early BBC TV
showed pictures and sound alternately: they only had one transmitter so couldn't
do both at the same time.

Until the 1920s,
television was also known as Hear-seeing, Seeing by Wireless, Optiphone,
Farscope
and the Electric Telescope.

'TV dinners' were so-called because the compartments resembled the screen and
knobs
on an old-style round-cornered TV.

Rounded corners on electronic devices have been patented
by Apple.



Nokia once made gas masks: the Finnish army used them until 1995.

The French company Bich
changed its name to Bic
to stop people in
English-speaking countries pronouncing it 'bitch'.

Play-Doh
was originally designed as wallpaper cleaner.

The first bubblegum
produced bubbles that
had to be removed from the face with turpentine.



James I of England
only ever washed
the tips of his fingers.

Louis XIII of France
wasn't bathed until he was almost seven.

According to a passenger from Sudan, the first London Underground trains smelt
'like crocodile breath'.

The air in London
is cleaner now than at any time since the 16th century.



In the 16th century,
Britain had one pub
for every 200 people.

At any one time,
45 million people in the world are drunk.

Hangovers cost the US economy more than \$220 billion
in lost productivity each year.

A popular Roman hangover cure was deep-fried canary.



Oliver the Elder

Emily the Elder
advised tying a fox's genitals to the brow
to cure headaches.

Chopin whistled
or played chords on the piano when he had trouble urinating.

Giving Prozac to a snail
renders it unable
to stick to surfaces.

Viagra was developed
to treat angina.



Fatal heart attacks
were unknown before 1900.
The first medical description of one in Britain was in 1925.

The human heart is not
on the left-hand side of the body, it's in the middle.

Each time a fertile man's heart beats, he makes 1,500 new sperm.

Over a lifetime,
the human heart pumps enough blood to fill a football stadium.



In 1903,
the three largest
sports stadiums in the world were all in Glasgow.

The pregnancy of the
frilled shark lasts for three years, the longest in nature.

The tuatara,
a New Zealand reptile
that pre-dates the dinosaurs, has three eyes.

Babies have three times
as many taste buds as adults.



Squid
taste with their
tentacles.

The Chinese fruit
Siraitia grosvenorii
is 300 times sweeter than sugar.

The principal killer of elephants in American zoos
is obesity.

North Americans account for less than a sixteenth of
the world's people,
but more than a third
of their weight.



Kunga cake
is an East African food
made from millions of
crushed midges.

The star-nosed mole
can identify and eat
an insect quicker than
you can read the word 'mole'.

Flamingo tongues
were a delicacy
in ancient Rome.

A tiger's tongue is so rough that if it licked your hand it would draw blood.



More is known
about the behaviour of
big cats in Africa than
that of domestic cats in Britain.

In 17th-century England,
effigies of Guy Fawkes
were stuffed with live cats to make the figure scream as it burned.

The Kattenstoet
was a medieval festival in Belgium in which cats were thrown from the town's
belfry.

In 1879, the Belgian city of Liège commissioned 37 cats
to deliver mail to nearby villages.
The project was a complete failure.



John Lennon and Paul McCartney both had cats named Jesus.

The Beatles classic 'Yesterday'
was originally titled
'Scrambled Eggs'.

'I'm a Poached Egg'
is a love song by
George Gershwin.

Albert Einstein
claimed his second-best idea was to boil his eggs in his soup, thus saving on
washing-up.



The Moon is shaped like an egg: it only looks round because the big end points
towards Earth.

The coldest known place
in the Solar System
is in a crater at
the north pole of the Moon.

Oymyakon in Russia
is the coldest inhabited town on Earth: its only hotel has no hot water and an
outside toilet.

Between 2010 and 2013,
the London Fire Brigade rescued 18 children with their heads stuck in toilet
seats.



After just four moves
in a game of chess, there are 318,979,564,000 possibilities for the layout of the
board.

The 1978 chess final at
HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs was between ‘Moors Murderer’ Ian Brady and
disgraced MP John Stonehouse.

In 1913,
Hitler, Stalin, Trotsky, Tito, Freud, Jung and Wittgenstein were all living in
Vienna.

Dublin, Glasgow, London,
Petroleum, Coal, Wax
Goforth, Stay and Jump
are all towns in Kentucky.



The Irish pub
furthest from Dublin
is Waxy O'Shea's in
Invercargill, New Zealand.

Villages in County Durham include Pity Me and
No Place.

There are six villages
in France called Silly,
12 called Billy
and two called Prat.

There are 11 places in Utah called Mollys Nipple, Mollies Nipple or Molleys
Nipple.



Female giant jumping rats have four nipples:
two in the armpits
and two in the groin.

Buzz
is Arabic for 'nipple'.

Dad
is Albanian for 'babysitter'.

Waterponie

• • • • •

is Afrikaans for 'jet-ski'.



10,000 horses were killed at the battle of Waterloo.

The first Skyscraper
was a particularly tall horse that won the Epsom Derby
in 1789.

Snickers bars are named after a horse owned by the Mars company.

Humans have one more bone in their bodies than horses.



Human bone is
four times stronger
than concrete.

Your brain cells live longer than any other cells
in your body.

You have taste receptors
in your lungs.

The Cornish for 'heart'
is *colon*.



Hands evolved
before arms.

After a double hand transplant, right-handed patients
can become left-handed.

Mothers over 40
are twice as likely
to have left-handed children as women in their 20s.

Until the early 20th century, left-handedness in a wife was grounds for divorce
in Japan.



The Japanese for 'poverty'
is *bimbo*.

Raicho, meaning 'thunderbird',
is Japanese for the
rock ptarmigan or
snow chicken.

Chicken, Alaska,
was going to be called
Ptarmigan, Alaska,
but no one could agree
on the spelling.

Alaska is the
northernmost, westernmost and easternmost state
in the USA.



'Alaska strawberries'
was 19th-century slang for 'dried beans'.

Empress Isabelle of Bavaria bathed in strawberry juice.

In the Azerbaijani town of Naftalan, people bathe in crude oil to ease joint pains.

Male eland antelopes
let other males know
how tough they are
by clicking their knees.



Anglerfish
have black-lined stomachs to stop their insides
giving them away
after they eat something
luminous.

The longest recorded flight of a domestic chicken
lasted 13 seconds.

The highest-ever jump
by a rabbit
measured 3 feet 3 inches.

A rabbit was the only casualty of the first bomb in
the Second World War
to fall on British soil.



95% of baby rabbits
don't survive beyond
their first six months.

In three years,
two mating rabbits
can theoretically produce 33 million relatives.

The world's biggest rabbit, Ralph from East Sussex,

costs £50 a week to feed.



Earmuffs
were invented by
a 13-year-old.

Within seven years of their invention, 60% of the US population
owned boomboxes.

A collection of boomerangs and a Z-bed were found in Tutankhamun's tomb.

Tutankhamun died
of a broken leg.



Some whales are born
with a small leg
protruding from their body.

Whales have hip bones,
which means they must
have once left the oceans, grown legs, decided they didn't like it and gone back
into the sea again.

The barstools on
Aristotle Onassis's yacht were upholstered with
whales' foreskins.

Moby-Dick
was based on a real sperm whale called Mocha Dick.



Geronimo's real name
was Goyathlay,
meaning
'he who yawns'.

Yawning cools your brain, like a fan cools the inside of a computer.

Babies yawn in the womb;
they also swallow, stretch and hiccup.

Babies up to the age of six months can swallow and breathe
at the same time.



Pandiculation is yawning and stretching
at the same time.

There is enough tissue
in a human lung
to cover a tennis court.

There is enough carbon
in your body
to make 9,000 pencils.

You lose a pound of carbon in weight every night
just from breathing.



Diamonds boil
at 4,027 °C.

–40 ° Celsius
and –40 ° Fahrenheit

are the same temperature.

15 °C is
the highest temperature
ever recorded in Antarctica.

There are 300 lakes
beneath Antarctica
that are kept from freezing by the warmth of the Earth's core.



Husky dogs have been banned from Antarctica since 1994.

When Roald Amundsen
travelled to the South Pole, he ate his huskies
on the way back.

Only one dog
has ever been to both
the North and South Poles.

During the 1962 World Cup, a dog ran onto the pitch
and urinated on Jimmy Greaves.



