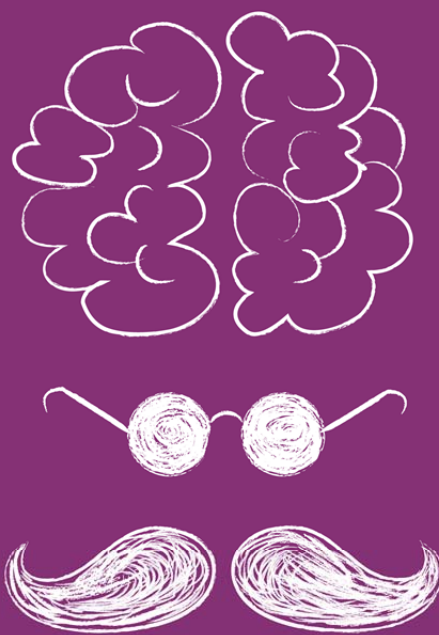


1123 HARD TO BELIEVE FACTS



from the creator of the popular trivia website

RaiseYourBrain



Nayden KOSTOV

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By Nayden Kostov

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E-Book ISBN 978-99959-980-0-4

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Acknowledgements

Note on sources and description of the verification process

About the author

Born in Bulgaria, I have lived in places like Germany, Belgium and Iraq, before settling down with my family in Luxembourg. With varied interests, I have always suffered from an insatiable appetite for facts stemming from an unrestrainable intellectual curiosity. It has certainly influenced my academic background and career: after acquiring Master degrees in Greek Philology, German and English Translation, I graduated in Crisis Management and Diplomacy and, most recently, undertook an MBA.

My career has been equally broad and diverse, swinging from that of an army paratrooper and a military intelligence analyst; through to that of a civil servant with the European Commission, and presently, that of a clerk, performing purely financial tasks in a major bank.

Member of MENSA.

Prologue

Following the success of my site www.RaiseYourBrain.com and numerous inquiries from readers, I decided to collect the best gems of breath-taking trivia and to present you a great compilation of facts, suitable for a vast and diverse audience. This is a result of years of sifting through history and references books on a myriad of subjects as well as searching the Internet and paying attention to the news.

Apparently, this book can be fun for high-school students too - even the most 'spicy' entries, neatly separated in the chapter 'Facts about human and animal sexuality', remain factual and abstain from profanity. To my greatest delight, an avid reader of my site explained that she was preparing daily fact sheets for her son's lunch box. She prints out three facts every day to create some lunch-time fun for her child and thus entice him into further reading and to provoke his intellectual curiosity. Honestly, I wish my parents had done the same for me when I was a child!

I confess that most trivia books are insufferably boring. This book is different, packed with interesting, educational, and fun ingredients; it seeks to entertain as well as challenge. It will provide you with never-ending intellectual ammunition for a lifetime of dinner parties. You will amaze your friends and family by recounting to them that the greatest Chinese pirate of all times was a woman, or that herrings use flatulence to communicate!

The book will be your strongest ally in combatting social awkwardness and will arm you with plenty of icebreaking pieces of trivia, suitable for any occasion.



CHAPTER 1

Unbelievable facts about virtually everything

1. In many Israeli schools, algebra is taught without the use of the symbol '+', as it looks like a Christian cross. They use an inverted 'T' instead (see below).



2. Mercury is the planet closest to the sun and yet is not the hottest one in our solar system. Venus, the second closest planet, is in fact far warmer.
3. Chewing gum, yoga and poorly-made dental fillings make you flatulent.
4. The words 'gym' and 'gymnastics' both derive from the Greek word for 'naked'.

5. 'Karaoke' means 'empty orchestra' in Japanese.
6. In a deck of cards, the king of hearts is the only one without a moustache.
7. What we know today as Arabic numerals actually originated in India. In Arabic, they are known as 'Indian numbers'.
8. Sudan has far more pyramids than Egypt.
9. In the black and white TV era, female anchors used green or black lipstick.
10. One of the most frequent regrets of those on their deathbed is: 'I wish I hadn't worked so hard'.
11. Pope Francis was a bouncer in his youth.
12. Fucking is an Austrian village (see *below*) where the beer 'Fucking Hell' is produced ('hell' means 'clear' or 'light' in German).



