THE Bluffer’s® GUIDE TO EVERYTHING

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THE Bluffer's® GUIDE TO EVERYTHING
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MAXIMUM CREDIBILITY,
MINIMUM EFFORT

The Bluffer’s® Guides have been inspiring speech writers, ironic gift givers, and genuine information seekers for the past five decades. They offer hard fact masquerading as frivolous observation in one witty, easy read. In other words, they provide instant erudition with no pain – and plenty of laughs thrown in for good measure.

If, for example, you want to surprise and impress a partner’s parent with your in-depth knowledge of their favourite pastime, you’ll find the answers in the relevant Bluffer’s® Guide on fishing, golf, wine, sex or poetry, to name a few. If you’re choosing a gift for your boss, The Bluffer’s® Guide to Management will strike the right note of irreverence, and the recipient might simultaneously learn something useful about employee relations (not to mention reward).

If you need to research a specialist subject for the pub quiz team, you can become an expert during your own lunchtime on such diverse disciplines as sex, jazz, rugby, skiing, cats, rock, opera, the quantum universe and many more – all of which you’ll learn more about in the following pages.

Minimum effort, maximum credibility. What’s not to like?
WHAT IS BLUFFING?

**Bluff** v. and n. – v. 1 intr. make a pretence of strength or confidence to gain an advantage. 2 mislead by bluffing. n. an act of bluffing: a show of confidence or assertiveness intended to deceive. (*With acknowledgments to the Oxford English Dictionary.*)

The true aim of civilised bluffing is not to deceive, but to hold your own against (not actually to humble or defeat) a social, intellectual or business opponent in a skilful game of confidence. The bluffer does not intend to be outwitted by anyone, even someone who clearly has a superior fund of knowledge.

In the game of poker, arguably the activity most commonly associated with bluffing, opponents are led to believe that the bluffer’s hand is stronger than it is and so are induced to throw the game before ‘calling the bluff’. All players know the rules and accept them, and the winner is more often than not the most convincing bluffer.

Affecting an air of calm confidence is therefore a crucial weapon in the bluffer’s arsenal. Subscribe to this simple axiom, and you’re halfway there. All you need to do next is
add a smattering of fact. Or, in poker’s case, luck.

**WHY BLUFFING IS NECESSARY**

Renaissance man (circa 1650) was considered a fully-rounded individual if he:

a) knew a little about all the arts;

b) knew which end of a sword to hold; and

c) knew who the current monarch was.

Elizabethan woman was similarly perceived if she:

a) knew a little about all the arts;

b) knew which end of a sewing needle to hold; and

c) knew which courtier the current monarch was ‘dallying’ with.

It was much easier in those days. There hadn’t been anything like as much history as there has been since, and the maps were still half empty. Nor had science and the arts really got going, and nobody was expected to understand Google+. A little learning was enough to get by.

The present-day Elizabethan (circa now) has so much to know that the chances of being anything more than semi-rounded are slight. Since the advent of the internet, the means of getting to know about almost any topic are now more accessible than ever. Not to know, or affect to know, is simply an admission of mental lassitude. The successful man or woman of today likes to appear to be in touch with
more or less everything. They may not be really interested in, say, quantum mechanics, isomorphism or deep-bore fracking, but they are expected to converse on any of these subjects at a moment’s notice.

It is on these occasions that a careful manipulation of some rudimentary facts will help them to bluff their way through with a reasonable degree of nonchalance. Failure to polish one’s bluffing techniques in these heady days of instant information can only leave one at a social and professional disadvantage.

**BENEFITS OF BLUFFING**
There are numerous occasions when bluffing comes in useful. Here are a few:

1. As a means of self-defence; the ‘assumption of a fictitious bold front’ at parties, other social functions and in job interviews.

2. In confrontation with retailers. They will always try to convince you that what they have in stock is superior to the item that you came in to get and which they haven’t got at the moment. Be ready with a convincing line of scientific twaddle about GM foodstuffs, blood diamonds, anything to do with sustainable resources, or child labour. This usually leaves them speechless.

3. In certain trades or professions, where a degree in bluffing is essential to convince yourself and others that you know what you are talking about. This is of particular relevance to lawyers, salesmen, estate agents, sommeliers,
What is Bluffing?

teachers, builders and doctors.

4. In business. All business.

5. All the time in everything. Bluffing is not simply a game to be played at social functions; for many it is a whole way of life.

BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL BLUFFER
It is important to accept that you cannot be an accomplished bluffer in everything. There are subjects such as polar bear-wrestling and BASE jumping (where the motto which begins ‘If at first you don’t succeed’ is of no practical use) which should be left to the expert. You are recommended to make a start by taking on one Art, one Sport, one Science, and one Leisure Activity, which, preferably, don’t involve risk to life or limb. From these subjects you can equip yourself with the bluffing tools you will need to prevail in most situations, once – of course – you have turned the conversation toward them.

However, your newfound knowledge will only get you so far – it’s the delivery that seals the deal.

The essential thing to get right is the manner or style that suits you best. Here are some of the classic methods:

The Question
Couch most of your remarks in the form of a question, particularly when on the defensive. Preface or terminate your most telling thrusts with the words, ‘Don’t you find …?’ This has a subtle element of conciliation without concession about it.
**The Hedge**
Never commit yourself totally. Use phrases like ‘I am inclined to think’ and ‘Perhaps there is something to be said for…’ You may then retract if you find you have gone too far in any direction.

**The Look of Disbelief**
Far be it for any bluffer to promote the cause of silence, but there is no doubt that the disbelieving or cynical look can be a major force – particularly if you happen to be at a loss for words.

**Playing for Time**
Less drastic, but highly effective: there is never any harm in saying that you ‘will have to think it over’. Even if, by some chance, you knew what you were talking about, it is quite a reasonable request.

**The Interjection**
This can range from a quiet ‘Mmm’ to a surprised ‘Oh!’, a contemptuous snort, or a sardonic laugh. But by far the most effective is ‘Really?’ in a questioning, even doubting, sort of tone. This can put some people off their stride and goad others into a state of fury.

**The Prop**
The most practical prop for the bluffer is a drink, whether it is alcoholic or not. Quite apart from various distracting ways of drinking it, dangerous moments can easily be averted by an apparently benevolent desire to refill your opponent’s glass or, in real moments of crisis, refilling your own.
The Delivery
Try to adopt a slow, measured and considered tone of voice, as if you knew what you were saying and had carefully thought it all out. This will give the effect of being assured. The object is to brook no contradiction.

ALII SENTIUNT TE SCIRE PLURA*
Ultimately the art of bluffing comes down to knowing when, where and how to deploy priceless nuggets of carefully collated wisdom. There is no need to go in search of these. The Bluffer's® Guides have done all the hard work for you. The following pages will provide sample tasters of what you need to know on a range of everyday subjects, and tell you how you can use this information to enhance your social and professional standing with the minimum of effort.

These short extracts will conduct you through the main danger zones encountered in the act of bluffing, and equip you with a vocabulary and evasive technique that will minimise the risk of being rumbled. They will give you a few easy-to-learn hints and methods in a variety of disciplines that might even allow you to be accepted as an individual of rare wit and intelligence. But they will do more. They will give you the tools to impress legions of marvelling listeners with your knowledge and insight – without anyone discovering that until you read them, you probably didn’t know the difference between a bluff and a rebuff.

* For added credibility this is the Latin version of the bluffer’s mantra. Possibly.
And if in doubt, always remember the bluffer’s mantra:

*It’s not what you know, it’s what they think you know.*
Food and Drink
FOOD AND DRINK

Few areas of modern life afford better opportunities for bluffing than a subject in which every living organism has a vital interest, unless they’re purposefully avoiding it or they suffer from a disorder known as Pica – the consumption of substances with no apparent nutritional value.

Food is indivisible from survival. The procurement and consumption of food is a fundamental driver in the human and animal condition, and therefore it is important to know about it, and perhaps to bluff that you know more about it than you actually do. Who knows? Greater knowledge, or the pretence of it, might give you a subtle advantage over others.

Some might claim that wine, beer and chocolate are equally essential sustenance. So, for aspiring bluffers who didn’t already know their ullage from their deposits, their milling from their mashing, or their nib-winnnowing from their cold-working, now is the time to find out…
FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO FOOD

POSH NOSH

According to the dictionary, ‘gastronomy’ is the practice or art of choosing, cooking and eating good food. Bluffers should be prepared to debate whether gastronomy is an art. Your position is that these days it’s closer to a religion.

Gourmet cuisine is ubiquitous. Once upon a time, it remained behind the door of a prohibitively expensive fine-dining establishment and you could ignore it if you chose. Now you can’t avoid it. Pubs have become gastropubs or ‘pub dining rooms’ and are being snapped up by Michelin-starred chefs. Greasy-spoon cafés are increasingly able to explain the provenance of everything in the pan, on the counter or in a sandwich. Tiny local restaurants are playing with ‘molecular gastronomy’ or cooking their locally sourced, seasonal, artisan pigeon livers in a water bath for 11 days at 17 degrees.

Where do you begin making sense of it all? In truth, you probably don’t need to. This end of the eating world is somewhat bizarre and full of contradictions. It’s frequently at the mercy of assorted fads and fashions, yet also riddled with convention. It’s arguably where the cutting edge of cuisine takes place, but it frequently celebrates the traditional. It’s also where the Venn diagram for playfulness and stupidity intersects.

Take, for example, the great Ferran Adrià – often described as one of the leading proponents of molecular gastronomy (although he refutes the tag) – which, as you
will know, is an interest in the physical and chemical transformations of ingredients that occur while cooking. Adrià is the man who helped take the legendary Catalonian restaurant elBulli from a one-time minigolf-course bar serving drinks and sandwiches to being named the world’s best restaurant four years in a row. One of his trademark dishes was olive-flavoured liquid chemically altered (via a process called ‘spherification’) into an olive shape. It thus looked like an olive and tasted like an olive. Other places achieve the same result by just giving you an olive. Cutting-edge, gimmick or fad?

Happily, such contradictions make for great bluffing, and pointing out these contradictions a) makes you look informed and b) means you don’t have to actually answer the question. Simply raise an eyebrow.

Interestingly, as more and more people are attempting to bring better and better food to the masses (who seem to be slowly responding), and as the cutting-edge techniques from the likes of Adrià and Blumenthal filter down even to pub menus, the bluffer should be aware that there has been something of a growing resistance to ‘high-end dining’.

The current vogue among a certain class of food worshipper is to maintain that gastronomy is over-hyped. Not for them are elaborate meals, precise cooking techniques and beautifully arranged plates of food; now is the time to celebrate simple dining and street food – a return to basics…

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http://bit.ly/1JbR42n
WINE-SPEAK
For some reason, many people feel that drinking – or even
tasting and drinking – wine is not enough; they must also
talk about it. Indeed, conversation about wine occupies
most of the time at social gatherings among the wine-
loving fraternity. You may secretly find this boring or
pretentious, but as a bluffer, you need to be able not only to
drink and taste wine properly but also to hold your own in
wine-speak.