Russian cosmonauts urinate on the right rear wheel of the bus taking them to the
space shuttle to bring themselves luck.

The 'I'm Feeling Lucky' button on Google costs the company \$110 million a
year
in lost ad revenue.

In 2006, a man named Ronald Man had a heart attack and crashed his car; the
impact worked like a defibrillator and restarted his heart.

James Dean's
last appearance on film
before his fatal car crash in 1955
was in a road-safety commercial.



In 1895,
the only two cars in Ohio crashed into each other.

The odds of hitting
two holes-in-one
in the same round of golf are 67 million to one.

Mo Farah,
Sir Roger Bannister, Sir Chris Hoy, Jason Kenny and Sir Steve Redgrave were
all born on March 23rd.

Moses, Raphael, Arnold Bennett, Captain Oates and Ingrid Bergman all died on
their birthdays.



The ancient city of Alexandria was built so that the sun shone down the main
street on Alexander the Great's birthday.

Galileo was born on the day that Michelangelo died.

People who die of old age are more likely to die at 11 a.m.
than at any other time.

Three US presidents died on 4th July: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in
1826, and James Monroe five years later.



Between April and July 1776, US states issued
more than 90 different
Declarations of Independence.

John Adams,
2nd president of the USA, took up smoking
at the age of eight.

John Tyler,
10th president of the USA, was born in 1790 but
two of his grandsons are still alive.

When George W. Bush,
43rd president of the USA, arrived in the White House, he found the Clinton
administration had removed the 'W' keys from all the computers.



'President Clinton of the USA'
is an anagram of
'to copulate, he finds interns'.

In 1999,
the president of Niger was Major Wanke.

In 1939,
835 sheep were killed by
a single lightning strike in Utah.

The best way to
avoid being struck by lightning is to crouch down away from any trees with your
bottom sticking up in the air.



Blowing air up

an armadillo's bottom
causes it to leap three feet into the air.

Air trapped inside hedgehogs can make them blow up like a balloon.
They should be carefully
deflated with a syringe
before they burst.

The Victorians
kept hedgehogs
in their kitchens to
control cockroaches.

If a cockroach touches a person, it immediately runs away
and washes itself.



Rats urinate on food
to mark it as edible.

Monkeys urinate
on themselves
to attract a mate.

An ostrich can
kill a lion
with a single blow.

Being attacked by an ostrich left Johnny Cash with
an addiction to painkillers.



Early Arabic texts
refer to cannabis as

كان يسمون الحشيش

‘the bush of understanding’
and ‘the shrub of emotion’.

In 1850, cannabis was used in the USA to treat tetanus, typhus, cholera, rabies, dysentery, alcoholism, anthrax, leprosy, snake bites, tonsillitis and insanity.

Ketamine was the
most commonly used anaesthetic during the Vietnam War.

A Macedonian soldier from 300 BC
was more likely to survive treatment for a wound than a British soldier at
Sebastopol in 1854.



Patients admitted to hospital at the weekend
are 40% more likely to die than those admitted
during the working week.

A human being can survive for nine seconds at 1,000 °C
without suffering lasting damage.

Since 1940,
157 people have fallen from planes without parachutes and survived.

Since 1990,
more people have been killed by sandcastles than by sharks.



Shark Bay, Australia,
is now called ‘Safety Beach’.
It changed its name
to attract tourists.

Kangaroo Island was named in 1802
by Matthew Flinders after he and his crew slaughtered 21 kangaroos there and

by Matthew Flinders after he and his crew slaughtered 51 kangaroos there and made them into soup.

At birth, a kangaroo
is smaller than a cherry.

Because opossums have forked penises, early naturalists thought males mated with the female's nose.



A *renifleur* is someone who gets sexual pleasure
from smells.

The human nose
can distinguish between
over 10,000 different smells.

Rhinotillexomania
is the scientific term for being unable to stop picking your nose.

It is impossible to hum
while holding your nose.



Humpback whales
can sing non-stop
for 20 hours.

Nightingales
can remember
over 200 different songs.

The fastest known muscle in nature is found in the throats of songbirds.

The superb fairy wren

The superb fairy witch
teaches its chicks to sing while they are still in the egg.



Ludo
was invented
in ancient India.

Jenga means 'to build'
in Swahili.

Chinese checkers
was invented in
Germany.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
invented the sport of
rock-climbing.



William Webb Ellis
died in France, completely unaware he had been credited with the invention of
rugby.

The French Vichy government banned rugby league because they considered it
a communist sport.

Rugby School's
first official rugby kit in 1871
included a bow tie.

The Nazi uniforms
were designed by
Hugo Boss.



When Josef Mengele
fled to Argentina
he went through customs
with several suitcases full of human body parts.

Iran is the
only country in the world where it is legal to sell your kidneys.

In Alabama, it is illegal to recommend shades of paint without a licence.

The Knights Templar's
most important rule was
to avoid kissing women.



The ancient Greek city of Megara held a version of the Olympic Games which
included a kissing contest.
Only boys were allowed to enter.

PE teachers were originally banned from the modern Olympics because they
were professionals.

At the 1908
Olympic Games in London, Great Britain won
gold, silver and bronze
in the tug of war.

The Kalenjin people of Kenya make up 0.05% of the world's population but
have won almost 50% of its major distance-running events since 1980.



The fastest 100 metres

The fastest 100 metres
run by an eight-year-old today would have won bronze
at the 1896 Olympics.

The 1988 Olympics
included the sport of
solo synchronised swimming.

Polar bears
can swim 60 miles
without stopping.

An ostrich
could run the
London Marathon
in 45 minutes.



A garden snail
would take three years and two months to make its way from
John O’Groats to Land’s End.

Light
travels from
John O’Groats to Land’s End in 0.00469 seconds.

8,000 years ago,
Britain had so many trees that a squirrel could go from John O’Groats to Land’s
End without touching the ground.

Nemophilia
is the love of spending time in forests.



Two out of three trees

Two out of three trees
in the world are
dangerously parched.

The only way to tell if trees are short of water
is to record the sounds they make: the thirstier they are,
the louder they get.

Different branches
on the same ash tree can be male, female or both at once.

Oysters change their sex up to four times a year.



Fruit bats enjoy fellatio.

Men are more likely to
die during sex if they're cheating on their wives.

More than one-third of
men using dating sites
are already married.

More than one-third of
married Canadians
sleep in separate rooms.



Ptolemy VII married
his sister Cleopatra II, who was also his brother's widow.
So his wife was not only his sister but his sister-in-law.

Einstein, Rachmaninoff, Darwin, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe all married
their first cousins.

When filling in forms,
Agatha Christie
always gave her occupation as 'married woman'.

90% of the world's
teenage mothers aged 16 to 19
are married.



In London,
women over 40
are giving birth at
twice the rate of teenagers.

In Mexican slang,
to 'mother' something is to wreck it, anything that 'has no mother' is very cool,
and 'mothers!' means 'whoops!'

In Korean, there are
no words for 'brother' or 'sister', but there are words for
an older or younger brother, and an older or younger sister.

Having a younger brother or sister can increase your blood pressure by more
than 5%.



It would take
1.2 million mosquitoes,
each sucking once,
to completely drain
the average human of blood.

A midge
beats its wings

62,750 times a minute.

It takes a male flea
six to eight hours
to unfold all the different parts of its penis.

Woodlice
have 14 legs.



The vampire spider
is attracted to the smell of human feet.

Mice
enjoy the smell
of marijuana.

The Japanese word *kareishu*
describes the smell of
old people.

Moths can smell one another from seven miles away.



The faint trace
of perfume left in the wake of a passing person is known as *sillage*.

In 2007, the makers of Stilton marketed Eau de Stilton, a perfume to ‘recreate
the earthy and fruity aroma’
of the cheese.

A ‘cheeseling’
is a small cheese.

‘Cneeseilps’
is another name for woodlice: they were once used
to curdle milk.



A glass of milk
left in the Lut Desert in Iran will not go off:
the heat is so intense
it kills all the bacteria.

All Neanderthals were
lactose intolerant.

Lee Pearson,
winner of ten Paralympic golds for dressage,
is allergic to horses.

Pigs suffer from anorexia.



There were fewer than 50 restaurants in Paris before the 1789 Revolution; by
1814 there were more than 3,000.

The first Indian restaurant in the UK
opened 50 years before
the first fish-and-chip shop.

