

DID YOU KNOW? Did you ever wonder why dimes, quarters and half dollars have notched edges, while pennies and nickels do not?

The US Mint began putting notches on the edges of coins containing gold and silver to discourage holders from shaving off small quantities of the precious metals. Dimes, quarters and half dollars are notched because they used to contain silver. Pennies and nickels aren't notched because the metals they contain are not valuable enough to shave.

DID YOU KNOW? Why do men's clothes have buttons on the right while women's clothes have buttons on the left?

When buttons were invented, they were very expensive and worn primarily by the rich. Because wealthy women were dressed by maids, dressmakers put the buttons on the maid's right. Since most people are right-handed, it is easier to push buttons on the right through holes on the left. And that's where women's buttons have remained since.

DID YOU KNOW? Why do X's at the end of a letter signify kisses?

In the Middle Ages, when many people were unable to read or write, documents were often signed using an X. Kissing the X presented an oath to fulfill obligations specified in the document. The X and the kiss eventually became synonymous.

DID YOU KNOW? Why is shifting responsibility to someone else called "passing the buck"?

In card games, it was once customary to pass an item, called a buck, from player to player to indicate whose turn it was to deal. If a player did not wish to assume the responsibility, he would "pass the buck" to the next player.

DID YOU KNOW? Why do people clink their glasses before drinking a toast?

It used to be common for someone to try to kill an enemy by offering him a poisoned drink. To prove to a guest that a drink was safe, it became customary for a guest to pour a small amount of his drink into the glass of the host. Both men would drink it simultaneously. When a guest trusted his host, he would then touch - or clink - the host's glass with his own.

DID YOU KNOW? Why are people in the public eye said to be "in the limelight"?

Invented in 1825, limelight was used in lighthouses and stage lighting by burning a cylinder of lime which produced a brilliant light. In the theater, performers on stage "in the limelight" were seen by the audience to be the center of attention.

DID YOU KNOW? Why do ships and aircraft in trouble use "mayday" as their call for help?

This comes from the French word m'aidez -- meaning "help me" --and is pronounced "mayday."

DID YOU KNOW? Why is someone who is feeling great "on cloud nine"?

Types of clouds are numbered according to the altitudes they attain, with nine being the highest cloud. If someone is said to be on cloud nine, that person is floating well above worldly cares.

DID YOU KNOW? Why are Zero scores in tennis called "love"?

In France, where tennis first became popular, a big, round zero on scoreboard looked like an egg and was called l'oeuf, which is French for "egg." When tennis was introduced in the US, Americans pronounced it "love."

DID YOU KNOW? Why are many coin banks shaped like pigs?

Long ago, dishes and cookware in Europe were made of a dense, orange clay called piggy. When people saved coins in jars made of this clay, the jars became known as "piggy banks." When an English potter misunderstood the word, he made a bank that resembled a pig. And it caught on.