This is a complicated subject, but these few simple rules
can get you a surprisingly long way:

1. Try never to use words except where they are strictly
   necessary. Noises that are either non-committal (such
   as ‘Hmm…’) or enthusiastic (‘Mmm…’, ‘Ahh!’) and
   interesting facial contortions (raised eyebrows, narrowed
   glance, pursed lips) are often entirely adequate, and don’t
   actually commit you to anything.

2. The word ‘Yes’ is quite sufficient in most cases – not
   least because it can be said in an almost infinite variety
   of tones: doubtful, quizzical, interrogative, tentative,
   affirmative, decisive, appreciative, ecstatic. It can be
   repeated in a clipped, conversation-stopping manner
   (‘Yes, yes.’), or in a rising, excited tone (‘Yes, yes, YES!’).

3. Put off describing what the wine actually tastes like for
   as long as possible. Instead, limit yourself to some of the
   following technical expressions:
a) Mention ullage. This means the level of wine in the bottle. If you’ve noticed that the bottle is not completely full, say in a neutral tone: ‘Ah, slightly ullaged.’ It could be, of course, that your host has swigged some of it beforehand.

b) Ask whether the wine has ‘thrown a deposit’. Deposit, of course, refers to sediment at the bottom of the bottle, not what you get back when you return empties to the off-licence.

c) If you’ve noticed when you’re tilting the wine that it leaves a thick, transparent trail on the glass (as most red wines do), say that it has ‘good legs’. Thicker, viscous ‘legs’ are an indication of higher alcohol. A wine deemed overly alcoholic is described as ‘hot’ which, uniquely in wine circles, is not a compliment.

**GENERAL TASTING NOTES**

One all-embracing term you can offer is ‘pronounced’. The bluffer can get a lot of mileage from this one. For instance: ‘This wine has a pronounced bouquet, don’t you think?’ is a completely safe comment that still manages to sound informed.

If an appropriate opinion escapes you but you find that you’re nonetheless obliged to give one, then it makes good sense to be as nonspecific as possible, as in: ‘Hmm. This is coarse, but generous.’

Here are some other plausible comments that could leave your audience satisfied, if none the wiser:
‘Somewhat lacking in finesse.’
‘Broad and weighty.’
‘Voluptuous, but in an earthy way.’ ‘Interesting depth.’
‘Ripe, but lacking concentration.’
‘Concentrated, but lacking ripeness.’
‘Overripe, but with a touch of tartness.’
‘Elegant, but lacks backbone.’

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO BEER

A QUESTION OF TASTE

See
The first assessment of beer should be visual because, it’s true, we do eat and drink ‘with our eyes’. And a beer’s colour should give you a good indication of its style. At the very least, it should appear clear and bright, unless it’s a wheat beer, in which case cloudy is cool. Is your pilsner sufficiently golden and sparkling, your stout sufficiently dark and opaque? Does your barley wine or bitter light up the room with its amber, come-hither glow? Does the head retain its structure, leaving a delicate ‘lace’ down the side of your glass? You get the picture. Hold your glass against a white wall or up to the light for best results – and maximum dramatic effect.

Sniff
Next up, perform the aforementioned swirl to aerate your
beer, awakening the aromas from their slumber. Take a deep, self-satisfied sniff, making sure you are being observed. Here, you can pontificate on the relative merits of nose and tongue as instruments of analysis. Berate the tongue as a dim-witted charlatan, capable of detecting only four basic sensations – sweetness, bitterness, sourness and saltiness. Extol the virtues of your nasal cavities, especially the olfactory bulb perched at the top, which is capable of detecting thousands of tiny nuances. This is why a blocked nose robs us of our sense of taste. Can you smell the calling-card clove and bubblegum of wheat beer? Are you getting the tangy, bittersweet marmalade aromas of a cheeky ale? The espresso coffee and bitter chocolate of burly stout and porter? Or the floral delicacy of a pilsner, skittish as a startled fawn? If, as Robert Louis Stevenson once remarked, ‘Wine is bottled poetry’, then beer is bottled prose, and it’s long overdue a purple patch.

**Swallow**

You’re probably getting pretty thirsty by now and your friends have probably moved on to the next pub, so it’s time you actually put some beer in your mouth. Not too much, as you want to be able to suck in some air, as if whistling backwards, without actually choking. Don’t forget to swallow. Obviously, you’ll pick up on some basic flavours, but here you’re assessing bitterness, texture (‘mouthfeel’) and finish. To really impress your friends (if any of them are still left), ask the barman for a spoon so you can sample a little of the froth on top your beer. Hop oils concentrate here, allowing you to gauge hop flavours and bitterness
Food and Drink

quite separately from the rest of the beer.

In terms of texture and finish, is your beer creamy or thin, full-, medium- or light-bodied, sparkling, gassy or flat? Is it warming or refreshing? Does it glide over your tongue like a silk scarf, or is it a tad ‘chewy’? When it comes to the finish, does your beer reveal its character in tantalizing layers, like a dance of the seven veils? Do the flavours vanish as quickly as a Premier League footballer from a poetry reading? Or do they linger on, stretching towards a hoppy, hazy horizon with soft, fluffy clouds of malt?

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO CHOCOLATE

HOW IT’S MADE
Knowing how chocolate is made – in theory, obviously, not in practice, because that seems like an awful lot of work – puts you in an admirable position of authority, enabling you to break and sample bars and declare with confidence that the beans weren’t dried enough or that the chocolate wasn’t conched correctly. You’ll also be able to drop words such as ‘melting point’, ‘tempering’ and ‘nib winnowing’ into conversations, thus further establishing your credentials as an expert.

Cacao trees are large things, standing some 20 metres high in the wild but slightly smaller – around three to eight metres – where farmed. They need a tropical climate to grow and are usually found around the equator, in places such
as Venezuela, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Indonesia and Brazil. They can be grown in greenhouses, but it’s challenging and utterly impractical; at full maturity, a single tree still only produces enough beans for 1kg of chocolate. That would require an awful lot of very tall greenhouses.

MODICA
Those who know about these things (mostly fellow bluffers) say that the chocolate produced in a charming old baroque town in the south of Sicily is the closest it is possible to get to the original xocoatl made by the Aztecs. But Modica isn’t an actual company making authentic chocolate; rather, it is an entire community dedicated to keeping alive ancient skills which have passed down the generations.

When the island was part of the Spanish Empire from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, it benefited from many of the exotic new foodstuffs being brought back by the conquistadors from South America. Cacao was the one that really caught the attention of the people of Modica, and the result is a 400-year-old tradition of producing very possibly the best chocolate in the world. This is one good reason to know about it, but the other is the priceless bluffing potential involved in the manufacturing process, known as ‘cold-working’.

The main ingredients in Modican chocolate are hand-ground cocoa beans and sugar, and very little else except flavourings such as chilli pepper, cinnamon or vanilla. After toasting, the beans are ground with a stone known as a ‘metate’, then they are gently warmed and the sugar
is added. But here’s the important part (which you must commit to memory): the mix never goes above 40°C, so the sugar doesn’t melt and retains a gritty, granular quality.

So, whenever you have the opportunity, pronounce authoritatively that the secret of Modican chocolate is in the cold-working, which, you might add, preserves more nutrients and flavours than modern methods of manufacturing. Nobody could possibly disagree with you…

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The Bluffer’s® Guide to Everything
SPORTS AND LEISURE

All sport lovers, irrespective of their age, sex or ability, like to pretend that they know more about sport than they actually do. That axiom lies at the root of the subject, and from that root flourishes the most luxuriant verbiage of preposterous declarations about imagined skills and expertise. Take fishing as an obvious example – there isn’t a fisherman alive who hasn’t claimed that a three inch tiddler was in fact a mighty piscine predator which happened to ‘get away’. But adroit fishing bluffers know better than to tread this well-worn path, choosing to take a more philosophical angle when discussing the sport’s appeal and pointing out for example that all fishermen are in fact proud inheritors of the hunter-gatherer tradition of their ancestors.

In fact, all sports bluffers will play a better game by avoiding the drearily predictable recounting of past triumphs fondly embellished, and would be better advised to focus on little-known facts to enliven a conversation. How fast does a powder snow avalanche travel? Where is the world’s biggest killer wave? Which all-conquering
international team has its motto: ‘Subdue and Penetrate’? What team game is often likened to a glimpse of eternity? What are the comparative merits of Naismith’s Rule and Tranter’s Variation?
  Read on for the answers…

**FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO FISHING**

**WELL AND TRULY HOOKED**

The Irish literary critic Vivian Mercier once wrote of Samuel Beckett’s absurd masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*, that it ‘has achieved a theoretical impossibility – a play in which nothing happens, yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What’s more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice.’ This astute observation can equally be applied to fishing – with knobs on – since it is often a sport in which nothing happens, all the time.

Given angling’s reputation for tedium, the bluffer must have a ready answer to the question perpetually posed by non-anglers, which may be paraphrased thus: ‘Why on earth do you enjoy sitting outdoors in all weather, looking miserable and not catching anything?’

While the following answers might be suggested as jumping-off points, you should feel free to improvise as necessary. Since all anglers are characterised as congenital liars, bluffers have a unique advantage when describing their love of, and adventures in, fishing.
'It gets me out of the house.'
Other anglers will usually respond with a look of rueful recognition.

‘It’s the peace and quiet.’
This response has a more modern earth-lover vibe and implies a certain thoughtfulness, as if still waters might actually run deep – and that there might be more to fishing than catching fish. Indeed, since most people have short attention spans when it comes to fishing, it is strongly suggested that you keep this little gem up your sleeve and practise delivering it like this: ‘Why do I go? It’s hard to explain.’ Make brief eye contact, then look away wistfully into the middle distance and repeat: ‘Let’s just say there’s more to fishing than catching fish.’ Ooh, aren’t you mysterious?

‘It’s the hunter in me.’
There’s a school of thought that argues that one of fishing’s primary attractions is that it taps into the need to feel that you’re somehow connected to your distant hunter-gatherer ancestors who once faced down monstrous, slavering beasts before returning in unlikely triumph to the roaring cave fire. This may be utter nonsense – a two-ounce roach does not and never will possess sabretooth fangs – but it’s a convenient post-new-man motif that may convince in certain environments – the rugby club, perhaps, but probably not the ashtanga yoga class.

‘It’s a social thing.’
Despite the fact that it’s clearly not a team sport – two people
cannot hold the same fishing rod unless they’re fighting over it – the bluffer will find this a useful explanation for fishing’s attraction, if only because it combines the twin enduring loves of mates and beer. Just remember that sea fishing comprises mates and beer on a boat (‘Yeah, we got so hammered that I can’t even remember what we caught. Big, though.’) and that fishing holidays comprise mates and beer somewhere else (‘What? Can’t remember. Hammered. Big, though.’).