The oldest known English cookbook is called the *Forme of Cury*.

An English person from 2013
could not understand
an English person from 1300
without a translator.



In the 14th century,
a high-spirited person
was known as a
'great-willy'.

Cumbria has villages called Great Snoring and Great Fryup, and a hill called
Great Cockup.

Fletcher Christian
and William Wordsworth
were at school together in Cockermouth, Cumbria.

Wordsworth
had no sense of smell.



Before sending his six-year-old son, Auberon, to boarding school, Evelyn
Waugh threatened
to change the family name to Stinkbottom.

Daniel Defoe changed his name from Daniel Foe in order to sound more
upmarket.

Holly Golightly
from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
was originally going to be called Connie Gustafson.

James Bond was originally going to be called James Secretan.



Margaret Thatcher
was offered passport number 007

was offered passport number 00/
but she turned it down.

Brendan O'Carroll,
star of *Mrs Brown's Boys*,
was once Mrs Thatcher's butler.

In the 19th century,
a five-foot six-inch footman cost £20 a year,
while a full six-footer
would set you back £40.

When they reach
a height of 100 metres,
trees stop growing leaves.



Ten trees were needed
to make the paper to
print the 2013 report
on the environmental impact of the British HS2 rail scheme.

The British Standards Institution has a 5,000 word report
on the correct way
to make a cup of tea.

When Swindon station opened in 1840, all the trains passing through it had to
stop for a ten-minute tea break.

British soldiers
in the First World War
had a tea ration
of six pints a day.



Turning up
the music in a bar by 22%
makes people drink
26% faster.

To 'dibble' is
to drink like a duck,
lifting your head
after each sip.

Lifting your head
on a neutron star
would use more energy
than climbing Mount Everest.

The energy burned off
by the average footballer in a single match is
equivalent to 15 Jaffa Cakes.



Boys' GCSE results
dip by almost half a grade in World Cup and
European Championship years.

60% of Premier League footballers go bankrupt
within five years
of retirement.

Somebody in the UK
is declared bankrupt
every 50 seconds.

Plutomania
is the delusion
that one is immensely rich.



Hewlett-Packard printer ink is 20 times more expensive than 2003 vintage Dom Pérignon champagne.

It is 14 million times cheaper to store 1GB of data on a hard drive than it was in 1981.

There are 2,436 millionaire bankers in the UK, compared to 170 in Germany and 162 in France.

The best credit profiles in the UK are held by men named Brian and women called Helen.



Julius Caesar
had two sisters,
both called Julia.

Karl and Jenny Marx
named all four
of their daughters
Jenny.

George Foreman has five sons called George, George Jr, George III, George IV, George V and George VI, and a daughter called Georgetta.

Emlyn Hughes's son
is called Emlyn
and his daughter,
Emma-Lynn.



Abraham Lincoln was suffering from smallpox when he gave the Gettysburg Address.

Alfred Russel Wallace was delirious with a malarial fever when he came up with the Theory of Natural Selection.

The human influenza virus was first isolated in 1933 from a sick ferret.

A flu virus can only survive on most surfaces for 48 hours, but can live on a banknote for 17 days.



The Bank of England used to heat its buildings by incinerating old banknotes.

La Paz, Bolivia, was the first South American city to get an electricity supply. It was powered by llama dung.

Until 2010, the solar-panel industry used more electricity than it produced.

You would need to cover an area the size of Wales with wind turbines to meet one-sixth of the UK's daily energy needs.



One-third of batteries are thrown away with 70% of their power left.

Sugar is an ingredient
in 70% of manufactured food.

70% of Americans
believe in angels.

In a 2004 experiment,
70% of Britons handed over their computer passwords in exchange for
chocolate.



For 2,000 years,
chocolate was only known as a drink.
The first solid chocolate bar was sold in 1849.

Hot chocolate seems tastier if served in a cup
that is coloured
orange or cream.

Aristotle believed
rainbows only had
three colours.

To the Chinese,
rainbows have only
five colours.



You can only see a rainbow if your back is to the sun.

A comet's tail always faces away from the sun:
it doesn't tell you anything about the way it's going.

You are ten times more likely to be hit by a comet

than to die in a plane crash.

The word 'comet' is from the Greek *kometes* meaning 'long-haired'.



Ponytails were
outlawed in China
in 1911.

In the 18th century,
to 'queue' meant
to tie your hair into a plait.

The French for 'grand piano'
– *piano à queue* – means 'piano with a tail'.

Spotted animals
can have striped tails, but stripy animals
can't have spotty tails.



Because they are
such solitary animals,
there is no collective noun for a group of snow leopards.

Sami people
never mention a polar bear by name in case they offend it; instead they call it
'the old man in the fur coat'.

Human pollution has caused the average length of
polar bears' penises
to shrink.

A male polar bear will follow the tracks of a breeding female for more than 60

miles.



Spiny anteaters
form 'love trains' where a female is followed for weeks by a line of ten hopeful
males.

'Esperanto' means 'hopeful'
in Esperanto.

One in ten lottery tickets in Turkey is bought from a single kiosk with a
reputation for
selling to winners.

In 2010,
exactly the same numbers came up in the Israeli lottery twice in three weeks.



Four is the only number whose value is the same as the number of letters in its
name.

Multiplying 21978 by 4
reverses the order of the numbers.

MOW, NOON and SWIMS
read the same when upside down.

In 2010, Brazil, Russia, India and China invited South Africa to join the BRIC
group of nations.

They would have asked Nigeria, but BRICS made a better acronym.



The acronym 'lol'

was being used in the 1960s to mean 'little old lady'.

The Korean version
of 'lol' is KKK.

More than half of all Koreans are called Kim, Lee, Park, Choi or Jung.

Jung's grandfather
taught his children Hebrew so they would be able to read the newspapers in
heaven.



In the 1720s,
the *Gloucester Journal* apologised for 'the present scarcity of news'
and offered its readers a selection of poems instead.

Kinmel Hall in Wales
had a room that was used for nothing but ironing the daily newspapers.

Royal household staff
iron a £5 note every Sunday so that the Queen has something to put in the church
collection plate.

The Union Jack
only flies over Buckingham Palace when the Queen is *not* there.



The British subjects who are happiest in their work are gardeners and florists.

A *ziraleet* is an outcry of joy,
especially by several people at once.

Strikhedonia is the joy of not giving a damn.

Ataraxia is complete freedom
from stress and anxiety.



John Le Carré
has a poster
in his study that reads 'Keep Calm and Le Carré On'.

Abraham Lincoln
calmed himself down
during the American Civil War by playing marbles.

Stressed koalas
suffer from a fatal condition called 'wet bottom'.

A koala's brain
is only 0.2% of its
body weight.



The smallest known brain in a healthy person belonged to Anatole France,
winner of the 1921 Nobel Prize for Literature.

We have more brain cells as a newborn baby
than we will ever have again.

There are 100 trillion atoms in a human cell
and 100 trillion cells
in the human body.

50,000 cells in your body have died since you
started reading this sentence.



The murder rate in the UK
is 11 people per million; in Cabot Cove, the setting for *Murder, She Wrote*,
it's 1,490 per million.

In Germany, *Murder, She Wrote*
is called *Mord ist ihr Hobby*
(‘Murder Is Her Hobby’).

Man-eating tigers
almost always attack people from behind.

In 23 movies,
Dolph Lundgren has
killed a total of 662 people.



Jagdish Raj, holder of
the Guinness World Record for ‘most typecast actor’, played a policeman in 144
movies.

The world record
for keeping a kite aloft is seven and a half days.

The world shorthand record was set at 350 words a minute in 1922
and has never been beaten.

In 2010, a British man
spent 121 days in a room with 40 snakes, only to be told that Guinness no longer
maintain the world record he was trying to break.



A rattlesnake

A rattlesnake
that has been out in the rain will not rattle.

Birds can't burp.

Mice can cough.

A crocodile cannot
move its tongue.



'Jimber-jawed' means
having a protruding lower jaw.

A jaguar's jaws are strong enough to bite through a turtle's shell.

A Panamanian termite can close its mouth at more than 150 mph.

Adolf Hitler bit his nails.



Kooteninchela deppi
is an insect fossil
with triple-pronged claws, named after Johnny Depp in *Edward Scissorhands*.

Sylvilagus palustris hefneri
is a rabbit named
after Hugh Hefner.