13. There are about 50 million kangaroos in Australia, more than two for every Australian.
14. The moon and the sun appear to be the same size due to the coincidence that the moon is 400 times smaller and 400 times closer than the sun.
15. The first product to have a bar code was Wrigley's chewing gum.
16. 'Goodbye' originates from 'God bye', which came from 'God be with you'.
17. McDonald's began as a hot dog stand.
18. The first official match of the NBA (the men's professional basketball league in North America) was not played in the USA. It took place in Toronto, Canada, on 1 November 1946, with the Huskies hosting the New York Knickerbockers.
19. Today, there are more Uber cars in New York City, USA, than there are yellow cabs.
20. The 17th Prime Minister of Australia, Harold Edward Holt, disappeared on 17 December 1967 and was never seen again.
21. Solariums are outlawed in Australia and Brazil.

22. Mr. Smith-Cumming was the first director of the British Intelligence service, MI6. Ironically, he introduced a method of using semen as invisible ink.
23. Ketchup originates from China.
24. Bicycle was invented after the steam-powered locomotive.
25. If the evolution of Intel microprocessors (since 1971) had been applied to cars, in early 2016 one car would have cost five cents and would travel faster than light.
26. In 2002, the US Congress acknowledged that an Italian immigrant, Antonio Meucci, was, in fact, the real inventor of the telephone, some 20 years ahead of Bell.
27. In the 1990s, Super Mario was better known to US children than Mickey Mouse.
28. Victoria's Secret catalogues were initially sent only to men.
29. When flying from Tokyo, Japan, to Hawaii, USA, you can arrive the day before you departed.
30. The sound of a whip crack is actually the sound of the whip's tip breaking the sound barrier.

31. Gerald Ford served as US president and vice president without being elected to either post.
32. Whittier is a town in the state of Alaska, USA. The vast majority of its population lives in one single building.
33. France is the country with the most time zones in the world. However, Russia has the largest number of contiguous time zones.
34. There is liquid water on Mars.
35. In the 1970s, the three best-known western names in China were: Jesus Christ, Elvis Presley and Richard Nixon.
36. At one time, the Soviet Union was spending over 40% of its GDP on arms.
37. Humans suffer from cancer much more often than whales and sharks do.
38. Helicopters are the safest means of air transportation.
39. Amongst the 10 busiest container ports worldwide, six are located in China.
40. Cuttlefish ink was used in early photography.

41. Electronic payments are leading to a cashless society. An unexpected benefit is that bank robberies in the USA have fallen by 40% in the course of the last 10 years.
42. There are more lakes in Canada than in the rest of the world combined.
43. Frank Oz is the voice behind both Yoda and Miss Piggy.
44. It's possible to travel by boat from Pakistan to Russia if you sail in a completely straight line.
45. On average, astronauts are 5 cm (2 inches) taller in space.
46. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism all started in Asia.
47. Isaac Newton died a virgin.
48. Long ago, the phrase 'mad as a hatter' was used literally. Hatters used mercury in their work, which made them go insane.
49. Due to the Earth's rotation, an object will go slightly further if thrown towards the west.
50. The Icelandic government developed a smartphone app to curb involuntary inbreeding.

51. Ernest Rutherford used to say that 'All science is either physics or stamp collecting'. Ironically, he was honoured with a Nobel Prize in chemistry.
52. Sometimes Pluto is closer to Earth than Neptune.
53. In Yellowstone Park, there are many more hot springs and geysers than in the rest of the world.
54. There are almost 800 million \$2 bills in circulation worldwide – they are anything but rare!
55. Arsenalna station in Kiev, Ukraine, is the deepest metro station in the world – almost 106 m (346 feet) below street level.
56. In 2015, an abandoned airport in Spain was sold for €10 000 (\$11 000). It cost €1 billion to build and was operational only for a single day.
57. The US stock market always dips around the date of a sun eclipse.
58. Musical notes got their names from the first syllables of each verse of the religious hymn 'Ut Queant Laxis'.
59. 'For sale: Baby shoes, never worn' is considered to be the shortest novel ever written.