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http://bit.ly/1OrVvWT

FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO GOLF

TEE TIME
Sooner or later, you may be unable to avoid playing the game. Bluffing becomes more challenging, but is still possible. It is never a bad preliminary bluff to feign injury, limping to the first tee and extending your left hand for the opposite number to shake, with an apologetic mention of your arthritic right wrist, which has never fully recovered from the time you saved your neighbour’s dog from drowning. ‘It’s nothing, honestly. Sure to loosen up in an hour or two. Don’t mention it.’ Your opponent may be consumed with pity for your misfortune; or his spirits may soar at the prospect of inevitable victory. Either way, his game will suffer.
THE SWING
The theory behind golf, as any golfer will tell you, is quite simple. Starting with the club head near the ball, slowly bring it back behind your head and swing it down on the same path. Club head hits ball and sends it away straight, true, and singing a happy tune that inspires you to quote the great American golfer Arnold Palmer: ‘What other people may find in poetry or art museums, I find in the flight of a good drive.’

A successful outcome merely requires you to make sure your feet are correctly placed in relation to the ball, your grip neither too strong nor too weak, your arms, wrists, elbows, hips and knees braced, cocked, and bent in the prescribed angular manner so as to resemble an irregular tetrahedron rotating and counter-rotating simultaneously on a fixed axis, your body coiling and uncoiling like a wound spring smoothly yet powerfully with wrist snap but without snatching or jerking the club as it comes to the ball in an even, accelerating arc, and after the strike, continues over your left shoulder in what is called the follow-through or finish. Remain perfectly balanced throughout, with your eye fixed on the ball, head down and unmoving.

A five-year course in pirouettes and pointe work at the Royal Ballet School under the personal supervision of Darcey Bussell may not be enough to achieve this with any guaranteed consistency, but should get you started on the right track. If one were to select a single hurdle, it would be this: the untrained person is not naturally adept at keeping his head still while all the rest of him is in violent movement.
Most of us can manage, at best, one thing at a time, which is why concert pianists and prima ballerinas are relatively thin on the ground – certainly not numerous enough to populate the world’s golf courses and urban driving ranges. The golf shot requires you to do and not do at least eight things in the space of a second, with several (or more) people watching, all earnestly willing you to make a hash of it, apart from your playing partner who is no less earnest in his desire for you to succeed and has told you twice to watch out for the trees on the right. This is equally off-putting…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO CRICKET

PRE-MATCH DRILL
It has been said that the English, not being by nature a religious people, invented cricket to give them some idea of Eternity. This is blatant bluffing, though it does indicate that cricket is not to be treated lightly or dismissed as merely a sport. The English did not invent cricket, but they acted as its wet nurse, nurtured it, and finally made it their own.

GM Trevelyan – famous historian and useful late-order bat – once suggested that, if the aristocracy of the Ancien Régime had spent more time playing cricket with their serfs, the French Revolution would never have taken place. The truth is that neither the French aristocracy nor their serfs could ever have wanted to play cricket; it is not their game.
Bored almost beyond endurance, the uninitiated spectators and even players of cricket will moan: ‘What’s the point of it?’ Bluffers know that there is no point to cricket, any more than there is a point to tennis, ballet, rose gardens or nouvelle cuisine.

Cricket maintains its precarious existence because ‘the show must go on.’ It has to be demonstrated that people can:

- bowl faster;
- score more runs;
- make more appearances for their county; and
- take longer to score a run than ever before.

This, you must maintain, stoutly provides proof of human progress. Support for English cricket fluctuates with the performance of the national team. During decades of defeat, first by the West Indians and then the Australians, and then everybody else, it was reduced to a hardcore of thermos-gripping fans scattered thinly across increasingly shabby county grounds. But then, as the England team did better, interest revived. Smart new stands went up, new technology was introduced, and a shorter form of the game called Twenty20 began pulling in large crowds. Now, it would seem, cricket is in danger of becoming sexy – and that’s not a bluff. Winning the Ashes in 2005, after 18 miserable, soul-searching years, was a vital turning point for England. Fair-weather supporters suddenly appeared in droves, with politicians and other inveterate bluffers suggesting that they’d been lifelong fans all along. A few even hinted
that, in their time, they’d been more-than-useful players themselves. When it was reported that, during an extended post-victory bender, Ashes hero Andrew ‘Freddie’ Flintoff had relieved himself in the prime minister’s rose garden, even some of the stuffiest cricket followers found it easy to smile indulgently.

By 2011, when England topped the world rankings, having thrashed the Aussies in their own backyard, an ignorance of cricket had become a social handicap, carrying with it risk of exclusion from pub, party and office chat.

Cricket bluffing ranges from hinting that you know more than you do, which is the general idea, to extravagant claims of a dazzling cricketing past, which is somewhat riskier. An extreme bluffer may even take the dangerous step of accepting an invitation to play. This is not recommended.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO RUGBY

INTERNATIONAL DUTY

To bluff your way with confidence around the game of rugby, you will need to appear to understand the complexities of the international game. Fortunately for you, the globalisation of rugby has been kept relatively simple. While the sport may now be played in something approaching 100 countries worldwide, there are only a handful that you need to worry about.

In the northern hemisphere, there are six nations that
you need to know about, and they play each other every year in the same tournament, helpfully called the Six Nations: England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy. In the southern hemisphere, there are four that count: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and, increasingly, Argentina. They play each other in some tournaments now and then, sharpening their skills for those moments when they set out to teach the northern hemisphere teams a salutary lesson.

So, all the bluffer needs to do is equip himself or herself with an opinion or two about each of the 10 sides. Even in an increasingly politically correct world, it is still more or less acceptable to draw on national stereotypes as you do this.

**NEW ZEALAND**

Traditionally top of the world rugby rankings, New Zealand are the only side known by their kit. In an early, rather unsophisticated attempt at sports psychology, an Australian assistant coach once declared: ‘We are not calling them the All Blacks this week. They are New Zealand. New Zealand is a poxy island in the South Pacific.’*

New Zealand’s national sport, national pastime and national obsession is rugby. It has been said that in New Zealand, rugby is a religion, whereas in England, it’s only a

* Bluffers should note that it’s actually two poxy islands in the South Pacific. Bluffers should also note, if they want to be really pedantic, that there are a further 10 New Zealand islands that are populated, and hundreds more that aren’t. Australians hate to be corrected about things like this.
cult. The All Blacks motto is ‘Subdue and penetrate’ (which sounds a bit painful), and it will probably be the case that, for any World Cup competition between now and the last knockings of the known universe, New Zealand will be the favourite to win. In over 100 years of international rugby, the All Blacks hold an 84% winning record against all opposition played. Moreover, they have won 74% of all test matches played. The next closest – though still some distance away – is South Africa (62%), followed by France (55%), England (53%), Australia (52%) and Wales (51%).

These statistics make the New Zealand All Blacks the greatest-ever team in any sport. This fact tends to stick in the craw of their much larger neighbour, Australia.

The All Blacks like to do a traditional Maori dance called the haka at the beginning of all of their games. This is designed to intimidate the opposition and can indeed cause problems for bluffers. If you happen to be watching the opening rituals of a game in the company of less experienced bluffers, you might choose to point out that the words of the haka translate roughly as: ‘This is the hairy man who fetched the sun.’

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO HIKING

NAISMITH’S RULE

If you’re huddled round a roaring log fire, sampling the local brew in a quiet hikers’ pub, and you drop the phrase
‘Naismith’s Rule’ into the conversation, you will instantly command the attention of any hiking aficionados who happen to be listening. But before you do, it’s best to understand what it is you’re talking about.

In its simplest form, the problem with maps is that they are two-dimensional. Lay them on a table and the only ridges to be seen are the creases where they fold. Contour lines may show peaks and valleys, but when you measure the distance from A to B all you have is the distance on a flat surface. No hike is as flat as a pub tabletop (with a couple of beer mats under the wobbly leg).

Guessing how long it will take you to travel the distance isn’t easy. A three-mile walk along a Norfolk lane may only take you an hour. A three-mile climb up a 2,500-foot Scottish hillside will probably take a lot longer than that, particularly if the contour lines are ominously close together.

Ergo this chap, William Naismith, came up with his own proposal, suggesting that:

a) you should allow one hour for every three miles measured on the map, and

b) you should add an extra half-hour for every 1,000 feet climbed.

So by Naismith’s Rule, the three-mile, 2,500-foot climb would take one hour and 15 minutes longer to complete than the three-mile Norfolk lane walk. Quietly mentioning that Naismith knew all about Scottish inclines because he was one of the 1889 founders of the Scottish Mountaineering Club will further establish your bluffing credentials.
TRANTER’S VARIATION
Scotsman Phillip Tranter realised that Naismith’s timings assumed everyone had the same fitness level, whereas any bluffer knows that some people can carry eight pints on a tray, whereas others can only manage three.

Tranter’s Variation is a complicated formula enabling hikers to assess their own level of fitness – something with which you need not concern yourself. It gets complicated because it also factors into the equation the weight of the rucksack a hiker is carrying, the weather conditions and the ground conditions underfoot. The knowledge that this variation exists is sufficient to bluff other hikers into thinking that you know your stuff.

Suffice it to say, dropping Tranter into any conversation practically guarantees you a pint in the next round of drinks.

PUBS
All hikers eat at country pubs. It’s the reason for going on a hike in the first place, and hikers are entitled to reward themselves for their efforts. However, you should be aware that there is still an act to keep up in an idyllic country pub. Other hikers will be watching.

Never buy a ‘half’ of anything. Pints, gallons and barrels are okay. Halves are out.

Never buy bottled beer. That’s what football fans drink. Real Hikers savour Real Ale.

If you’re eating, remember that real hikers never have starters – unless they classify the first three rounds as ‘starters’.
Never select the scampi, far less the vegetarian options. Steak-and-ale pie, rib-eye steak, and toad in the hole are the only choices for a true hiker. Supersize anything you can.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO HORSE RACING

THE HEART OF THE MATTER
A racehorse with a big heart, known in racing as ‘an engine’, is a good thing. The two greatest Flat racehorses, arguably of all time (because there’s always an argument), Secretariat and Frankel, both had exceptionally large hearts. Secretariat’s heart weighed about 21lbs, well over double the average. Like Frankel, he had ‘a tremendous engine’.

Yet, with a racehorse, the heart of the matter is not so much the heart as the legs. It doesn’t take a degree in anatomy to figure out that they have a fundamental design flaw.

Having started off, in the proverbial mists of time, with five toes on each foot, the thoroughbred somehow managed to lose four of them, leaving it with only its middle toe to stand on. If that isn’t bad enough, it has ridiculously thin legs.