Phialella zappai
is a jellyfish named after Frank Zappa
because its discoverer
wanted to meet him.

The real names of the

THE FOUR NAMES OF THE
Marx brothers were
Leonard, Julius, Herbert and Adolph.



Until the late 17th century, pine cones were known as ‘pineapples’.

The word *barack*
is Hungarian for ‘peach’, Hebrew for ‘flash of lightning’
and Swedish for ‘shed’.

Britons spend
60 million hours a week in their sheds.

One in ten
National Lottery millionaires bought caravans with their winnings; one in four
bought hot tubs.



St Mungo,
the patron saint of Glasgow, died of shock after
getting into a hot bath.

St Nicholas
resurrected three small boys who had been cut into pieces and pickled in brine.

The medieval French made up their own saints, such as St Coquette, the patron
saint of talkative women, and St Jambon, the patron saint of ham.

Pope John Paul II,
who held office for 26 years, created more saints than all the popes in the
previous 500 years.



When Pope John Paul II
visited California, the Hollywood sign was changed to read 'Holywood'.

The Golden Palace Casino in Texas bought Pope Benedict XVI's old VW Golf
on eBay.

According to the Vatican, you can reduce the time you spend in purgatory
by following the Pope
on Twitter.

The word *papa*
means 'pope' in Italian, 'shark' in Swahili, 'potato' in Quechua and 'arse' in
Maori.



The Italian name for @
is *chiocciola*, meaning 'snail'.

The Dutch name for @
is *apenstaart*, meaning 'monkey's tail'.

The Danish name for @
is *snabel-a*, meaning "'a" with a long nose'.

The Czech name for @
is *zavináč*, meaning 'pickled herring'.



The Manx word for 'kipper'
is *skeddan jiarg*,
which literally translates as 'red herring'.

The word 'jungle'
comes from the Hindi *jangal*, meaning 'waste ground'.

The Thai word for 'tapir'
is *P'som-sett*, meaning 'mixture', because tapirs look as if they are made up of
bits left over from other animals.

The 'slush' in 'slush fund'
was originally leftover fat that sailors sold for profit.



In the 1790s,
a quarter of the sailors in the Royal Navy
were black.

The modern British army has more horses
than tanks.

American citizens
own more assault rifles than the British army.

You can join the army at 16, but you have to be 18
to play *Call of Duty*.



In an average
three-hour game
of American football,
the ball is in play
for just 11 minutes.

In 2011, the UK's top-selling single in cassette form was *N Sync's 'I'll Never
Stop'.

It sold a total of 11 copies.

The Basque word for '11'
also means 'infinite'.

111,111,111 x 111,111,111

=

12,345,678,987,654,321.



The Irish language
has one set of numbers for arithmetic, one for counting humans and one for
counting non-humans.

Bees can count
up to four.

Wasps can recognise
each other's faces.

Octopuses can be
taught to open jam jars, but will have forgotten how by the next day.



During Isaac Newton's
29-year fellowship at Cambridge, he taught only three pupils.

Handel wrote
the 259-page score of *The Messiah*
in 24 days.

The longest anyone
has gone without sleep is 18 days, 21 hours and 40 minutes.

The medical condition
known as a 'stroke'
is short for
'a stroke of God's hand'

a stroke of GOD'S hand .



North Carolina, Arkansas, Maryland, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee
and Texas
all ban atheists from
holding public office.

You need a licence
to sell seaweed in England.

Under the UK's Salmon Act of 1986, it is illegal to handle salmon in suspicious
circumstances.

Honking your car horn,
except in an emergency, is illegal in the city
of New York.



Only 1% of car alarms that go off are caused by an attempted theft.

When working as an organist, Puccini stole and sold the pipes and then changed
the harmonies so no one noticed the missing notes.

Charles Dickens's brother Frederick was imprisoned for debt and died an
alcoholic.

Dickens nicknamed
three of his children
Flaster Floby, Lucifer Box and Chickenstalker.



Coyotes

can run faster
than roadrunners.

A coyote
crossed with a dog
is called a 'coydog'.

A cross between
a zebra and a pony
is called a 'zony'.

Chemshebongo, the Swahili for 'crossword', means 'boil-brain'.



The world's largest jigsaw has 552,232 pieces.

The official state sport of Maryland
is jousting.

The official state dance of North Carolina
is the Shag.

The largest-ever Irish dance involved 10,036 people, and took place in
Dublin, Ohio.



The cancan
was originally a dance for couples and its earliest stars
were men.

'Hip-hop'
first appeared
in English in

1672.

Winston Churchill's mother had a tattoo of a snake on her wrist.

King Charles XIV of Sweden had a tattoo which read 'Death to Kings'.



400,000 human beings
are born every day.

In June 2013,
21 women born
in the 19th century
were still alive,
but no men.

The average temperature of a beehive
is the same as that
of the human body.

There is 40 times
more energy in empty space than in matter.



Iceland is the
world's youngest land mass; Greenland is the oldest.

If we could extend
our lives indefinitely, we'd still die, but in an accident, at an average age
of 1,200.

An 'endling'
is the final
individual in a species.

Eugene Cernan,
the last man to walk on the Moon, wrote his daughter's initials in the lunar dust.
They will still be legible in 50,000 years.

A Note on Sources

For anyone keen to verify any of the facts in the book, they can be found online by going to qi.com/1339 and typing the relevant book page number in the search box. There is also a wealth of additional background detail about much of the information. Please do let us know if you have a quibble or a correction and add your own discoveries via our Twitter account @qikipedia.

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Index

This is here to help you find your favourite bits. Like the facts themselves, we've kept it as simple as we can.

*N Sync, [1](#); 007 [1](#); 1,339 [1](#)

abortion [1](#); abracadabra [1](#); accidents [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); acronyms [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); activists [1](#); actors [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); adultery [1](#); advertising [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); aeroplanes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Afghanistan [1](#), [2](#); Africa [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Afrikaans [1](#); age [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#); air [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); air-conditioning [1](#); Airedales [1](#); airports [1](#); airships [1](#); alarms [1](#); Alaska [1](#), [2](#); Albanian [1](#); albatrosses [1](#); Albert Hall [1](#); alcohol [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); alcoholics [1](#); Aldrin, Buzz [1](#); Alexander the Great [1](#); alligators [1](#); Alzheimer's [1](#); Amazon [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); America [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#); Amundsen, Roald [1](#); anagrams [1](#), [2](#); Andaman Islands [1](#); Anderson, Pamela [1](#); Andorra [1](#); angels [1](#); anger [1](#); angina [1](#); animal cruelty [1](#); animal testing [1](#); anorexia [1](#); Antarctica [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); anteaters [1](#); antelopes [1](#); antlers [1](#); Antoinette, Marie [1](#), [2](#); ants [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); appendixes [1](#); applause [1](#), [2](#); Apple, Inc. [1](#), [2](#); apples [1](#); apricots [1](#); Arabic [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); archaeology [1](#); arguments [1](#); Aristotle [1](#); armadilloes [1](#); Armenia [1](#), [2](#); armies [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); armpits [1](#), [2](#); arms [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); arse-wisp [1](#); art [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); ash [1](#), [2](#); aspirin [1](#), [2](#); assassinations [1](#); astatine [1](#); astronauts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); atheism [1](#); Atkins, Dr [1](#); atomic bombs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); atoms [1](#), [2](#); audiences [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); 'Auld Lang Syne' [1](#); Austen, Jane [1](#); Australia [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); avocados [1](#), [2](#); Azerbaijan [1](#)