60. Tommy Atkins serves as a generic name for a British soldier; in the US Marine Corps, it's Lance Corporal Schmuckatelli.
61. Torpedoes were named after a fish species.
62. The superstition 'three on a match' or 'unlucky third light' dates from the Boer War, when sharpshooters often killed the third enemy soldier lighting a cigarette from the same match at night.
63. The surface of the moon covers roughly the same area as Asia.
64. Most restaurant menus have at least 100 times more bacteria on them than the toilet lids in the same restaurant.
65. In the years 1600 and 2000, there was a 29 February; in 1700, 1800 and 1900, there was not, nor will there be in 2100.
66. Since 1945, all British battle tanks have possessed tea-making equipment.
67. Nazi Germany introduced the torch relay, which transports the flame from Greece to the respective site of the Olympic Games.
68. Licking 10 postage stamps burns 1 calorie. You will not lose weight however because the adhesive contains starch.

69. In China and Japan, some women wear special hairy stockings to deter rapists.
70. In ancient times, salaries were paid in salt (hence, the origin of the word).
71. All the gold in the world, extracted since the dawn of humanity, would fit into a cube with sides of just 20 m (65 feet).
72. Airbags inflate in just 30 milliseconds.
73. There are more than 300 million ping-pong amateur players in China.
74. The first commercial flight of a jumbo jet was made in 1970.
75. Buildings in China and Hong Kong rarely have floors containing the digit '4', as it sounds like 'death' in Chinese and nobody wants to live there.
76. Alexander Pushkin, the 'Russian Shakespeare', was the grandchild of an Ethiopian slave.
77. In some cases, male urine can turn a pregnancy test positive. In fact, it may be an indication of testicular cancer.
78. Both marine vessels and aircraft have green lamps on the right side and red ones on the left.

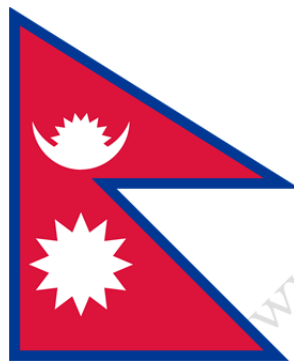
79. The safest seats in an airplane are at the back, aisle not window, and those closest to emergency exits.
80. Bluetooth was named after the Danish king Harald 'Bluetooth' Gormsson, who lived in the 10th century.
81. George W. Bush was, in fact, a male cheerleader in college.
82. 'Yo Mama is so...' jokes started among African Americans before their emancipation from slavery. 'Mama' was used as a code word for 'Master'.
83. Tracy, Hilary and Shirley used to be boys' names.
84. On 3 September 1939, France declared war on Germany, and the French troops were the first to cross the border.
85. The Hundred Year War actually lasted 116 years.
86. Most 'paper' banknotes are made of cotton.
87. The owner of the Segway Company died riding a Segway.
88. Platinum was only discovered in 1735. Until then, it was thought to be 'fake' silver.

89. In 1960, the strongest earthquake on record occurred in Chile. It had a magnitude of 9.5 on the Richter scale (out of 10).
90. The letter 'J' is not used in the periodic table of elements.
91. In some US states, women and black people had the right to vote as early as the 1790s.
92. 90% of the volume of fresh snow is air.
93. In 2012, Costa Rica outlawed hunting.
94. In 1943, the entire crew of the destroyer USS W.D. Porter was put under arrest. Why, you might wonder? It almost sunk President F.D. Roosevelt's ship. Twice.
95. Christopher Columbus never set foot on mainland America.
96. The brands Puma and Adidas were founded by two brothers.
97. In the USA, deserters from the Vietnam War are still being tracked down and arrested.
98. Google Street View blurs the face of Colonel Sanders in each KFC logo because 'he was a real person'.
99. There is no hospital in Vatican City.

100. St. Patrick was, in fact, not from Ireland.

101. Pluto was discovered, declared a planet and then had the title rescinded before even making it half way around the sun.

102. Nepal is the only country to have a non-rectangular flag (see *below*).



103. The state of Alaska is 425 times larger than the state of Rhode Island, USA.

104. According to the 1872 Licensing Act, it is illegal to ride a horse while drunk in Great Britain.

105. Selling and using chewing gum in Singapore can result in fines and jail time.

106. The highest mountain in our solar system is on Mars.

107. Ebola survivors should use condoms for the rest of their lives as the virus is found in semen months after recovery.

