

Stuff You Never Knew You Wanted To Know!

Why is there a small hole halfway down the outside shell of a Bic ballpoint pen?

If the inside of a ballpoint pen were entirely airtight, the pressure inside it would fall as the ink was used up.

This would slow or stop the flow of ink because the higher air pressure outside the pen would push the ink back in.

The reverse could happen if the pen were heated.

This would cause the ink to leak out of the pen onto your most expensive jacket.

The hole is there to allow the air pressures to equalise and prevent these problems.

Scientific answer: The hole is to equalise



the pressure inside the pen with the pressure outside the pen.

These vents, or holes in the pen barrels, basically help to prevent ink leakage.

Approximately 90 per cent of all pens are vented to prevent leakage.

Pens that do not have vented caps contain sealed ink systems and must be pressurised.

Occasionally when reheating broccoli and sweet

potato in the microwave, what sounds like violent electrical arcing occurs if the two are in contact with each other.

This results in blackened sections. What's going on?

You can think of microwaves in the oven as light shining through apparently solid food, with the light that is absorbed being turned into heat.

This is a good description of what happens when the food is a continuous mass measuring more than about 6 centimetres in all directions.

However, if the food mass is smaller and oddly shaped, the interaction between the wavelength of the radiation (usually around 12.24 centimetres) and the shape becomes dominant.

Microwaves then behave more like radio waves, and some slender, spiky or complex-shaped vegetables become electrical conductors.

These conductors act like radio aerials along which electric charges surge back and forth, typically at about 2.5 billion times a second.

Wherever these "aerials" form small gaps or fine contacts, electrons leap across, creating hot spots or sparks that scorch the food.

This is why conductors such as forks, plates decorated with metal leaf, or unsuitably shaped foods cause arcing.

If your broccoli is in firm contact with the lumps of sweet potato, or covered with liquid, the fluid clogs the gaps and masks any fine tips, preventing harm, but wherever the electrons can arc across fine contacts or gaps, you get sparks or charring.

Why is it when we are tired the blood vessels in our eyes are more visible?

Apart from causing droopy eyelids, sleepiness slows down blinking, a process which normally keeps the conjunctiva - the outer layer of the eye - moist and well lubricated with fluid from the tear ducts.

Its drying out triggers mild inflammation. The more obvious effect is red eyes, a consequence of the dilation of the conjunctiva's capillary blood vessels, which are usually invisible.

All this causes the eyes to become itchy, and rubbing them only makes things worse, as does a dry indoor atmosphere or smoke.

Contact lenses become unbearable by this stage, and if they dry out, too, can cause painful scratching of the conjunctiva.

Other than trying to remember to blink more frequently or going to bed and having a good night's sleep, going outdoors into cooler and moister air helps, as does the humid air from a warm shower, remove contact lenses first.

The quick fix of resorting to eye drops to reduce the inflammation and then going straight back into a dry, smoky atmosphere would be a short-sighted approach.

You couldn't make it up!

In the great US of A, an animal rights group wants to rent a prison building the state plans to close and turn it into the nation's first chicken empathy museum

Is Your Shower Bugged?

"Run your shower for a minute or so before you get in, otherwise you'll get a face full of bacteria", advises microbiologist Norman Pace, who has studied and analysed the film of microbes that builds up inside shower heads

Using a sample of nearly fifty showers in the US, Pace and scientists from the University of Colorado found significant amounts of non-tuberculous mycobacteria (NTM).



In particular, Mycobacterium avium, at levels one hundred times higher than those allowed in drinking water.

M. avium is responsible for a type of pulmonary disease, more prevalent than TB in developed countries, cases of which have risen in parallel with the rise in showering, says Pace.

"For most people, taking a shower is not dangerous, but if you are immune compromised, such as the elderly or pregnant, it could be," he says.

His advice is to not use shower heads made of plastic. "If it has little crusty deposits, throw the sucker away. Have a bath."

And lay in the dirty, crusty deposits there?

officials, baffled by the foreign food, decided it should be classified according to the way it was eaten.

- The = sign was invented by 16th Century Welsh mathematician Robert Recorde, who was fed up with writing "is equal to" in his equations. He chose the two lines because "noe 2 thynges can be moare equalle".
- When faced with danger, the octopus can wrap six of its legs around its head to disguise itself as a fallen coconut shell and escape by walking backwards on the other two legs, scientists discovered.
- "Restaurant" is the most mis-spelled word in search engines.
- Deep Throat is reportedly the most profitable film ever. It was made for \$25,000 (£13,700) and has grossed more than \$600m.
- It takes less energy to import a tomato from Spain than to grow them in England because of

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19-Sep-82 11:44 Scott E Fahlman :-)
From: Scott E Fahlman <Fahlman at Cmu-20c>

I propose that the following character sequence for joke markers:
:-)

Read it sideways. Actually, it is probably more economical to mark
things that are NOT jokes, given current trends. For this, use
:-(

The First Internet Emoticon By Scott Fahlman
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the artificial heat needed, according to Defra. A towel doesn't legally reserve a sun lounger - and there is nothing in German or Spanish law to stop other holidaymakers removing those left on vacant seats.

- George Bernard Shaw named his shed after the UK capital so that when visitors called they could be told he was away in London.
- A single "mother" spud from southern Peru gave rise to all the varieties of potato eaten today, scientists have learned.
- You are 176 times more likely to be murdered than to win the National Lottery.

The doctor had no idea what was causing her bad knee pain.

So he asks her, "Is there something you're doing that you haven't told me? Is there anything that might abuse your knees?"

"Well," she said sheepishly, "my husband and I do have sex doggy-style on the floor most nights."

"That must be it," said the doctor. "You know, there are plenty of other ways to have sex."

"Not if you're gonna watch TV, there ain't!" she replied.

I never knew that!

Memory: Episodes from your past are remembered faster and better while in a body position similar to the pose struck during the event.

And I thought the lady in the chemist's shop was just doing animal impressions!

Hearing a laugh actually stimulates the brain region associated with facial movements.

Mimicry plays an important role in social interaction.

Cues like sneezing, laughing, crying and yawning all encourage others to do the same.

Just think of me yawning and you'll see what I mean.

Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history:

- Spades - King David
- Hearts - Charlemagne
- Clubs - Alexander, the Great
- Diamonds - Julius Caesar

If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle.

If the horse has one front leg in the air the person died as a result of wounds received in battle.

If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.

- A rat can last longer without water than a camel.
- Chewing gum while peeling onions will keep you from crying.
- By raising your legs slowly and lying on your back, you cannot sink into quicksand.
- The UK's first mobile phone call was made 20 years ago this year, when Ernie Wise rang the Vodafone head office, which was then above a curry shop in Newbury.
- WD-40 dissolves cocaine - it has been used by a pub landlord to prevent drug-taking in his pub's toilets.
- One in 10 Europeans is allegedly conceived in an Ikea bed.
- Until the 1940s rhubarb was considered a vegetable. It became a fruit when US customs



McDonalds Opening In Louvre Museum?

To the disgust of every true Frenchman, and the delight of the rest of the world, McDonald's are opening in the approach to the Louvre Museum.

I Ask You, Whatever Next?