babies [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#); Babylon [1](#); Bach, Johann Sebastian [1](#); bacteria [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); baked beans [1](#), [2](#); balls [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Bangladesh [1](#); Bank of England [1](#); bankers [1](#); banknotes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); bankruptcy [1](#); banks [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); *barack* [1](#); Barbie [1](#); Barcelona [1](#); baseball [1](#); Basque [1](#); bathroom [1](#); baths [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); bats [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); batteries [1](#), [2](#); battles [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); beaches [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); beards [1](#), [2](#); bears [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Beatles [1](#), [2](#); beauty [1](#); beds [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); beehive [1](#); beer [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); bees [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Beethoven [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); beetles [1](#), [2](#); Belarus [1](#); Belgium [1](#), [2](#); Bell, Alexander Graham [1](#); bells [1](#); Ben & Jerry [1](#); Bentham, Jeremy [1](#); Berlin, Irving [1](#); Beyoncé [1](#); Bible [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); Bic [1](#); bicycles [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Bierce, Ambrose [1](#); bimpos [1](#); birds [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); Birmingham [1](#); birth [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); birthdays [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); biting [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); black holes [1](#); black mamba [1](#); blackbirds [1](#); bladders [1](#); Blanc, Mel [1](#); blood [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Blyton, Enid [1](#), [2](#); body odour [1](#), [2](#); bodybuilding [1](#); Bolivia [1](#), [2](#); bombs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); Bond, James Bond [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); bones [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); bookcases [1](#); books [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); boomboxes [1](#); boomerangs [1](#); bootylicious [1](#); Boss, Hugo [1](#); Boston [1](#); bottoms [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); bow ties [1](#); bragging [1](#); brain freeze [1](#); brains [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); bread [1](#), [2](#), [3](#);

breakfast [1](#), [2](#); breathing [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); bribery [1](#); bricks [1](#); bridges [1](#); briefcases [1](#); Bristol [1](#); Britain [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#); British Rail [1](#); brothels [1](#); Brown, Dan [1](#); Brussels sprouts [1](#); bubblegum [1](#); Buckingham Palace [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Buddhism [1](#); budgies [1](#); buffalo [1](#), [2](#); Buffalo Bill [1](#); Bugs Bunny [1](#); bullfrogs [1](#); bullies [1](#); burglary [1](#), [2](#); burial [1](#); Burma [1](#); burping [1](#); buses [1](#); Bush, George W. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); butlers [1](#); butterflies, [1](#); buttons [1](#)

cabbages [1](#), [2](#); Caesar, Julius [1](#); caffeine [1](#); Cage, John [1](#); cake [1](#), [2](#); Calais [1](#); calendars [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); calmness [1](#); calories [1](#), [2](#); Cambridge [1](#), [2](#); camels [1](#); Cameron, David [1](#), [2](#); Cameron, Samantha [1](#); Cameroon [1](#); campanology [1](#); Canada [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); canals [1](#); canaries [1](#); Canberra [1](#); cancan [1](#); cannabis [1](#), [2](#); cannibalism [1](#); Capone, Al [1](#); caravans [1](#); carbon [1](#), [2](#); Cardiff [1](#); cards, greeting [1](#); Carlsberg [1](#); carp [1](#); carpets [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); carrots [1](#); cars [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#); Cash, Johnny [1](#); cassettes [1](#); castles [1](#); Castro, Fidel [1](#); Catholics [1](#); cats [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); cauliflowers [1](#); caves [1](#); Cayman Islands [1](#); CCTV [1](#); cells [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); cemeteries [1](#); centipedes [1](#); cereal [1](#); champagne [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); charity [1](#); Chaucer, Geoffrey [1](#); Cheddar [1](#); cheerleaders [1](#); cheese [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); cheeseburgers [1](#); chemistry [1](#), [2](#); cherries [1](#); chess [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); chestnuts [1](#); chewing gum [1](#); chicken [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); children [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); China [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#); Chinese checkers [1](#); chins [1](#), [2](#); chocolate [1](#), [2](#); choirboys [1](#); Chopin, Frederick [1](#), [2](#); Christie, Agatha [1](#), [2](#); Christmas [1](#), [2](#); Churchill, Winston S. [1](#), [2](#); ciabatta [1](#); cigarettes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); cigars [1](#); Cinderella [1](#); circuses [1](#); civil servants [1](#); clams [1](#), [2](#); claret [1](#); Cleopatra II [1](#); Clinton, Bill [1](#), [2](#); clones [1](#); clothes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); clouds [1](#); Cluedo [1](#); coal [1](#); cobwebs [1](#); Coca-Cola [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); cocaine [1](#); cockroaches [1](#), [2](#); coffee [1](#), [2](#); coins [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); coldness [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Coleridge, Samuel Taylor [1](#); colon [1](#); Colonel Sanders [1](#); colours [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); comas [1](#); comets [1](#); communication [1](#); communism [1](#); companies [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); competitions [1](#), [2](#); computer games [1](#); computers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); concrete [1](#); constellations [1](#); cookbooks [1](#); copper [1](#), [2](#); Cornish [1](#), [2](#); Costa Rica [1](#); cougars [1](#); coughing [1](#); counterfeiting [1](#); countries [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); cowards [1](#); cowboys [1](#); cows [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); coyotes [1](#); crashes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); crayons [1](#); cricket [1](#), [2](#); Cricklewood [1](#); crime [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); crisps [1](#); crocodiles [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Cromwell, Oliver [1](#); crosswords [1](#); crying [1](#); crystal meth [1](#); cucumbers [1](#), [2](#); cults [1](#); Cumbria [1](#); curries [1](#), [2](#); customs [1](#); cyanide [1](#); cycling [1](#); Czech [1](#)

Dalí, Salvador [1](#); dancing [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Danish [1](#); darkness [1](#), [2](#); Darling, Wendy [1](#); Darwin, Charles [1](#), [2](#); Dastardly, Dick [1](#); data [1](#), [2](#); dating [1](#), [2](#); deafness [1](#); Dean, James [1](#); death [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); debauchery [1](#); debt [1](#); deer [1](#); Defoe, Daniel [1](#); delusions [1](#), [2](#); demons [1](#); Dench, Dame Judy [1](#); Denmark [1](#), [2](#); dentists [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Depp, Johnny [1](#), [2](#); depth [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); deserts [1](#), [2](#); detectives [1](#); detergent [1](#); diabetes [1](#); diamonds [1](#), [2](#); Dickens, Charles [1](#); diets [1](#); digestion [1](#), [2](#); dinosaurs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); disaster [1](#); discoveries [1](#), [2](#); Disney, Walt [1](#); distance [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); divorce [1](#), [2](#); DNA [1](#); dog food [1](#); dogs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); dollars [1](#); dolls [1](#); dolphins [1](#), [2](#); Dominica [1](#); Dostoevsky, Fyodor [1](#); doughnuts [1](#); Dover [1](#); Doyle, Arthur Conan [1](#); dreams [1](#); drills [1](#); drink-driving [1](#); drinking [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); drowning [1](#), [2](#); drugs [1](#); drunkenness [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Dublin [1](#), [2](#); ducks [1](#), [2](#); dumplings [1](#); Dundee United [1](#); Dutch [1](#), [2](#)

e-readers [1](#); earmuffs [1](#); ears [1](#), [2](#); Earth [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); earthquakes [1](#); eating [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); eBay [1](#); echidnas [1](#); Eden, Garden of [1](#); education [1](#), [2](#); eels [1](#), [2](#); eggs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Egypt [1](#); Eiffel Tower [1](#), [2](#); Einstein, Albert [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); elections [1](#), [2](#); elements [1](#), [2](#); elephants [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Elgar, Edward [1](#), [2](#); elves [1](#); Elvis [1](#); emails [1](#), [2](#); emissions [1](#); emperors [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); energy [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); energy, renewable [1](#); English [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); English Channel [1](#), [2](#); erasers [1](#); erections [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); escalators [1](#), [2](#); Esperanto [1](#); Ethiopia [1](#); Ethiopian [1](#); ethnicity [1](#); Eton [1](#); euphemisms [1](#); Europe [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Everest [1](#), [2](#); evolution [1](#), [2](#); executions [1](#); exorcisms [1](#); explosives [1](#); *Express, The* [1](#); extinctions [1](#), [2](#); eyebrows [1](#); eyelashes [1](#), [2](#); eyes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#)