108. I bet you did not know that Winnie the Pooh was named after the bear 'Winnie' and the swan 'Pooh'.
109. In most families, there are fewer photos of the second child than of the first one.
110. Never heard of Xiaomi? It is the third largest mobile phone producer in the world.
111. During World War II, US soldiers and German Wehrmacht soldiers once fought together against SS troops.
112. Buzz Aldrin was the first man to urinate on the moon.
113. Taphophobia is the fear of being buried alive.
114. Bubble wrap was initially supposed to be marketed as wallpaper.
115. 'Senator' means 'old man' in Latin.
116. Less than 10% of all inmates in US state and federal prisons are women.
117. According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2014 Oklahoma had over 10 times higher female incarceration rate than Rhode Island.
118. The 'Playboy' magazine was initially meant to be called 'Stag Party'.

119. The countries Lesotho, Vatican City and San Marino are enclaved states.

This means that they are completely surrounded by larger neighbours.

120. In some parts of Switzerland, flushing the toilet after 10 pm is against the law.

121. The Nazis abandoned Gothic script in 1941 as it was too hard to read for the majority of German citizens.

122. In 1941, Hitler prohibited smoking in most public areas.

123. The Republic of Nauru has no capital city.

124. 'Samsung' means 'three stars'.

125. All Middle Eastern countries except Lebanon have a desert.

126. Water is densest at 4°C (39.2°F).

127. There are military airplanes equipped with 105 mm howitzers.

128. The company Asus was named after Pegasus.

129. Nintendo started business in the 19th century, initially selling playing cards.

130. Tom Cruise has a scene in each of his movies in which his hair is wet.

131. 18 countries, the largest being Saudi Arabia, don't have a single river.
132. The word designating 'butterfly' is unique in the majority of languages.
133. The words 'bet', 'drug' and 'puke' were all introduced into the English language by Shakespeare.
134. Self-guided 'smart' bullets already exist.
135. The brand name JEEP evolved from the army abbreviation for 'General Purpose' vehicle – G.P.
136. In the Westminster Parliament, UK, the Speaker of the House cannot speak (express an opinion).
137. There are flying skateboards. In 2015, the company HENDO created a working prototype, just like the one from the movie 'Back to the Future'.
138. The most faked artist in the world is Salvador Dali.
139. White and yellow cars are less likely to be passively involved in a car accident.
140. Lucky Strike cigarettes refer to the gold rush in which everybody dreamt of striking gold.
141. In the solar system, Venus is the only planet to turn clockwise.

142. Zebras in warmer climates have more stripes.

143. The greatest Chinese pirate of all times was a woman named Ching Shih (1785-1844).

144. Other than its derivatives, 'dreamt' is the only word ending in 'mt'.

145. Edible packaging for foods has already been developed.

146. The inventor of the electric chair was a dentist by profession.

147. A roulette wheel in Rio All Suite Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, USA, once stopped seven times in a row on the number '19'.

148. The F-104 fighter jet was nick-named 'Aluminium Death Tube' and 'Widowmaker' for a reason. The German Air Force lost 269 aircraft (roughly 30% of its entire F-104 fleet) and 116 pilots died, all in peacetime.

149. A Listerine mouthwash advertisement coined the phrase 'always a bridesmaid, never a bride'. The message was in the sense that if you have bad breath, nobody would marry you.

150. The entrance door at 10 Downing Street (the residence of the UK Prime Minister) can only be opened from the inside.

151. Several countries used to have nuclear cannons and howitzers.
152. The guillotine was named after a French doctor. His descendants changed their family name out of shame.
153. In 2004, the former Soviet republic of Georgia spent three months without traffic police.
154. The first living creatures to fly in space and come back alive were fruit flies. They were sent up in a modified trophy Nazi V2 rocket in 1947.
155. The front edge of some military jets' wings is as thin as a knife (less than 0.5 mm or 0.02 in.)
156. Over 27 000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea since the 1950s. Only several dozen South Korean citizens fled to North Korea during the same period.
157. Japanese Sokushinbutsu sect members mummify themselves while still alive. The practice is banned in Japan.
158. The producer of mummy brown pigment stopped production in the 1930s when he ran out of raw materials, i.e. Egyptian human and animal mummies.