Whereas most creatures use their legs to move around, the thoroughbred racehorse uses his to give sleepless nights to his owner and trainer and a lucrative occupation to members of the veterinary profession. The expression ‘He’s got a leg,’ although at first sight both obvious and reassuring,
upon closer examination turns out to be shorthand for ‘He’s got a leg but it’s got something wrong with it. I haven’t looked at the other three yet.’

The bluffer will always be on sound ground when asking, ‘How are his legs?’ The same thought will have occupied most of the trainer’s waking hours since he was first issued with a licence. During brief intervals when the trainer is not worrying about his horses’ legs, he is feeling them, because he knows they can’t be trusted. No trainer’s wife has as much attention paid to her legs, however fine, as the most knock-kneed horse in the yard.

If the legs in question are fine and dandy today, they are only one false step away from being put in the care of a veterinary surgeon for the next month. Wherever a stone is to be found, a racehorse can be relied upon to seek it out and step on it.

At heart, the thoroughbred is a collection of parts which, when working in harmony, present one of the finest sights known to man. It is a pity that they are most in harmony when the horse is standing still.

Wonderful though the thoroughbred racehorse is, it has an unfortunate predisposition to commit suicide, with the occasional murder thrown in. Even in its stable, it cannot be relied upon not to self-harm, being prone to be ‘cast in its box’, meaning that it is lying down and either can’t or won’t get up. This may be because he is due to race at three o’clock that afternoon at Catterick or because he has got stuck. When you try to help him up, he is liable to injure both himself and you. Someone else will have to call the
doctor and the vet. As the horse is more highly valued than his trainer, the first call will be to the vet, whose bill will be bigger than the doctor’s…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO SKIING

AVALANCHES
The thing you really need to know about avalanches is that they aren’t called the ‘white death’ for nothing. Having brought up the subject, sooner or later someone will ask you if you have been caught in one. If your audience is not cooperating, say something rhetorical like: ‘Believe me. An avalanche is no laughing matter. I…no, perhaps it’s better left unsaid.’

When pressed, pause, and gaze stoically into the distance. If you can manage it without dribbling, allow your bottom lip to quiver slightly. After a suitably pregnant silence, say softly: ‘It’s not easy to talk about.’ This is true, of course, because you know absolutely nothing about it. Follow this by saying enigmatically: ‘Did you know that an airborne powder snow avalanche can travel at speeds of up to 190 miles per hour? That’s not too easy to keep ahead of – even for me.’

If this doesn’t have them marvelling, continue with: ‘A block of wet snow three feet square weighs about three-quarters of a ton. Imagine the weight of something the size of a football pitch coming down the mountain after you.’
As you say this, rub your thigh bone ruminatively and resolutely refuse to take the matter further. If you really want to push your luck, say: ‘I was one of the lucky ones. But I can never ski the Widowmaker again.’

**CREVASSES**

Never claim to have fallen into a crevasse. The chances of getting out alive are slim, so people will be disinclined to believe you. In any discussion about crevasses, the best approach is to pretend that you risked your life rescuing some other poor fool who skied too close to one. So you will need to know what a crevasse is. They are big holes in a glacier caused by glacial movement and subsequent fractures in the ice. They are generally very deep (up to 200 feet) and always dangerous. They can also be difficult to spot because their ‘lips’ are often concealed by snow. This means that, when snow collapses beneath a skier’s weight, the crevasse has a disturbing tendency to show its true contours rather suddenly – sucking anybody standing on top into its frozen depths.

Hope of rescue is often futile because if the fall doesn’t kill you, the intense cold probably will. Furthermore, most professional rescuers have a healthy respect for crevasses and prefer to stay a safe distance away.

If, however, you are determined to push your deceptive powers to the limit, you should explain that the victim was fortunate enough to land on a ‘snow bridge’. This is a build-up of hard snow spanning the crevasse which is usually flimsy and not to be relied on, so even the most shameless
bluffer should not claim to have dropped Fearlessly onto it, skis clamped firmly between teeth. Waffle instead about ropes and crampons and painstaking precautions and first aid. With any luck, your audience will have fallen asleep before they see through you.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO SURFING
There is no better opportunity for some shameless bluffing than when discussing the biggest, scariest, gnarliest, most insanely suicidal waves around the world’s oceans. These are the ones that genuine surfers, for whom survival is not a priority, joyfully plunge into. Naturally you’ll be well acquainted with all of them (from the comfort of your armchair).

BANZAI PIPELINE, HAWAII
The Banzai Pipeline is one of the most terrifying waves in the world. More people have died surfing here than anywhere else. Someone dies at Pipeline every other year, which is a grim pearl of knowledge that you will insist made it impossible for you to resist the temptation to ride it.

Need to know When the surf gets to a certain size, then ‘Second Reef Pipeline’ starts breaking further out. It’s actually slightly easier to catch a wave on the Second Reef and then ride it through First Reef on the inside. Don’t worry about what this means; just remember to mention
nonchalantly that you ‘only surf when Second Reef is breaking’. Prepare for jaws to drop in admiration.

**Dungeons, South Africa**

This is the biggest wave in South Africa and one of the biggest in the southern hemisphere. Bluffers should mention that they prefer to take off on the Two-Point-Four peak as opposed to the outside peak, as the wave breaks a bit harder in the shallow water. What this means is that the Two-Point-Four section breaks over 2.4-metres-deep water, while the Outside breaks in very deep water.

**Need to know** There is another part of the wave called ‘The Slab’, but that’s only for real nutters. Avoid it at all costs. And if you happen to be in the area, don’t say that you hitched a lift with the Nauticat. That’s the tourist boat that goes past the wave on its way to Seal Island. It’s tempting, but it’s not cool.

**Shipstern Bluff, Australia**

This ferocious right-hander is tailor-made for bluffers, not just because it’s the only big wave with the word ‘Bluff’ actually in its name, but because so few people have surfed it. Down at the bottom of Tasmania and also known as ‘The Wave at the End of the World,’ Shipstern Bluff must rank with Pipeline as one of the scariest waves on the planet. Churned up by the Roaring Forties, this is as cold, gnarly and isolated as surfing gets – which is why all bluffers must claim to have been there. Very few could possibly dispute this, because they won’t have been there either.
Need to know Getting to Shipstern involves a long bushwalk from the only road and there are very few signposts to point you in the right direction. The locals tend to rip them up. Tracks magazine first made the wave famous with a memorable photoshoot, but it was reluctant to expose the exact location and named it ‘Fluffytonka’ in the article. Further bluffing points can be earned for knowing that it was once called Devil’s Point – for a very good reason…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO TENNIS

GAMESMANSHIP

In any analysis of unsportsmanlike behaviour, bluffers should never use the word ‘cheating’. Gamesmanship, on the other hand, is a permissible tactic – simply because it is allowed by the rules (however deplorable it might be). It is sometimes also known as ‘getting inside an opponent’s head’, or what used to be called ‘putting off’. Mess with someone’s mind, and you mess with their game.

Ball bouncing before serving is a time-honoured method of slowing the game, and cooling down a fired-up opponent. There are no firm rules on the number of ball bounces permissible while setting up. Novak Djokovic was known for bouncing until his opponents became catatonic with boredom. He was once observed performing a 29-time ball bounce, but the umpire failed to intervene (on the grounds that he was asleep). Grunting, shrieking, swearing,
screaming, racquet throwing, and abusing the official are all additional ways of putting an opponent off. Sometimes it’s worth a penalty to disturb the composure of a player on a hot streak.

Of course, the vast majority of tennis matches are between amateur players who don’t get to rely on official enforcers monitoring their transgressions. By necessity, they play matches according to the ‘honour’ system – which is fertile ground for gamesmanship. The players make their own rules about ‘comfort’ breaks, cramp relief, knee strapping, blister wrapping, religious observance, and line calls. The inevitable disputes regarding the latter are generally brought to a satisfactory conclusion for both players by negotiation.

When playing an expert gamesmanshipper, the desire to win stems from knowing that, should you lose, your nemesis is going to perform a celebratory dance so elaborate that it might well find itself a worthy contender for the All-time-10-most-watched list on YouTube.

To gamesmanshippers, playing the ‘game’ can be more rewarding than playing tennis. To them, the ability to totally distract you with underhand ploys and schemes to the point where you leap over the net with your racquet raised in a fit of bloodthirsty rage is vitally important. They like to win that way.

Some common forms of amateur gamesmanship include:

1. Slowing the match down to the speed of coastal erosion by adopting tactics such as replacing shoelaces on an opponent’s game or set point;
2. Trying to speed up the match via quick serves (serving when an opponent is retrieving balls, nose-blowing, adjusting a contact lens, etc.);

3. Questioning an opponent’s line calls during warm-up;

4. Offering wholly insincere sentiments of sympathy when an opponent makes a mistake (e.g., ‘Hard Cheese!’ as exemplified by the actor Terry-Thomas in the definitive tennis gamesmanship scene from the film *School for Scoundrels*); or

5. Displaying a rifle stock from a tennis bag.

Always claim to empathise with those who decry the practice of gamesmanship. It is an insidious virus that threatens the very foundations of the game, you will say as you simultaneously try to figure out where their vulnerability lies. If, for example, you hear: ‘If there’s one thing I can’t stand, it’s a six-bounce server’, then you know what you have to do.

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**FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO CYCLING**

To be accepted as a cycling expert, you don’t have to talk technical about bikes. You just need to know a few right answers that will get all the cyclists in your group nodding in agreement and thinking they really ought to buy you a drink as you’re clearly the right sort. Carry them off with confidence and the wannabe cyclists will be impressed too.
You won’t get far with the anti-cyclists, but they’ll probably still be stuck in a traffic jam somewhere, texting.

**CYCLING FACILITIES**

Always substandard, cycle paths are too narrow, too short, full of glass, and dump you on the main road too soon anyway. There’s not enough cycle parking; if there is, it’s too cramped, too close to the wall, too far from the entrance. One-way streets should be two-way for cyclists (as is common on the continent). On-road cycle lanes are ignored by motorists, taxis, buses, or used as an excuse to pass too closely.

You can claim any facility ‘actually makes it more dangerous for cyclists’ while giving other road users, especially the non-cycling councillors who voted it through, the impression that money is being spent on cycling provision. Councils always claim it was installed ‘in consultation with the local cycling group’. Which it was – except they ignored the group’s feedback that it was a dangerous waste of money.

You can justify anything with comparisons to cycling-friendly Netherlands, a mythical land of car-free bike lanes where the entire population cycles all the time. Refer to some miracle facility you saw on the internet in Groningen or Assen (‘40% of all journeys there are by bike compared to 2% here – well, no wonder’, etc.).

**CYCLING ILLEGALLY ON PAVEMENTS**

You don’t do it yourself, of course, but when nobody
at all is about it’s clearly justifiable as a way to avoid a dangerous road. Equally clearly, if there’s any chance of inconveniencing pedestrians, you should get off and push.

