

# Keep your English up to date

## F. A. Q. s

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Now, nobody knows how many abbreviations there are in the English language, or in any language for that matter – half a million in one big set of dictionaries I've got: half a million abbreviations, can you imagine it! They're very important, abbreviations, because they save time and they add familiarity; it's a way of gaining rapport. I don't say "I'm in the British Broadcasting Corporation studio", I say "I'm in the BBC studio"...it adds a sort of familiarity, doesn't it.

Now there are written abbreviations and spoken abbreviations, and the written ones are the ones that are interesting today – because you can have letters like U.N. for United Nations and you can have words like UNESCO for the other organisation.

Now, FAQs – you've seen them a thousand times I suppose on computer screens – are computer text files containing a list of questions and answers, especially basic stuff on news groups where you want to find a quick reply.

It's not a universally spoken word. You don't say I've got some FAQs – because that could be very misleading, it could sound like facts, f-a-c-t-s. So most people use it as an initialism, they spell it out: F. A. Q. And it's beginning to be used now in a more general way, outside the internet setting. People talk about F.A.Q.s in all kinds of non-computer circumstances. I saw it on a church notice board once. I'll leave you to guess what the questions were.



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