Facebook [1](#), [2](#); faces [1](#), [2](#); Fanta [1](#); farmers [1](#); fat [1](#), [2](#); Father's Day, [1](#); faxes [1](#); FBI [1](#), [2](#); feet [1](#), [2](#); fellatio [1](#); Ferrari [1](#); ferrets [1](#); *Fifty Shades of Grey* [1](#); Fiji [1](#); films [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); fines [1](#); fingernails [1](#), [2](#); fingers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); Finland [1](#), [2](#); Finnish [1](#); fire [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Fire Brigade [1](#); fire hydrants [1](#); First World War [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); firstborns, [1](#); fish [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); fittest, survival of [1](#); flags [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); flamingos [1](#); flatulence [1](#); flatworms [1](#); flavours [1](#), [2](#); fleas [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Fleming, Ian [1](#); flies [1](#), [2](#); flight [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); *Flintstones, The* [1](#); flirting [1](#); Florence [1](#); flowers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); flu [1](#); flying [1](#), [2](#); foie gras [1](#); folding [1](#), [2](#); folklore [1](#); food [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); football [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); footmen [1](#); Ford, Henry [1](#), [2](#); Foreman, George [1](#); foreskins [1](#); forks [1](#); Fortnum & Mason [1](#); fortune cookies [1](#); fossils [1](#); foxes [1](#), [2](#); France [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#); Franco, General [1](#); French [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); Freud, Sigmund [1](#); friendship [1](#), [2](#); frogs [1](#), [2](#); frost [1](#); fruit [1](#); fuel [1](#); funerals [1](#); fungi [1](#); fur [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

Gaelic, [1](#); Galilei, Galileo [1](#), [2](#); gambling [1](#); games [1](#), [2](#); Garden, Lady [1](#); gardening [1](#); gas masks [1](#); GCSEs [1](#); gender [1](#), [2](#); genes [1](#); genitals [1](#), [2](#); geology [1](#); Geordies [1](#); German [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Germany [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); germs [1](#); Geronimo [1](#); Gershwin, George [1](#); gestures [1](#); ghosts [1](#); Gilbert and Sullivan [1](#); ginger beer [1](#); giraffes [1](#); Glasgow [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); glasses [1](#); gloves [1](#); goats [1](#), [2](#); God [1](#); gold [1](#), [2](#); Goldberg, Whoopi [1](#); gold rushes [1](#); Goldilocks [1](#); golf [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Golightly, Holly [1](#); Google [1](#), [2](#); Grand Central Station [1](#); grass [1](#); *Grease* [1](#); *Great Gatsby, The* [1](#); Greece [1](#); Greenland [1](#), [2](#); greetings [1](#); grenades [1](#); guillotine [1](#), [2](#); guinea pigs [1](#); Guinness [1](#); Guinness World Records [1](#), [2](#); gullible [1](#); gunpowder [1](#); guns [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Guy Fawkes [1](#)

haemorrhoids [1](#); hagfish [1](#); hair [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); ham [1](#); hamsters [1](#); Handel, George Frideric [1](#), [2](#); hands [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); handstands [1](#); hangovers [1](#); Hannibal [1](#); happiness [1](#); harps [1](#), [2](#); harpsichords [1](#); #hashtags [1](#); hatred [1](#); Hawaii [1](#); headaches [1](#); heads [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); health and safety [1](#); heart attacks [1](#), [2](#); hearts [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); heaven [1](#); Hebrew [1](#), [2](#); hedgehogs [1](#); Hefner, Hugh [1](#); height [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); Heinz [1](#), [2](#); Hendrix, Jimi [1](#); herrings [1](#), [2](#); Heyerdahl, Thor [1](#); hiding [1](#); Higgs boson [1](#); Himalayas [1](#); *Hindenburg* [1](#); Hindi [1](#); hip-hop [1](#); hippos [1](#); Hiroshima [1](#), [2](#); Hitchcock, Alfred [1](#); Hitler [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); holidays [1](#), [2](#); Holly, Buddy [1](#); Hollywood [1](#); Holmes, Sherlock [1](#), [2](#); homelessness [1](#); honey [1](#); hope [1](#); horses [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); hospitals [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); hot tubs [1](#); house arrest [1](#); House of Commons [1](#), [2](#); House of Lords [1](#); Hughes, Emlyn [1](#); Hugo, Victor [1](#); hula-hoops [1](#); human body [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#); humming [1](#); humour [1](#); hurdles [1](#);

hurricanes [1](#); husbands [1](#), [2](#); Huskies [1](#); Hussein, Saddam

IBM [1](#); Ibsen, Henrik [1](#); ice [1](#), [2](#); Ice Age [1](#); ice cream [1](#), [2](#); Iceland [1](#); idiots [1](#); IKEA [1](#); illegal [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); imitations [1](#); immune system [1](#); indexes [1](#), [2](#); India [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Indian [1](#); Indonesia [1](#), [2](#); infinity [1](#); information [1](#); injuries [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); ink [1](#); insecticides [1](#); insects [1](#), [2](#); insomnia [1](#); insults [1](#); insurance [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Internet [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); intestines [1](#); intoxication [1](#); Inuit [1](#); invasions [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); inventions [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#); invertebrates [1](#); iPhones [1](#); Iran [1](#), [2](#); Irish [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); ironing [1](#); irony [1](#); islands [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); Israel [1](#); Italian [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Italians [1](#), [2](#)

Jaffa Cakes [1](#); jaguars [1](#); jails [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); jam [1](#); January [1](#); Japan [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); Japanese [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); jaws [1](#); jazz [1](#); jeans [1](#), [2](#); Jedi [1](#); jellyfish [1](#), [2](#); Jenga [1](#); Jesus [1](#), [2](#); jewels [1](#); jigsaws [1](#); jobs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); John O’Groats [1](#); Johnson, Amy [1](#); jokes [1](#); journalism [1](#); journeys [1](#), [2](#); jousting [1](#); Judaism [1](#); Jung, Carl [1](#), [2](#); jungles [1](#); Jupiter [1](#); *Jurassic Park* [1](#)

K2 [1](#); Kabul [1](#); Kafka, Franz [1](#); Kalashnikovs [1](#); Kama Sutra [1](#); kangaroos [1](#), [2](#); karaoke [1](#); kayaks [1](#); kebabs [1](#), [2](#); Kent [1](#); Kentucky [1](#), [2](#); Kentucky Fried Chicken [1](#); Kenya [1](#); kestrels [1](#); Ketamine [1](#); ketchup [1](#); kettles [1](#), [2](#); Kevins [1](#); keyboards [1](#); Keynes, John Maynard [1](#); keys [1](#), [2](#); kidnapping [1](#); kidneys [1](#); killing [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); kilts [1](#); kimchi [1](#); kingfishers [1](#); kings [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#); Kipling, Rudyard [1](#); kippers [1](#); kissing [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Kitchener, Lord [1](#); kites [1](#); kitty litter [1](#); kiwis [1](#); knees [1](#); knights [1](#); Knights Templar [1](#); knives [1](#); koalas [1](#); Komodo dragons [1](#); kookaburras [1](#); Koran [1](#); Korea, North [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); Korea, South [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Korean [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); krill [1](#); Kubrick, Stanley [1](#); Kuwait [1](#)

Labour Party [1](#); lacrosse [1](#); lakes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); lamps [1](#); Land’s End [1](#); landfill [1](#); landscapes [1](#);

language [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#); Laos [1](#), [2](#); lasers [1](#); Latin [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); laughter [1](#); Laurel and Hardy [1](#); lava [1](#); laws [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); lawyers [1](#), [2](#); Le Carré, John [1](#); lead [1](#); Lee, Bruce [1](#); left-handed [1](#); legs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); letters [1](#), [2](#); libraries [1](#); lies [1](#); lifts [1](#); light [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); lighters [1](#); lightning [1](#), [2](#); Lightyear, Buzz [1](#); Lincoln, Abraham [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); lions [1](#); literature [1](#); livers [1](#); llamas [1](#); lobotomies [1](#); lobsters [1](#); locusts [1](#);
lol [1](#); lollipops [1](#); London [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#); London Underground [1](#), [2](#); Long John Silver [1](#); look [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Lord Byron [1](#); *Lord of the Rings* [1](#); lorries [1](#); losing [1](#); lotteries [1](#), [2](#); Louvre [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); love letters [1](#); LSD [1](#); luck [1](#); Ludo [1](#); lunches [1](#); Lundgren, Dolph [1](#); lungs [1](#), [2](#)