Pedantry can help, but you might be better off with the damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don’t line: ‘Motorists shout that we shouldn’t be on the road; pedestrians shout that we shouldn’t be on the pavement.’

**MOTORIST V PEDESTRIAN V CYCLIST**

These are emphatically not exclusive rival groups; most cyclists are motorists, and we’re all pedestrians at some point in the journey. Inciting tribalism is silly and futile. We are all road users; the war is between good and bad users, not modes of transport. We should be working together to make a pleasant and safe public space for all to share.

Having made that Abe Lincoln-like point, with a suitable air of gravitas, you can spend the next hour swapping stories about taxis that shouted unprovoked abuse at you, buses that cut you up, motorists that ignore cycle boxes at lights, lorries that overtake you and then turn left, etc. And the pedestrian who stepped out in the road in front of you listening to their iPod. Typical. Motorists, pedestrians, they’re all the same.

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http://bit.ly/1I7jzsK
How to Behave at a Match

Take your cues from your fellow fans. Cheer, jeer, laugh, applaud, etc., when they do. Don’t worry if you can’t work out why a referee has given a particular decision. Very often he won’t know either. Just make the same noises as the people around you. Don’t be surprised when a player appeals for (say) a throw-in when the ball has clearly come off his own shin rather than his opponent’s. This is not cheating. It’s another example of gamesmanship. Everyone in the game of football engages in it, including supporters, who will be claiming the same thing, but more volubly.

Equally, you must accept that football supporters are fickle creatures. If a player who has been having an awful game and attracting the condemnation of his fans suddenly scores the winning goal, he will instantly become the best player in the world and his name will be chanted in glowing terms for the rest of the match.

If your team scores, go into raptures of joy. If the opposition scores, look stunned and disbelieving. Either way, you will get to witness professional footballers’ goal celebrations. Once a simple case of the firm, manly handshake before returning to the centre circle for the restart, these have now become choreographed epics of which Busby Berkeley would be proud. Teams spend hours on the training ground perfecting their celebration routines, ignoring the fact that if they spent the same amount of time practising their football they might actually have a few more goals to celebrate.
CHANTING
Throughout the match there will be chanting. It is advisable to join in. You needn’t feel self-conscious about every other word you utter being an obscenity. Normal rules do not apply inside football grounds. You will pick up most of your team’s chants as you go along.

Chants directed at your own side
These will normally (though not always) be supportive. Most teams have a version of the ‘Greatest Team’ chant, which is sung to the tune of ‘The Wild Rover’:

And it’s Stockport County, Stockport County FC,

We’re by far the greatest team the world has ever seen.

This is patently absurd. But an absence of logical reasoning is one of football fans’ most endearing traits.

Chants directed at the opposition
If your team is losing, it is customary to chant at the 97 opposition fans (to the tune of ‘Guantanamera’):

Sing when you’re winning, You only sing when you’re winning, Sing when you’re win–ning...

If your team is winning, a common chant is (to the tune of ‘Bread Of Heaven’):

Can we play you, can we play you, can we play you every week?

Chants directed at the referee
These will question his eyesight, his parentage, or his
propensity for having sex on a regular basis – with himself. Hence the popular refrain:

*The referee’s a w*nker. The referee’s a w*nker.*

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Lifestyle and Hobbies
LIFESTYLE AND HOBBIES

Owning and cherishing a cat and/or a dog can be both a hobby and a lifestyle choice, as can owning and cherishing a car. A hobby is something done specifically for relaxation and pleasure, thus sex can certainly be so categorised, unless it is done for money in which case it becomes a job (and beyond the remit of this area of bluffing). Nonetheless, there will still be times when we might need to know more about it than we actually do – especially during that long, involved, tiring, expensive business of seduction that often seems hardly worth the fleeting moment of pleasure that is the end result.

A lifestyle differs from a hobby in the sense that it defines the broader way in which we live. Etiquette, and the study of it, is a way of life for a thin but influential strata of society – and although the right way to conduct oneself in the company of the upper classes is unlikely to concern the majority of us, there might well be occasions when we’ll need to know how and when to bow to royalty, how to hold a fork, and why never to say the words ‘pardon’ or ‘toilet’.

Read on for further elucidation…
FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO SEX

HEROIC LOVERS
The accolade of ‘great lover’ is attributed to very few. Although it is important to be familiar with the stories of some of these adept practitioners, caution is nonetheless advised. When relating their exploits, you should temper each one with a healthy measure of disbelief. The following selection consists of some of the more reliable accounts.

Cleopatra
Apart from bathing in asses’ milk and hailing a variety of Caesars, Queen Cleopatra’s greatest claim to fame was as the ancient world’s finest fellatrix. She was reported once to have performed her art on 100 Roman soldiers in one evening, from which one can surmise that she was a sucker for any man in uniform. Her name in Greek is Merichane which is held to mean ‘she who gapes wide for ten thousand’.

Casanova
The most famous of the great lovers was born in Venice in 1725. His name was Giacomo Casanova (Jack Newhouse in English), and he is notorious as much for the sheer number of his sexual conquests (and the fact that they included five sisters and their mother, a hunchback with ‘an excitingly misplaced vulva’, and two unrepentant nuns) as the joy with which he recorded them in his memoirs. Bluffers should know that he was actually something of a scholar who hung out with Voltaire, Mozart and Goethe.

For Casanova, a woman’s appeal was her cooperation in
his essentially selfish quest to try sex in all its forms. The acts he remembered were those with the youngest, oldest, tallest, shortest, fattest, most disfigured and most disturbed of his sexual partners. He could recall details like the position of the lady’s left foot at the moment of orgasm. It was the faces and surnames which eluded him.

**Catherine the Great**
Born four years after Casanova, it is sad to think that the woman addressed as ‘Empress Ekaterina of all the Russias’ never met him. They would have made a lovely couple. She was married at the age of 16 to Peter, the young Russian emperor, who was a terrible disappointment to her in the trouser department.

Catherine was not exactly a stunner. She used her position to entrap men, gaining a reputation for promoting her conquests and ruining those who snubbed her. In fact she was a rather portly lady, which might explain the ‘Great’ in her title. She was certainly no slouch in the lovemaking department, making Herculean demands of her many lovers. Each stud was first examined for venereal disease by the court physician and then tested by her éprouveuse, a trusted lady-in-waiting who assessed the new lover’s skills. If he was passed fit, he was allowed a stab at entertaining the empress. In her waning years, she was a fully fledged cougar; her last lover, Prince Zubov, was 40 years her junior.

Her more outlandish biographers claim that she died at the age of 67 in the act of copulation with a stallion harnessed above her bed. It is more likely that she died of
a stroke, though she would no doubt have preferred the alternative version.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO CARS

START ENGINES
Irrespective of whether you regard them as expressions of your libido or extensions of your overdraft, cars are hard to ignore. They’re the subject of politics, lust, envy, aspiration and necessity. They’re symbols of liberation and progress that stop you getting where you want to go as their numbers have multiplied like super-viruses and clogged up the roads.

Cars are the result of genius, megalomania, vanity and insanity, and have the capacity to both fascinate and bore. Visit one of Britain’s few remaining pubs and in the corner of the bar will be a man with a brown nylon tie and his own tankard who knows everything about the Triumph Herald. Go to the car park of your local supermarket after it’s shut and you’ll find spotty boys in hoodies and saggy-arsed jeans who wish Jeremy Clarkson was their dad. They’ll have memorised the top speed of every Lamborghini built since 1998, but have to content themselves with wheel-spinning a 12-year-old, wheezing, 1,000cc Vauxhall Corsa until one of its drive shafts snaps or they collect a shopping trolley as a bonnet mascot. Or both.

Car bluffing starts early, and the high cost of motoring is hardly a disincentive to drive. If you’re under 25 and male,
then your first car will cost many times more than the car’s worth to insure for a year, sadly not because miserable, middle-aged insurers are jealous of your youth and vitality but because they reckon (with some justification) that you’re an adrenaline-addled nutter who will wrap it round a Bentley at the first opportunity.

But this won’t put you off car ownership. Quite the contrary. It will make the prospect of getting behind the wheel of your own car even more alluring. And you will remember that seminal moment for the rest of your life. Indeed, you can still recall those looks of admiring envy from other car owners when you first screeched to a halt onto that garage forecourt, narrowly missing the tiers of wilting flowers and charcoal briquettes, as you casually stepped out of your wheezing, smoke-belching runabout and struck a noble pose of devil-may-care insouciance.

With the myopia of youth, you will have failed to notice that your audience’s lips were collectively mouthing the word ‘tosser’, but no matter. You were finally there, you had joined the brother/sisterhood of car owners, and the road of freedom stretched out ahead of you with all its shimmering promise of limitless adventure.

For some, cars are giant, shiny badges of machismo or material success. For others, they have become an everyday adjunct to life, as necessary as dental work but slightly more fun.

Then there are car enthusiasts, for whom anything with a wheel at each corner is utterly fascinating. They can tell you the split-second speed with which a Porsche sequential
transmission changes gear, or the flammability of the fibreglass used to make a Reliant Robin and how long it will take to burn one to the ground…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO ETIQUETTE

CORGI COURTESY (A ROYAL AUDIENCE)
Those who have followed the instructions in this book to the letter may very well find themselves mingling with royalty at some stage. Of course, there’s no saying what sort of royalty. 100% retention of advice and information will mean you can hope for the British royal family. Anything less than 70% observance will mean you might have to settle for a Greek royal. (In which case, it is suggested that you hide the good china and bring out the Ikea stuff.) But let’s assume you have taken this guide’s advice seriously and, as a result, you are now hovering on the fringes of British royal circles.

When meeting any member of the royal family, you will be expected to bow or curtsey. Men bow from the neck. Bowing from the waist, if you don’t know what you’re doing, may well result in you ‘headbutting’ an unsuspecting royal who might be stepping forward to confide something amusing. So take care. Women curtsey by placing one foot behind the other, and just gently bobbing. Don’t go down too far, or else you may never come back up. Women can opt to bow instead of the
traditional curtsey, though it would be the unconventional choice so is not recommended.

Anyone with republican tendencies will probably not be in the position of courting royalty – they’ll be too busy manning the barricades or stoking the braziers outside one of the royal palaces. But mention the possibility of a ‘gong’ and things have a tendency to change very quickly. Veteran Labour politicians with a chance of a peerage are prone to trot out the old cliché: ‘I bow to no man, but I’ll make an exception in the case of Her Majesty.’

When discussing the etiquette involved in bowing to royalty, you will not take offence when someone of a republican persuasion insists that it is a shameful and unconscionable show of obeisance. Listen to them, smile politely, and say ‘how lovely’. Entering into an argument is fruitless and even the royal family will not stoop to argue their case. Republican types are best ignored.