159. During the War of 1812, soldiers misinterpreted the 'U.S.' abbreviation on their 'U.S. Beef' rations, thus coining the phrase 'Uncle Sam'.
160. Nodding your head expresses 'yes' in the vast majority of cultures. Be careful though – it means 'no' in Bulgaria.
161. The NATO member Iceland has no army.
162. San Marino and Sweden were foes during the Thirty Year War (1618-1648). They signed a formal peace treaty officially ending the conflict in 2004.
163. One of the language choices when using ATMs in Vatican City is Latin.
164. DNA analyses support the theory that more than 2000 years ago one legion of the Roman Army lost a series of battles and its descendants ended up settling in China.
165. Mickey Mouse's white gloves were initially meant to make his hands visible in early black and white movies.
166. Listerine mouthwash was initially sold as a floor-cleaning substance.
167. Serbia, Macedonia and San Marino are all landlocked countries but participate in the Mediterranean Games. Israel does not.

168. Historically, in many North American cities, 1 May used to be 'moving day' and the only possible date on which one could change dwelling.
169. As of today, the Phantom of the Opera is the longest running Broadway show, with almost 12 000 performances.
170. In 2013, a single tuna fish was sold in Japan for \$1.76 million.
171. Widely used green wall paint, containing arsenic, was to blame for the poisoning of thousands of people in the 18th and 19th centuries, including, allegedly, Napoleon Bonaparte.
172. In a single battle in modern day Germany (Battle of the Teutoburg Forest), the Roman Empire lost three legions (around 20% of its total manpower).
173. The US company OPENBIOME is willing to pay \$13 000 (over €10 000) a year for your faeces. It uses them for faecal transplants.
174. Robes became the standard outfit for English judges around 1350, during the reign of Edward III.
175. Brussels became the 'capital' of Europe because Belgium starts with a 'B' and was first on the list. At the time, it was thought to be a temporary solution.

176. In 1987, seven million US children disappeared overnight. How? The Internal Revenue Service stopped the widespread fraudulent practice of listing phantom children for tax exemptions.
177. The carrousel was initially used by the French military for basic cavalry training.
178. The Mars rover, Curiosity, was equipped with the strongest parachute ever built by mankind. It worked perfectly and ensured a soft landing on the red planet.
179. Initially, tuna was advertised as 'chicken of the sea'. Its taste was unknown to the general public. The marketing ploy, which implied similarity to something familiar, worked just fine.
180. In 1897, Amos Dolbear formulated a relationship between the rate of cricket chirps and temperature.
181. A triangle can have 3 right angles if drawn on a sphere.
182. According to Cunningham's law, the best way to get the right answer on the Internet is not to ask a question but to post a wrong answer.

183. In antiquity, a Greek city would demolish part of its fortress walls after one of its citizens had won the Olympic Games. Its rulers believed that 'with such citizens we have no need for walls to feel protected'.
184. Doing your favourite activity temporarily boosts your IQ.
185. A €3 coin is in circulation in Slovenia.
186. Blue street lights in Tokyo, Japan, and Glasgow, UK, successfully led to a drop in crime and suicides.
187. There is an escape tunnel leading from the Pope's inner chamber to a place beyond Vatican's borders.
188. Picasso is the artist with the most stolen works. As of mid-2016, over 1000 of his paintings are missing.
189. In 1952, Einstein declined an offer to become the President of Israel.
190. Iceland does not have a single McDonald's restaurant. It does not have a Starbucks café either.
191. Al Capone's tailor made the clothing for Robert de Niro in the movie 'The Untouchables'.

192. In Dubai, United Arab Emirates, it is possible to withdraw gold from a special ATM.
193. In ancient Rome, Julius Caesar's contemporaries celebrated Lupercalia, a festival that is thought to be the forerunner of our modern Valentine's Day.
194. H.L. Hunley was a submarine of the Confederate States of America and the first combat submarine in the world to sink a warship.
195. A malignant melanoma was discovered in Bob Marley's toe and doctors suggested an amputation. He refused for religious reasons and died of cancer.
196. Birthday paradox: in a group of only 23 people, there is a 50% chance that two of them share a birthday.
197. In 1712, there was a 30 February in Sweden.
198. One in six residents of Singapore is a millionaire in US dollars.
199. The most destructive earthquake ever occurred in 1755. It completely destroyed Lisbon, the capital of Portugal.
200. On 23 January 1556, the deadliest earthquake in history killed about 830 000 people in Shensi, China.

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I hope you have enjoyed this sample. The book is already available for pre-orders on all Amazon marketplaces worldwide and the release date is 25 July 2016.

Buy now on Amazon.com: <https://www.amazon.com/1123-Hard-Believe-Facts-RaiseYourBrain-com-ebook/dp/B01GQRGE6E>

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