Macbeth [1](#); mace [1](#); magnets [1](#); magnolias [1](#); Major, John [1](#); malaria [1](#), [2](#); Malaysia [1](#); Maldives [1](#); malnutrition [1](#); Malory, Thomas [1](#); Manchester [1](#); Manchester United [1](#); manners [1](#); Manx [1](#); Manx shearwater [1](#); Maori [1](#); marbles [1](#); Marianas Trench [1](#); markets [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Marmite [1](#); marriage [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Mars [1](#); Martini [1](#), [2](#); Marx Brothers [1](#); Marx, Harpo [1](#); Marx, Karl [1](#), [2](#); Mary Queen of Scots [1](#); Maryland [1](#), [2](#); mass [1](#), [2](#); masturbation [1](#); maths [1](#); mating [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); matter [1](#), [2](#); Mayans [1](#), [2](#); meals [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); measles [1](#); measurements [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); meat [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); medals [1](#); *Mein Kampf* [1](#); melting [1](#), [2](#); memory [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Mengele, Josef [1](#); Merkel, Angela [1](#); Mexicans [1](#); Mexico [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); mice [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Michelangelo [1](#), [2](#); Mickey Mouse [1](#); midges [1](#), [2](#); military [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); milk [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Milky Way [1](#); millipedes [1](#), [2](#); Milton, John [1](#); minerals [1](#); minimum wage [1](#); Missouri [1](#); mistakes [1](#); mistletoe [1](#); mobile phones [1](#), [2](#); *Moby-Dick* [1](#), [2](#); Mohammed [1](#), [2](#); moles [1](#), [2](#); moments [1](#); *Mona Lisa* [1](#), [2](#); money [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); monkeys [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); monks [1](#); monsters [1](#); Moon [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); moose [1](#);
Mormons [1](#); mosquitos [1](#); Mother's Day [1](#); mothers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); moths [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); mountain lions [1](#); mountains [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); mouse (computer) [1](#), [2](#); moustaches [1](#); mouths [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus [1](#), [2](#); MPs [1](#), [2](#); Mr Bean [1](#); Mrs Beeton [1](#); *Mrs Brown's Boys* [1](#); Mumbai [1](#); mummies [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Munch, Edvard [1](#); murder [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); *Murder, She Wrote* [1](#); museums [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); mushrooms [1](#); music [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); Mussolini, Benito [1](#), [2](#); mustard [1](#)

names [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [33](#), [34](#), [35](#), [36](#), [37](#), [38](#), [39](#); Napoleonic wars [1](#); NASA [1](#), [2](#); national anthems [1](#); navigation [1](#), [2](#); Navy [1](#); Nazis [1](#), [2](#); Neanderthals [1](#); nectar [1](#), [2](#); Nelson, Horatio [1](#); nests [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); neutron stars [1](#); New Jersey [1](#); New Mexico [1](#); New York [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); newspapers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Newton, Isaac [1](#); Niagara [1](#); nicknames [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); nicotine [1](#); Nigeria [1](#); nightingales [1](#); nightmares [1](#); Nile [1](#); *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1](#); nipples [1](#); Nixon, Richard [1](#); no [1](#); Nobel Prize [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); nobody knows [1](#); Nokia [1](#); Norfolk [1](#), [2](#); Norse [1](#); North Africa [1](#); North Carolina [1](#), [2](#); North Dakota [1](#); North Pole [1](#), [2](#); Norway [1](#); Norwegian [1](#); noses [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); notebooks [1](#); Nottingham [1](#); nuclear power [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); nudity [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); numbers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); Nutella [1](#); nutmeg [1](#); nuts [1](#), [2](#)

oaks [1](#); obesity [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); OCD [1](#); ocean [1](#); oceans [1](#), [2](#); octopuses [1](#), [2](#); *Odyssey* [1](#); *Of Mice and Men* [1](#), [2](#); Ohio [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); oil [1](#), [2](#); OK Corral [1](#); oldest [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Oldham [1](#), [2](#); olives [1](#); Olympics [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#);

onesies [1](#); opossums [1](#); orchestras [1](#); Oregon [1](#); organs [1](#); orphans [1](#); Orwell, George [1](#), [2](#); ostriches [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); otters [1](#); ounces [1](#); overcrowding [1](#); owls [1](#); Oxford Circus [1](#); oxygen [1](#); oysters [1](#); Osbourne, Ozzy [1](#)

pacemakers [1](#); Pacific islands [1](#); Paddington Bear [1](#); pain [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); paint [1](#), [2](#); Pakistan [1](#), [2](#); palaces [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); pandas [1](#); paper [1](#), [2](#); parachutes [1](#); *Paradise Lost* [1](#); Paralympics [1](#); parasites [1](#); pardons [1](#); parents [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Paris [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); parliament [1](#); parrots [1](#), [2](#); parsnips [1](#); passports [1](#); passwords [1](#); patents [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); patriotism [1](#); pavements [1](#); pawnbroking [1](#), [2](#); peaches [1](#); peanut butter [1](#); peanuts [1](#), [2](#); peas [1](#); pencils [1](#), [2](#); penguins [1](#), [2](#); penises [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); pepper [1](#); perfume [1](#); Persian [1](#); Peter Pan [1](#); pets [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); phantom limbs [1](#); pharaohs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Philippines [1](#), [2](#); phone calls [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); phones [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); photocopiers [1](#); photographs [1](#), [2](#); pi [1](#); pianos [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Piccadilly Circus [1](#); pigs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); pilots [1](#); pimples [1](#); pine cones [1](#); pineapples [1](#); pipes [1](#); piranhas [1](#); pirates [1](#), [2](#); Pitt the Younger, William [1](#); Pixar [1](#); pizza [1](#); planets [1](#); plants [1](#), [2](#); Play-Doh [1](#); plays [1](#); Pliny the Elder [1](#); ploughman's lunch [1](#); Pluto [1](#); pneumonia [1](#); pockets [1](#); Poe, Edgar Allan [1](#), [2](#); poetry [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); poets [1](#), [2](#); police [1](#), [2](#); Polish [1](#); pollution [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); pomegranates [1](#); Pompeii [1](#); ponies [1](#); poo [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); popes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); Popeye [1](#); populations [1](#); Portsmouth [1](#); positions [1](#), [2](#); post [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); post offices [1](#); postcodes [1](#); potatoes [1](#), [2](#); Potter, Harry [1](#); poverty [1](#), [2](#); pregnancy [1](#), [2](#); presidents [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); pressure [1](#); prime minister [1](#); Prince Charles [1](#); Prince Philip [1](#); Pringles [1](#); prohibition [1](#); prostitutes [1](#), [2](#); Prozac [1](#), [2](#); pubs [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); public office [1](#); Puccini, Giacomo [1](#); punishment [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); purgatory [1](#); Puritans [1](#); Pyrenees [1](#)

Qatar [1](#); Quechua [1](#); Queen Elizabeth II [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); queens [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); queue [1](#)

rabbis [1](#); rabbits [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); radiation [1](#), [2](#); rain [1](#), [2](#); rainbows [1](#), [2](#); ransoms [1](#); rarity [1](#), [2](#); Rasputin, Grigori [1](#); rats [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); razors [1](#); Reagan, Ronald [1](#); recipes [1](#), [2](#); records [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); refrigerators [1](#); Regent Circus [1](#); relationships [1](#); relatives [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#); Rembrandt [1](#); remote controls [1](#); repetitive strain injury [1](#); reptiles [1](#); restaurants [1](#), [2](#); restlessness [1](#); resurrection [1](#); revolutions [1](#), [2](#); rickets [1](#); ringtones [1](#); rivers [1](#); roadrunners [1](#); robbery [1](#), [2](#); rock [1](#); rock-climbing [1](#); rockets [1](#); rodents [1](#); Rodin, Auguste [1](#); Roman numerals [1](#); romance [1](#), [2](#); Romanian [1](#); Rome [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); Ronaldo, Cristiano [1](#); rose water [1](#), [2](#);