If you happen to be a citizen of a country where the British royal family is not your monarchy, then that is your misfortune. But be aware that although strictly you do not have to bow, scrape or curtsey, it can seem churlish not to. Former Australian prime minister, Julia Gillard, failed to do anything except stand there gawping when meeting the Queen on the latter’s state visit in November 2011, and former prime minister’s wife Cherie Blair was infamous for her reluctance to curtsey. The Queen was not noticeably fazed by any of this, and neither should you be if you notice anyone else petulantly refusing. Simply make a mental note to strike them off your dinner party list.
They’ll probably have their suit jacket fastened incorrectly, or be showing too much cleavage anyway.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO DOGS
While the people who know nothing about the subject will assume that a dog is an animal with four legs and a tail, you will, of course, understand that this description accurately describes any number of other animals too. To really understand what makes a dog a dog, a little biology lesson is required.

SENSE OF SMELL
A dog’s sense of smell is not to be sniffed at. While the human brain is up to 10 times bigger than a dog’s (depending on the size of the dog and the human), the amount of brain power devoted to smell in a human is dwarfed by that of a dog. The average canine brain assigns 40 times more cognitive activity to smell than the typical human brain. So next time a dog sniffs your hand, it’ll collect more data about where you’ve been, when you’ve been there and who you’ve been with than your supermarket loyalty card. It’s just as well that they can’t talk.

This remarkable canine sensory skill all comes down to what’s up our noses. Or rather theirs. While we both have smell receptors nestling inside our nostrils, the average human has some 5 million of them. Our canine companions can have between 125 million and 300 million.
It’s not clear who counted them all, or how they managed to get a dog to sit still for that long, but let’s face it, if humans had that many receptors up their nose, they’d probably go round sniffing each others’ bottoms too. This knowledge has enabled scientists to conduct various tests and declare that it is possible for a dog to detect one scent particle in a million particles of distilled water. (Apparently.)

One reason why dogs have this super-smelling skill is down to survival. When a puppy is first born, its eyes are closed, because they are not yet fully developed. It is also deaf. The eyes may not open for another two weeks after birth, so the sense of smell is its only way of understanding its immediate environment.

**WET NOSES**

Those who actually paid attention in school biology and chemistry lessons will already know that it is the moisture on dogs’ noses that allows them to analyse an aroma so efficiently. For it is this moisture that traps the scent molecules and then enables the dog to dissolve them for analytical purposes, as they make their way into the nostrils towards the receptive membranes. Nerve impulses take this data from the membranes to the brain for the final interpretation, thus permitting a dog to determine what another dog ate for lunch three weeks ago by sniffing … you’ve got it… that part which reveals that sort of vital information.
INTELLIGENCE
Studies suggest that the average dog has the same IQ level as a three-year-old child. This means that most dogs are capable of operating your personal video recorder, retuning your 40-inch 3D TV, and logging onto your social media networks when you’re not looking. On a good day, they’re also capable of thrashing you completely on the tablet version of Angry Birds.

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO CATS

TUNING INTO YOUR INNER CAT
There is nothing cat lovers like more than a ‘cat whisperer’. This is a person with the almost supernatural ability to read a cat’s mind. As there is so much variation in the life experiences, environments and personalities of individual cats, the chances of being irresistible to all is highly unlikely. However, this doesn’t stop the enthusiastic bluffer strutting his or her stuff and giving ‘cat whispering’ a jolly good try.

To limit the potential for disaster, don’t raise expectations ahead of your visit to a cat lover’s home. If it all goes well, and you appear to build up a mutual understanding with the cat, you can make the discreet claim in retrospect. Doing your homework will also enable you to adjust your approach accordingly.

Prior to arrival, make sure you do not smell of dog or cat and that you haven’t just been in a cage full of big cats or
gorillas. Your odour must be as non-threatening as possible. Avoid the liberal use of aftershave or perfume, as this can be extremely offensive to the cat’s sensitive nose (watch the nose wrinkle and eye squint for proof). If you want to appear particularly alluring, use the following suggestions with care. If the cat in question is a member of a ‘full-on’ breed such as Burmese, Siamese, or Bengal, you will want to avoid over-stimulation, as you may not be able to find the off button and could end up in a situation where you find yourself the object of persistent unwelcome attention.

CHEAT YOUR WAY TO CAT WHISPERING

1. Hide a generous pinch of catnip (dried catmint plant of the variety *Nepeta cataria*) in your pocket. This usually results in the cat rubbing, rolling, licking and clambering all over you in a euphoric, loved-up sort of way. Go expensive and choose the dried variety that only uses the finest organic flowers and leaves rather than the dusty old stalks. Occasionally a cat will get hyper-aroused and have a frenzied nibble so beware of the location of your pocket to protect vulnerable parts of the anatomy.

2. As an alternative to the above, place a valerian herbal ‘tea’ bag (the ones with hops and fennel seem to be particularly popular) in your pocket instead. Valerian is known to be an effective remedy for insomnia, so there’s every possibility that the cat will nod off halfway through the love-in.

3. Put tuna juice on your pulse points (wrists, behind the
ears). Be warned of course that the fishy aroma will not be so appealing to your host, especially if there is a romantic dimension to your relationship, so keep it subtle.

4. If all else fails, cheese, ham and prawns can be very popular, but secreting those about your person without smelling like a deli counter may prove difficult.

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http://bit.ly/1fYGsZv
At some point, every one of us will be required to venture an opinion about the arts and the sort of culture that isn’t found at the bottom of a Petri dish.

It’s a minefield. Make sure you pick your way through it with both circumspection and an air of total confidence. On the other hand, nobody knows much about jazz, not even those who play it, so bluffers can take a few well-judged risks. As they can with rock music, where anything generally goes and nobody agrees on anything. Opera takes a little more preparation, but if in doubt, shake your head and mutter something about coloratura and soprattitoli. The chances are that no one will have a clue what they mean. If stand-up comedy is your thing, demonstrate your knowledge by explaining the origin of the word ‘heckle’, and if you find yourself talking about James Bond, rest assured that you’ll be asked for your view about who played him best – almost immediately.
ALL THAT JAZZ

There are three notes of caution to observe when advancing a critical opinion about anything to do with jazz:

1. Never make jokes about jazz. If you do, make them with a fairly straight face, or at most a slightly apologetic smile.

2. Whatever line you take, stick to it – no matter where it might lead you.

3. Don’t agree with anyone completely. You might generously concur now and then in moderate mutual admiration of the art of Dink Johnson (or whoever is in the frame), but make sure that it is for different reasons. Total agreement will only lead to a reputation for indifference and might even raise suspicion.

One advantage of jazz over other kinds of music is that you don’t have to listen to it if you don’t want to. And plenty of people who do listen to it don’t actually listen either, because they have their own agenda. While the music is being played, live or on record, they are arguing, very loudly, about how – or even if – the contents of rare and crackling old 78s and battered LPs should be transferred to compact disc. They are questioning whether this or that presenter/editor/columnist/authority knows what he or she is talking about.

They are pontificating on matters such as exactly when Louis Armstrong stopped being great, why Miles Davis was
the way he was, what Anthony Braxton’s geometric titles really mean, and why it can’t be jazz without a banjo. They are asking whoever is sitting next to them which two Blue Note sleeves were designed by Andy Warhol, and whether David Stone Martin’s sleeves were often better than the music within them.

This chatter used to die down only during a bass solo when it was suddenly apparent that everything had gone comparatively quiet. But then bass players realised that the subtlety and brilliance of their playing was being masked by the sound of other instruments, so they fought back by purchasing amplifiers of their own and winding up the wick to suit themselves. Any chatter during a drum solo is usually pointless as it is too noisy even to hear your own bickering.

Do feel free to join in all this innocent fun. After all, there is no reason not to, and it’s one way to advance your own credentials. If you’ve always assumed that Ruby Braff was a female wrestler and Randy Brecker is a kind of aphrodisiac muesli, don’t be put off. Ignorance has never deterred others, and in this kind of verbal skirmishing, he who hesitates is defeated. So, get in there and grab your share of pontification.

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A SURVIVAL GUIDE TO FESTIVALS

What to bring
Toilet paper after day two is worth more per gram than the pick-me-ups the bands are helping themselves to backstage, so bring plenty of rolls (they can also double up as a pillow/airbed). Alcohol, to numb the pain of having to stand around for hours in the rain while nothing happens, is essential. It will also aid sleep. Finally, remortgage your house and bring wads of tenners; festivals tend to work as a dry run for when the global economy completely implodes and inflation runs riot to the point where a burger costs £18,000 and a round of beers runs into six figures.

How to dress
If it’s a UK festival, you need wellington boots, waders, sou’westers and a Victorian diving suit. You must also wear a T-shirt, ideally an official T-shirt of the festival you are at but from 20 years ago (you can get them on eBay, but do boil them thoroughly first) to look like you are an old hand. Also, bring at least 50 changes of socks to avoid trench foot.

What to say
The first rule of festivals is to be toweringly blasé about the main stage headliners. This is where you need to do some research and find out when they played a small venue near you before anyone knew who they were. Then you can loudly proclaim, ‘Yeah, I’m not going to see Arctic Monkeys/Elbow/The Black Keys as they’ll not be the same
band I saw play King Tut’s in Glasgow in 2005 when only five people showed up’.

**Who to avoid**
Pretty much every band until the last 15 minutes of their ‘set’ (note: always call their performance a ‘set’). The majority of their setlist will be weighted towards new songs and album tracks but the last 15 minutes will be a frantic race through their Biggest Hits and, as such, will not be too tedious as you don’t have to sit through a plodding piece the bass player wrote.

**What not to buy**
Do not buy a T-shirt while ‘on site’ as that will immediately mark you out as an arriviste. Equally avoid any kind of novelty headwear (hunter caps, foam jester hats, those beanie hats with dreadlocks sewn into them) and any kind of poster/lighter/keyring that has a cannabis leaf logo on it. In short: buy nothing at a festival. It’s all awful.

**What to say afterwards**
When the last traces of horror ebb away, friends and family will ask how it went. Do not start weeping uncontrollably and saying, ‘It was like swimming in a septic tank for a weekend while the worst radio station in the world played.’ Instead, talk in vague, yet positive terms, about how there was a real ‘sense of community’ among the fans (when in reality it was like *Lord of the Flies* with lukewarm beer). Then make a very clear mental note never again to be within 5,000 miles of any rock festival – or anywhere without running water, a bed and an operational toilet.
FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO OPERA

TALKING THE TALK

The origins of opera are Italian, so that is the language in which its technical terms are couched and in which the majority of operas are performed. It will greatly increase your chances of being mistaken for an expert if you can absorb a handful of these key terms into your everyday vocabulary.

For example, the words of the opera are contained in a *libretto* (little book), the big number is an *aria* (air), the lady singing it is probably a *soprano* (higher voice) and if she adds some ornamental flourishes they are most likely *coloratura* (colouring) rather than an early sign of dementia. If you subsequently run into the man you have seen waving a stick in the orchestra pit (and he is often to be found in the nearest pub after the performance, along with at least half his players, including the entire brass section), he will appreciate being addressed as *maestro* (master), though not half as much as he will enjoy that being prefaced with the emphatically non-Italian phrase: ‘What can I get you?’

