50 Fun Facts for Seniors

Read one a day, post them on a board, or cut them into table cards.

American memories

1. The first Super Bowl was played in January 1967.

2. Each face carved on Mount Rushmore is about 60 feet tall.

3. The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the people of France and was dedicated in 1886.

4. Coca-Cola was first sold in 1886 at a pharmacy in Atlanta.

5. The teddy bear is named after President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt.

6. The Slinky was invented by a naval engineer, Richard James, and went on sale in 1945.

7. The official color of the Golden Gate Bridge is called “International Orange.”

8. The first Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade was held in 1924.

9. Mr. Potato Head is often called the first toy ever advertised on television, in 1952.

10. The Hollywood sign originally read “Hollywoodland” when it went up in 1923.

Animals

11. A group of flamingos is called a flamboyance.

12. An octopus has three hearts.

13. Sea otters sometimes hold paws while they sleep so they don’t drift apart.

14. A hummingbird’s heart can beat more than 1,000 times a minute.

15. A baby kangaroo is called a joey.

16. A giraffe has seven bones in its neck — the same number as a person.

17. Honeybees tell each other where to find flowers by doing a “waggle dance.”

18. Almost all penguins live south of the equator; the Galápagos penguin is the one that sometimes crosses north.

19. Dalmatian puppies are born pure white; their spots appear as they grow.

20. Koalas sleep for most of the day, often 18 hours or more.

Food and the kitchen

21. Peanuts are not nuts. They are legumes, like beans and peas, and they grow underground.

22. Botanically speaking, bananas are berries but strawberries are not.

23. In the 1830s, ketchup was sold as a medicine.

24. Hershey’s Kisses were introduced in 1907.

25. German chocolate cake is named after a man, Samuel German, not the country.

26. The first carrots grown for food were purple and yellow; orange carrots came later.

27. The chocolate chip cookie was created by Ruth Wakefield at the Toll House Inn in Massachusetts in the 1930s.

28. Apples float in water because about a quarter of an apple is air.

29. The story goes that an 11-year-old named Frank Epperson invented the Popsicle by accident in 1905.

30. Properly sealed honey keeps for a very long time; it is one of the few foods that almost never spoils.

Space, weather and nature

31. A day on Venus is longer than its year: one spin takes 243 Earth days, one trip around the sun only 225.

32. Lightning can heat the air to about 50,000°F, roughly five times hotter than the surface of the sun.

33. Lightning often strikes the same place twice; the Empire State Building is hit about 23 times a year.

34. Sunlight takes a little over 8 minutes to reach Earth.

35. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon on July 20, 1969.

36. The astronauts' footprints on the moon can last for a very long time because there is no wind there to blow them away.

37. Some kinds of bamboo can grow almost 3 feet in a single day.

38. A rainbow is really a full circle; from the ground we only see part of it.

39. The head of a sunflower is made of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of tiny flowers.

40. Saturn is so light for its size that it is less dense than water.

Words and inventions

41. The dot over a lowercase i or j is called a tittle.

42. “Goodbye” comes from the old phrase “God be with ye.”

43. “OK” first appeared in a Boston newspaper in 1839 as a joke abbreviation of “oll korrect.”

44. Bubble wrap was first designed as a textured wallpaper.

45. Post-it Notes grew out of a glue at 3M that was not sticky enough for its first purpose.

46. The microwave oven was invented after engineer Percy Spencer noticed a candy bar melting in his pocket near radar equipment.

47. The word “alphabet” comes from alpha and beta, the first two letters of the Greek alphabet.

48. The zipper was once called the “hookless fastener.”

49. Silly Putty was discovered by accident during World War II, during the search for a rubber substitute.

50. Velcro was invented by a Swiss engineer, George de Mestral, after he noticed burrs sticking to his dog’s fur.