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel [1](#); rotting [1](#); Rousseau, Jean-Jacques [1](#); Rowling, J. K. [1](#); royalty [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Rubik's Cube [1](#); rugby [1](#), [2](#); rulers [1](#); running [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Russia [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#); Russian [1](#)

safaris [1](#); sailing [1](#), [2](#); sailors [1](#), [2](#); saints [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); saliva [1](#); salmon [1](#); salt [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Sami [1](#); Samsung [1](#), [2](#); samurai [1](#); sand [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); sandcastles [1](#); sandwiches [1](#); sanitary towels [1](#); Santa Claus [1](#); sarcasm [1](#); Saturn [1](#); Saudi Arabia [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Saxons [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); school [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Schubert, Franz [1](#), [2](#); science [1](#); scorpions [1](#); Scotland [1](#), [2](#); Scott, Robert Falcon [1](#); Scrabble [1](#); scurvy [1](#); sea [1](#), [2](#); sea cucumbers [1](#), [2](#); sea slugs [1](#); seahorses [1](#); seals [1](#), [2](#); seaweed [1](#); Second World War [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); seeds [1](#); serviettes [1](#); sex [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#); sexism [1](#), [2](#); Shackleton, Ernest [1](#); Shag [1](#); Shakespeare [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); shares [1](#); sharks [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); sheds [1](#); sheep [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); shelters [1](#); Shetland Islands [1](#); ships [1](#), [2](#); shit [1](#), [2](#); shoes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); shooting [1](#), [2](#); shops [1](#), [2](#), [3](#);

short-sightedness [1](#); shorthand [1](#); shrews [1](#); shrimp [1](#); sickness [1](#), [2](#); sight [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); silence [1](#), [2](#); silkworms [1](#); Silly [1](#); Silly Putty [1](#); Simon and Garfunkel [1](#); *Simpsons, The* [1](#); singing [1](#), [2](#); Sistine Chapel [1](#); sitting down [1](#), [2](#); skulls [1](#); skunk [1](#); skyscrapers [1](#), [2](#); sleep [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); slime [1](#), [2](#); sloths [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); slugs [1](#); sluts [1](#); smallpox [1](#); smell [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); smoking [1](#), [2](#); smuggling [1](#); smurfs [1](#); snails [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); snakes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); snapshots [1](#); sneezing [1](#); Snickers [1](#); snot [1](#); snow [1](#); snow leopards [1](#), [2](#); snow tigers [1](#); soap [1](#); socks [1](#); Solar System [1](#), [2](#); soldiers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); sonar [1](#); sonic booms [1](#); souls [1](#); sound [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); soup [1](#), [2](#); South Africa [1](#); South America [1](#); South Pole [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Soviet Union [1](#), [2](#); soy [1](#); soy sauce [1](#); space [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); spaceships [1](#), [2](#); spacesuits [1](#); Spanish [1](#), [2](#); species [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#); speed [1](#), [2](#); speed dating [1](#); Spencer, Herbert [1](#); sperm [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Spice Girls [1](#); spices [1](#); spiders [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); spinach [1](#), [2](#); Splenda [1](#); sporrans [1](#); sports [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); spots [1](#); squid [1](#), [2](#); squirrels [1](#), [2](#); squirting [1](#); Sri Lanka [1](#); stadiums [1](#), [2](#); stagecoaches [1](#); Stalin, Joseph [1](#), [2](#); *Star Trek* [1](#); *Star Wars* [1](#); stars [1](#), [2](#); starvation [1](#), [2](#); Statue of Liberty [1](#); statues [1](#); steering [1](#); Steinbeck, John [1](#), [2](#); stew [1](#); sticks [1](#), [2](#); stilettos [1](#); Stilton [1](#); Stinkbottom [1](#); stock exchanges [1](#), [2](#); Stockings [1](#); stomachs [1](#), [2](#); storks [1](#); straitjackets [1](#); straw [1](#); strawberries [1](#); streets [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); stress [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); stripes [1](#); stripping [1](#), [2](#); stroke [1](#); students [1](#), [2](#); sucking [1](#), [2](#); suffrage [1](#); sugar [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); suicide [1](#); suitcases [1](#); Sun [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); sunbathing [1](#); sunrise [1](#); sunset [1](#), [2](#); Surf [1](#); surgery [1](#); Surrey [1](#); survival [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#); Swahili [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); swarms [1](#), [2](#); swearing [1](#), [2](#); Sweden [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); swimming [1](#), [2](#); Swindon [1](#), [2](#); Switzerland [1](#), [2](#)

tails [1](#); talking [1](#); tanks [1](#); Tanzania [1](#); tapirs [1](#); Tarzan [1](#); taste [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); tattoos [1](#); tax [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); taxis [1](#); tea [1](#), [2](#); teachers [1](#), [2](#); teapots [1](#), [2](#); teenagers [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); teeth [1](#), [2](#); telephones [1](#), [2](#); television [1](#), [2](#); temperature [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); Tennessee [1](#); tennis [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); termites [1](#); Tesco [1](#); testosterone [1](#); texting [1](#); Thailand [1](#), [2](#); Thames [1](#), [2](#); Thatcher, Margaret [1](#); theft [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); thesaurus [1](#); throat [1](#); thumbs [1](#); Tibet [1](#); ticks [1](#); tigers [1](#), [2](#); tights [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); time [1](#); *Titanic* [1](#), [2](#); TNT [1](#); toast [1](#); tobacco [1](#); toes [1](#), [2](#); toilet paper [1](#); toilet seats [1](#); toilets [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Tolkien, J. R. R. [1](#); Tolstoy, Leo [1](#); Tom and Jerry [1](#); tombstones [1](#); tongues [1](#), [2](#); tools [1](#), [2](#); toothpaste [1](#); toothpicks [1](#); Tories [1](#); tortoises [1](#); Tour de France [1](#); Tower of London [1](#); tracking [1](#); traffic jams [1](#); trains [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); travelling [1](#); treasure [1](#), [2](#); *Treasure Island* [1](#); trees [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#); trousers [1](#), [2](#); tsunamis [1](#); tug of war [1](#); tummy buttons [1](#), [2](#); tuna [1](#); Turkey [1](#); turtles [1](#), [2](#); Tutankhamun [1](#); Tuvalu [1](#); televisions [1](#), [2](#); Twain, Mark [1](#); tweed [1](#); Twitter [1](#), [2](#); *Tyrannosaurus rex* [1](#)

UFOs [1](#), [2](#); UK [1](#), [2](#); underwear [1](#), [2](#); undressing [1](#); uniforms [1](#); Universe [1](#), [2](#); Uranus [1](#); urine [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); USA [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); Utah [1](#), [2](#)

vaginas [1](#); vanilla [1](#); vaseline [1](#); vegetables [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); vegetarianism [1](#); Velcro [1](#), [2](#); velvet [1](#); Venice [1](#); venom [1](#); Venus [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Viagra [1](#), [2](#); Vienna [1](#); Vietnam [1](#); vikings [1](#); villages [1](#); violence [1](#); viruses [1](#), [2](#); Vivaldi, Antonia [1](#); vodka [1](#); volcanoes [1](#), [2](#); vomiting, [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); vowels [1](#); Vulcans [1](#)

Wagner, Richard [1](#); waiting [1](#); Wales [1](#); walking sticks [1](#); walking the plank [1](#); wallabies [1](#); Wallace, Alfred

Russel [1](#); Walton, William [1](#); wandering leg sausage [1](#); Wang [1](#); Wanke [1](#); war [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#); washing [1](#), [2](#); Washington, George [1](#); washing-up [1](#); wasps [1](#), [2](#); waste [1](#), [2](#); watches [1](#); water [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); waterfalls [1](#); Waugh, Evelyn [1](#); wealth [1](#), [2](#); weapons [1](#); weddings [1](#), [2](#); weeds [1](#); weight [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); Welshite [1](#); whales [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#); wheels [1](#); whistling [1](#); whoopee cushions [1](#); whoops! [1](#); Wikipedia [1](#); William the Conqueror [1](#); Willy, Great [1](#); Willy, Louise [1](#); wind [1](#); wine [1](#), [2](#), [3](#); Winnie the Pooh [1](#); winter [1](#); wisdom [1](#); witches [1](#); wolves [1](#); women [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#); wood [1](#); woodchucks [1](#); wooden legs [1](#); woodlice [1](#), [2](#); words [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [33](#), [34](#), [35](#), [36](#), [37](#), [38](#), [39](#), [40](#), [41](#), [42](#), [43](#), [44](#), [45](#), [46](#), [47](#), [48](#), [49](#), [50](#), [51](#), [52](#), [53](#); Wordsworth, William [1](#); work [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#); worms [1](#), [2](#); worship [1](#); wrestling [1](#), [2](#); Wrigley's [1](#); writer's block [1](#); Wyoming [1](#)

yachts [1](#); yawning [1](#), [2](#); yeast [1](#), [2](#); yes [1](#); yesterday [1](#); 'Yesterday' [1](#); YMCA [1](#)

Z (letter) [1](#); Zappa, Frank [1](#); zebras [1](#); zoo [1](#); Zoroastrianism [1](#); ZZ Top [1](#)

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