From the dawn of opera until almost the end of the twentieth century, it was essential to buy a programme and spend a frantic 10 minutes before the performance mugging up on the synopsis in order to have the faintest clue as to what was about to happen on stage. This allowed the
dedicated bluffer to gain an important tactical advantage by laughing knowingly at the delivery of certain key lines, confident that 99% of the audience would not have a clue whether or not they were supposed to be funny. Modest bets could be placed with oneself as to how many fellow patrons might be bluffed into joining in.

Sadly, this potential source of amusement has been destroyed by the advent of almost universal surtitles, which provide a simultaneous (if sometimes approximate) translation of the words being uttered on stage. The best the bluffer can manage now is to express contempt for the sopravititoli (which, of course, you will know is the Italian for ‘surtitles’) on taking his seat, and look pointedly at the stage rather than the little screen above it (which is actually pretty good general advice for all members of the audience).

If moved by a particularly fine or affecting performance of an aria, one may be moved to shout bravo (well done, old chap) at its conclusion. (Though only if one is absolutely sure that it has indeed ended, as it is social death to make any sound mid-performance.) But do remember that this is a foreign word, and that one should be yelling brava (well done, madam) to female performers or bravi (jolly good show, all of you) if addressing a group. You may also throw in the occasional bravissimo or bravissimi (exceptionally good show) but do not move on to the likes of magnifico unless you are prepared for the court of public opinion to find you guilty of showing off…

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http://bit.ly/1OrULAZ
Bluffing about the Hollywood social scene is one of the most important skills you can acquire, whether you are in Bel Air (Los Angeles) or Bell End (Worcestershire). You’re not expected to actually engage with Angelenos (and in fact, you’re strongly advised not to, as it can be the equivalent of trying to talk to a crocodile). There are, however, a few rules that will benefit anyone who wants to seem like they have friends in high places – or at least, Hollywood.

When name-dropping, use only first names. Let your audience assume that when you mention ‘Kate’, ‘Johnny’ and ‘Jack’, it’s Winslet, Depp and Nicholson.

Make up zany hobbies you share with Hollywooders. The more outrageously healthy, the better. Never be afraid of crossing a line: there’s nothing this bunch of nutjobs wouldn’t do for vanity. A good start is to combine two exercises into one word: Piloxing (Pilates and boxing), Yogalates (yoga and Pilates), Blufflates (bluffing and Pilates).

No one really drinks in LA or stays out past 8.30pm, so talking about the night you got completely plastered will mark you out as a rank amateur. If you must, venture something along the lines of: ‘I drank a whole litre of wheatgrass with Leonardo. It was wild, man.’

LA is a city that has some of the best restaurants in the world – and a population that has the pickiness of a seven-year-old when it comes to nutrition. Everyone here is
allergic to something: gluten, shellfish, sugar, honesty. This is okay, because no one goes out to eat; they go out to be seen. Eating is for losers.

**Don’t be shocked by any amount of back-stabbing**, bitching and bullying; indeed, embrace descriptions of such behaviour in phoney accounts of Hollywood friendships. Any veteran will be able to list the times that he was shafted by his best friend/wife/parent/child/dog, and you should too. Relationships here are transactional and mostly fleeting. You need to be deft on your feet to survive. As a bluffer you will recount a story of Shakespearean betrayal, shrugging and telling your eager followers: ‘That’s just show business, kids.’

Combine these pointers with several touchstone spots you can reference glibly in conversation. The following are the places/activities you may safely claim to have formed the centre of your social life in Hollywood:

**THE CHATEAU**

Never call the Chateau by its full name: Chateau Marmont. This Hollywood institution has been around since 1927. It is in fact a bluffer itself, pretending to be the Château d’Amboise in the Loire Valley, a castle after which it is modelled.

In 1498 King Charles VIII of France died at Château d’Amboise, and its pretender has also had its share of celebrity deaths. John Belushi shuffled off his mortal coil after taking an overdose in one of the hotel’s bungalows in 1982. Fashion photographer Helmut Newton passed
away when he crashed his car into a wall on the property in 2004…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE
TO STAND-UP COMEDY

NO HECKLING PLEASE
There are rules to visiting a comedy club. They may not be as arcane and codified as the rules of cricket or croquet, but rest assured that if you don’t want to get egg on your face and find that the yolk is on you, they are equally as important. In essence, all you need to know is that there are just two comedy club rules, and they’re really very simple: enjoy the show and don’t disrupt the acts. This mainly means don’t talk and don’t use your phone during the show. You may think you are being discreet by burying your smartphone in your lap as you send a text but, apart from the fact that the people seated nearby may attempt to throttle you, the light from the screen may well be illuminating your face and distracting the performer with what comedian Josie Long has dubbed ‘mobile phone blue face’.

Mobile phones are the bane of modern comedians. Richard Herring once confiscated a phone from a persistent mobile miscreant and smashed it onstage. Others have also pulverised portable electronic devices. Of course, sometimes a phone can help a performer. If a phone rings there’s a risk that the comedian will leave the stage and
incorporate the call into their act. This generally results in extensive humiliation of the mobile offender. Most comedians are naturally adept at this form of casual cruelty.

Before the advent of the mobile phone, however, the activity most frowned upon in comedy clubs was the ‘heckle’ – defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘to interrupt with derisive or aggressive comments or abuse’.

The modern use of the term is said to have originated in Dundee in the nineteenth century. This is useful information for bluffers to have to hand in any conversation about stand-up comedy. ‘Heckling’ originally meant to tease or comb out flax and hemp fibres, and in the jute factories where this went on, workers had to shout to be heard over the noise of the machinery, so their shouting became known as ‘heckling’ as well. It is thought that the workers who did the heckling then used to shout angrily at visiting politicians on the campaign trail. (You might venture knowledgeably that these politicians included a certain Winston Churchill, who sat as Dundee’s Liberal MP from 1908 to 1922). Over the years this then became known as ‘heckling’, too, and the pastime soon moved indoors to the music hall and variety theatres. It is one of Dundee’s great gifts to the world. The others are cake, marmalade and one of the finest comedy talents of the modern age – Respect Party politician ‘Gorgeous’ George Galloway (not forgetting the pre-eminent British poet of the Victorian era, William McGonagall, once described as ‘so giftedly bad that he backed unwittingly into genius’).
FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO POETRY

For some people, Poetry is Life. They buy books of poetry; they go to poetry readings and performances; they go to poetry clubs and societies; they write the stuff and pay to get it published; they care and worry and fuss about poetry.

These are the Poetry Fanatics and you must beware of them. If you live in certain parts of London, the lusher suburbs of other cities, or towns with literary connections or festivals (Cheltenham, Hay-on-Wye and Aldeburgh, for example), you may find them hard to avoid. They’re in the mould of the Ancient Mariner – mad eyes staring, dribble coming out of the corners of their mouths, seeking some poor wretch to whom they can recite at length. If you can’t avoid them, you may consider joining them.

HOW TO DRESS FOR POETRY

Don’t:

- **Wear a velvet smoking jacket or thick cord trousers;** people will think you’re a psychotherapist.

- **Grow a beard.** No great poet of the last 100 years or so has sported a beard. Okay, Ginsberg had a real faceful but you might challenge anyone on this point by observing that a great big beard doth not a great poet make.

- **Slap on a beret.** People will think you’re from the Royal British Legion or the local farmers’ market.
• **Wear sandals.** People will think you couldn’t afford a decent pair of trainers.

• **Drip around in a silk dressing gown.** People will think you’re emulating Ivor Novello or Noël Coward.

**Do:**

• **Roll your own cigarettes,** as messily as possible, if you happen to smoke.

• **Kit yourself out in a Panama hat, white linen jacket, and two-tone brogues.** People won’t know which poet you evoke, and that will disturb them.

Whatever you do, though, you must ensure that nothing that you wear matches. Poets are renowned for their heightened powers of observation, but this faculty must absolutely not extend to noticing that one’s lime-green chinos clash rather garishly when coupled with that favourite, and seldom-washed, puce cardie.

**HOW TO TREAT POETRY BOOKS**
The moment you buy a book of verse, mutilate it:

1. Break the spine.

2. Fold down the corners as though marking pages.

3. Spill some dark brown (or, better, Burgundian red) liquid on it.

4. Tear out a few pages. Scribble dates and obtuse references in the margins.
Most people who buy poetry books never even open them, let alone read them, so when you turn up with a volume that looks as though London Wasps (the rugby team) have been playing with it, you will be regarded with awe.

**WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE THREATENS YOU WITH A POEM THEY’VE WRITTEN**

The vital thing is to prevent them reading it to you. If they do, you have to try to listen and then make a comment. So, when they say: ‘May I read you my latest oeuvre?’, firmly respond: ‘No. Don’t do that. I’ve just spent three days and nights reading The New Apocalyptics and my mind is completely shattered. Do you know The New Apocalyptics, by any chance?’ They won’t.

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**FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO BOND**

**WHO WAS THE BEST BOND?**

In any social gathering where Bond actors get mentioned, within a few seconds everyone will be discussing who was better, Sean Connery or Roger Moore. It’s hard to deny that Connery possessed an aura of convincing danger that Moore simply couldn’t match, while in his later Bond outings the massive amounts of hair on Connery’s chest seem to have distracted people from the ‘interesting’ hair on his head.

There is no question, however, which actor wins the prize for the most apposite name for playing the role of 007. If
you didn’t know that ‘Roger Moore’ was, in fact, Rog’s birth name, you’d swear that he’d adopted it as a pseudonym to hint at a tendency towards sexual profligacy.

Bluffers will be expected to pass judgment on the best Bond. Initially you should opt for one of the three actors who bring an edge to the role, coming closer to Ian Fleming’s original vision: smirking Australian George Lazenby, intensely conflicted Timothy Dalton or cruelly pouting Daniel Craig. This approach will lend you the credibility that clings to people who prefer the books to the films.

If you plump for Dalton, you should refer to the fact that the actor cited *Casino Royale* as his own favourite 007 novel, on account of Bond’s ‘moral and ethical confusion’. People tend to be impressed by phrases like this.

Pierce Brosnan, mind you, is a useful fallback position. Unequivocally handsome, he is also Irish – and after a Scotsman (Connery), an Englishman (Moore), and a Welshman (Dalton), it was an Irishman’s turn. If you wish to add weight to this opinion, you can reveal that Brosnan had in fact been offered the role of Bond once before, when Roger Moore retired, but because of a commitment to the TV series *Remington Steele*, he’d had to refuse. This must have been like turning down a Rolls-Royce because you’d paid the deposit on a Skoda.

