

I Just Have **1** Question

Would You Mind Spelling That for Me?

Part 3 of 4



by Doug Carpenter

Hopefully you're back again for Part 3 of our latest "Fun with Letters" adventure — the ABCs of the "New Normal" — and ready to get up close and personal with another six characters. If you didn't read about the first 13 in Parts

1 and 2 — which appeared respectively in August and September's *I Just Have 1 Question* — and don't have access to those issues of *After 50*, the columns are still posted on-line on the magazine's website at www.after50news.com.

For now though, we'll begin picking up speed to take a run at the second 13, the Part 3 portion of which will usher you into the worlds of cybertechnology, personal fashion and home cooking. Please take your time and savor their flavor as you dig into...

The ABCs of the "New Normal" Letters N through S

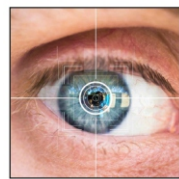


N is for Normal

How could the ABCs of the "New Normal" *not* include "Normal," you ask? Well, truth be told, it

all too easily *could* have. Because for something to *become* the norm, it kind of has to stick around for at least a *little* while. And if we learned *anything* from the recent events that transformed what *was* into what *is*, it's that we should always be prepared for the unexpected because nothing is abso-

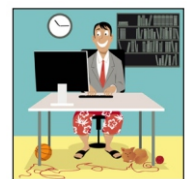
lutely certain — except for the fact that things can change... *like... that!*



O is for Optical

"The future," they say, "is already here. It just isn't evenly distributed yet." Well, in the "New Normal," you'll be seeing it arrive even faster than your package deliveries already do. In fact, every time you sign for one on their little digital pad... or electronically self-checkout your groceries at the supermarket... or have your temperature taken by a beeping handheld device aimed at your forehead, you'll be watching advances in optical scanning change your life right before your eyes.

It's actually been happening for quite some time inside your DVD player as it reads the disk to show you your movie. And any day now, some built-in device at a store, a gas station or an ATM will want to scan your eye instead of just reading your credit card to confirm that *you* really are *you*. [And if you think *that's* amazing, you haven't seen *anything* yet.]



P is for Pants

I'm sure you're glad that there's no required dress code for reading this column, just as there haven't

really been much in the way of clothing requirements for a while in a lot of modern workplaces, where traditional "dressy" attire has widely been dispensed with in favor of jeans and other sporty fashion choices. And that was *before* the electronic relocation of the working world brought about by the wave of pandemic-mandated closures, which saw getting up from your desk and making your way to a conference room replaced by sitting down at your dining room table and booting up Zoom on your computer.

And just like TV news anchors whose outfits were typically blocked from viewers' sight from the waist down by their in-studio desks, ordinary folks working "remotely" realized that the halves of their torsos not visible on camera could be considerably more comfortable in sweatpants and pajama bottoms. [Of course, if everyone gets so attached to that freedom that it becomes the weekday norm in the *real* working world, what's next? "Clothing Optional Fridays?"]



Q is for Quinoa

Also for quiche, quesadilla or, quite frankly, any other unfamiliar, ambitious or quirky dish you decided to try your hand at whipping up for dinner during the extended "quality time" you got to

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spend with yourself and your kitchen during the lockdown. It's not like you had anything *better* to do and, heck, you had to eat *something*, right? Plus, after spotting that cute picture of your sister hanging on the wall opposite your front door, the Uber Eats delivery guy started dropping hints about how maybe you could introduce them. [*Bad idea. Not her type — and she'd never let you hear the end of it.*]



R
is for
Remote

One of the most difficult and even controversial decisions made during the lockdown was to educate school-age children “remotely” on-line. And while it may not have been an ideal solution, it was unquestionably preferable to trusting the advancement of their language skills to watching episodes of *SpongeBob SquarePants* and — if we didn't keep a close eye on them — *Three Stooges* reruns.

The upside of this accelerated foray into “distance learning,” of course, is that it revealed to so many

of us — young and old alike — the amazing resources available through our computers. So if you've ever dreamed of getting a college degree — in fine arts, business, philosophy or whatever floats your intellectual boat, what are you waiting for? Classes will begin meeting this Fall at your dining room table. [And be sure to watch out for upperclassmen. I hear they've been going a little overboard with the virtual hazing these last few semesters.]



S
is for
Streaming

As we begin reopening business sectors like the entertainment industry, we're probably still going to be being encouraged to keep a “healthy distance” from each other. Chances are, though, movie house,

concert hall and theater operators are less worried about what might be in their venues that could keep customers away than they are about what's almost certainly in those customers' living rooms that could easily keep them at home. The dirty word those entertainment emporium managers fill with fear when they hear is, of course, “Streaming.”

From its humble beginnings just a few years back when 10 fingers were enough to count the popularly-recognizable ones — like Netflix, Hulu and the already-established cable movie outlets, today there are more than 200 sources anxiously waiting to deliver to your home TV, computer screen or mobile device a streaming smorgasbord containing just about anything you'd be willing to pay to watch [...plus a load of equally *unappetizing* content you'd probably pay even *more* to *never* see.] Either way, *bon appé-TV*.

I hope that this third bowl of alphabet soup leaves you with enough of an appetite for the final course being served up in November's issue, when we'll be tackling the last seven letters — a group I'll be totally candid and admit included a few that were more than a little challenging to match up with words that weren't either completely predictable or unbearably corny [...not that *that's* ever really stopped me.] But of course once again, as I always do, I'll leave it to you to judge how successfully I rise to that challenge.

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Throughout *After 50's* first 16 years, veteran WNY writer and columnist Doug Carpenter regularly shared his wry generational observations with readers as *Everyboomer*. He has now returned to write a uniquely-named new monthly humor/opinion column called *I Just Have 1 Question* — which he says he'll ask and then bravely try to answer... without, he fervently hopes, looking excessively foolish in the process. [We wish him luck.]

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