But however much you protest that you’re uninterested in the Connery/Moore debate, you will inevitably get dragged into it. Even if you can’t muster the courage to say ‘Moore was better’ out loud, mention the following in Roger’s defence:

- It’s human nature to prefer an original to its copy. If
Moore had been given that chance to be the first Bond, cinema-goers might well be sitting around mocking the vulgar Scotsman who came along in his wake.

- Ian Fleming himself wanted Roger Moore to play Bond and had severe doubts about the choice of Sean Connery, wondering how a working-class Scot with a lisp could possibly play his public school-educated hero.

- Most of Connery’s Bond outings were in the 1960s; while Moore’s were in the 1970s. How could Connery lose? He was operating during the coolest decade in history, the era of the Beatles, JFK and the Apollo Moon landings. All Moore had for a backdrop was loons and Showaddywaddy. And the less said about his powder-blue safari suit, the better…

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http://bit.ly/1CLtA39
There are many areas of human activity where the whole structure of social behaviour and working relations is based on the art of bluffing, not applied with any malicious intent but simply as a means of self-preservation. Thus it is in the business world, which is entirely founded on bluff.

Business is, by its very nature, the act of kidding someone – whether it be a colleague above or below you in the same business, or someone in another business to whom you want to sell something, or from whom you want to buy something – into a belief that a) you know what you are doing, and b) are to be trusted. Anyone in business will know how difficult this is in the face of the fact that a) it is blatantly obvious that you don’t know what you are doing, and b) you would cheerfully sell bad eggs to your grandmother.

You might be lucky enough to learn the basics of this sort of bluffing in the three or four years you spend on holiday at university, especially if you’re reading for a degree in Business Administration. It doesn’t matter if you aren’t;
simply learn the basics of quantum physics and let everyone assume that you’re a lot cleverer than you are and haven’t completely wasted your time on a degree in underwater basket weaving.

FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO MANAGEMENT

LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE
While it certainly helps for managers to be all-knowing, it is by no means essential.

It all comes down to timing. Rather than attempt to impress with a constant flow of knowledge, the bluffer should develop the technique of devastating subordinates with well-chosen nuggets of relevant information when they least expect it.

As a manager, you can bluff your subordinates into assuming that you are more knowledgeable than you are by choosing the right moments to raise intelligent points and ask them intelligent questions. That will keep them on their toes at all times, because they will not know when you will put them to the test.

The right moments are the moments when you happen to know what you are talking about. Those moments may be few and far between, but they will be enough. They will be remembered. There is nothing more shocking to a subordinate than to be surprised by a very intelligent point or question coming from a manager who was previously written off as an idiot. In a single moment, all the subordinate’s previous assumptions are undermined, and
they become very wary about making such assumptions again. You need only catch a subordinate unawares once or twice to ensure that they will always treat you with respect in the future.

This technique is effective only if you preserve the strictest self-discipline by never attempting to use it unless you are absolutely certain about what you’re saying. If there is the slightest doubt, keep your mouth shut. What impresses is not the number of intelligent points you raise but the fact that, however many points you raise, they are always sound. What you want is not a reputation for breadth of knowledge but for infallibility. To do that, you cannot afford to be caught saying something wrong even once. Resist the temptation to impress by piling on the points based on information you think is probably true. That ‘probably’ is not good enough – you must be certain or you must be silent.

It is important, however, not to go to the other extreme of never saying anything at all. As Sir Winston Churchill once said, ‘Too often the strong, silent man is silent because he does not know what to say, and is reputed strong only because he remains silent.’

So silence can be useful, but only in the short term. Sooner or later, the silent manager will be put on the spot – and, if there is nothing behind the silence, exposed.

To avoid this, you must use the manager’s privilege of choosing the moment. Take the initiative by ambushing each of your subordinates at least once early in your relationship. Do your research and prepare a single good
question in advance that tests their specialist expertise and suggests that you know their subject as well as they do.

If your question flummoxes your subordinate, do not be nasty or triumphalist: just give an indulgent, almost parental smile and move on. If you have a beard, stroke it thoughtfully…

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO YOUR OWN BUSINESS

BLUFFING BIG
Your own business will inevitably start off small. No bluffer particularly wants to head a small business. He or she would probably prefer to own a big business. Alas, it is a great social injustice that few are able to go straight in at their preferred level. For most, the best way to own one’s own big business is to start with a small one and make it bigger. And the best way of doing that is to convince everyone that the small business is already a big business.

In fact, if a small business is to stand any chance at all, it is not merely desirable but essential that it appears to be what it hopes to become.

The beginning of small business wisdom is this: no matter how much people profess to admire it, everyone hates small business. This is because:

• Customers feel safer buying from the firms everyone
else buys from.

- Suppliers are reluctant to grant easy credit terms to those who are less likely to buy regularly or in bulk.

- Taxmen and other bureaucrats enjoy picking on those who cannot afford the top division advisers they fear.

- Bankers consider Third World governments who regularly default on large loans to be better credit risks than small businesses who miss a single interest payment after years of impeccable financial management.

This is a vicious circle: no one really trusts a small business, so no one gives it a chance, so it remains a small business. To break the circle, you must make everyone believe that it is:

1. established longer than it really is;

2. able to deliver a higher quality product than it really does;

3. stronger financially than it really is; and

4. bigger than it really is.

**FREE PUBLICITY**

A useful way of ‘bigging-up’ a small enterprise is to utilize the ‘free’ publicity acquired through sending national and local media a regular supply of ‘press releases’ about the business…

The press release should not err on the side of modesty;
Business and Education

for example:

(Headline) EXECUTIVE TEAM STRENGTHENED

(Sub head) New transparent wall maintenance operative joins Universal Widgets

(Text) One of Barchester’s most progressive and ambitious companies has announced the appointment of Mr George Formby who joins an experienced and dynamic team…

(Translation) Universal Widgets has just taken on a new window cleaner

Other examples of useful headlines on press releases:

JOBS AT RISK (The standard line when a public authority threatens to do something the company doesn’t like.)

LOCAL FIRM IN TALKS WITH US GIANT (They phoned to ask about the price.)

LOCAL FIRM SIGNS CONTRACT WITH US GIANT (We actually sold them something.)

US GIANT & LOCAL FIRM LINK UP (They gave us a local sales agency.)

US GIANT & LOCAL FIRM IN PARTNERSHIP DEAL (The sales agency is a joint venture: we split the profits.)

LOCAL FIRM TO TAKE OVER US GIANT? (Well, anyone can speculate, can’t they?)
FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE
TO THE QUANTUM UNIVERSE

LET’S GET QUANTUM PHYSICAL

Whether you are trying to explore the universe, which is very, very big, or the ‘quantum realm’ in which particles of light and matter are very, very small, nothing can be stated with clearer conviction than this: nobody understands what’s going on. So, if you have ever lamented your own incomprehension, let yourself off the hook immediately. Welcome to a Bluffer’s® paradise, where no one need feel afraid, nor should anyone feel stupid.

Of course, where physicists do have knowledge and understanding, prudence dictates that astute bluffers gain some appreciation of it. This will not be too difficult. The universe is, after all, very large, and the smallest entities are extremely small – and their conduct is unusual, to say the least.

Happily, such an appreciation may be obtained without formulæ, equations or fractions. It may seem to be taking the word ‘appreciation’ too far, but you are going to have to feign, find or affirm some sense of wonder. Nature is full of marvels at the best of times. In the quantum realm, as the great Danish physicist, Niels Bohr, used to say: if people didn’t find these phenomena shocking, wild and confusing, they weren’t taking it in.
And Bohr was understating it, of course. Indeed, however bizarre a description of subatomic phenomena may be, there’ll always be some smarty-pants saying: ‘That’s underselling it’. Agree fervently and move on.

So, needless to say, overwhelming questions will continually come up. Nowadays these can be neatly batted away with the words: ‘Yes, well, of course they’re looking into that at CERN’. You hint at deeper knowledge by saying that CERN is an acronym for Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire and by being specific about the actual location of the famous ‘collider’ – near Geneva, beneath the Franco-Swiss border. Not too far away from Goldfinger’s lair in the eponymous Bond book, actually.

Mentioning CERN will become an automatic response for you, and one that falls somewhere between ‘They deal with that in accounts,’ ‘Give the ball to Brian’ and ‘Do you mind if I have another glass of wine?’ No one should ever tire of saying, ‘Yes, they’re addressing that at CERN’.

Nothing conveys the impression of substantial intellect so much as even the sketchiest knowledge of quantum physics, and since the sketchiest knowledge is all anyone will ever have, never be shy of holding forth with bags of authority about subatomic particles and the quantum realm without having done any science whatsoever.

After all, whole careers have been built on such deception. And besides, what else is the act of bluffing about?

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FROM THE BLUFFER’S® GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY

SETTING UP A SHARED HOUSE

The anarchic squalor of the 1980s BBC TV series *The Young Ones*, and the soap-like personal turmoils of the 2010s’ *Fresh Meat*, are described as ‘comedies’ about life in a shared student house.

You know better. They’re actually instructional videos. If you can survive a year battling for fridge space and avoiding the Hoover and the washing-up, you can survive anything.

Finding a house is straightforward; the union will have a network of contacts. Finding the people to share with won’t be.

At first it’ll seem easy. By the end of the first week, you’ll have assembled a cosy group of new best friends to cohabit with in that second year. Then two of them will sleep with each other. Then with someone else. Then fall out with each other. Then with you. Then you’ll sleep with one of them. Then everyone will fall out with everyone else.

And the next week could be just as eventful. Things move fast in student life.

Your ideal list of housemates may have a very different look and feel at the end of the year than it did in the first week – as will the housemates themselves, following a year of parties, lie-ins, takeaways and terrible tattoos that seemed such a good idea at the time.

The best tactic is to not commit yourself to any specific house or group of people until you have to. Talk vaguely about a second-year contact who has a ‘really good house’
that they can hand over to you next year. Doubt about the number of bedrooms means you can’t nail down exactly who will join you in this dream home. Stick simply to expressions of interest from your potential housemates, and keep the candidate list fluid.

Have plausible reasons to rule people out whom you don’t like without offending them (‘We’d love to have had her in the house, but she’s like, really allergic to cats, and I’m sure there were, like, five of them in the house when we visited – really, really hairy ones…’).

At some point, you’ll have to interact with the landlord. Don’t bother trying to convince him or her that you all love cleaning, don’t know anyone who smokes, won’t have parties and will redecorate it for free at the end, because they won’t believe you. They’ve had students before, remember; that’s what deposits are for. All they hope is that you pay up on time, don’t trash the place, and return the keys when you go. Be very suspicious if they want to be your friend. That’ll be because they haven’t got any others – always a bad sign, and you might have them turning up on a Friday night ‘wondering’ if anything’s ‘happening’.

Establish some ground rules for guests – how many and how long you can invite them to stay. (The classic misunderstanding: ‘Do you mind asking your mate to move on? He’s been here two weeks.’ ‘My mate? I thought he was your mate!’)

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