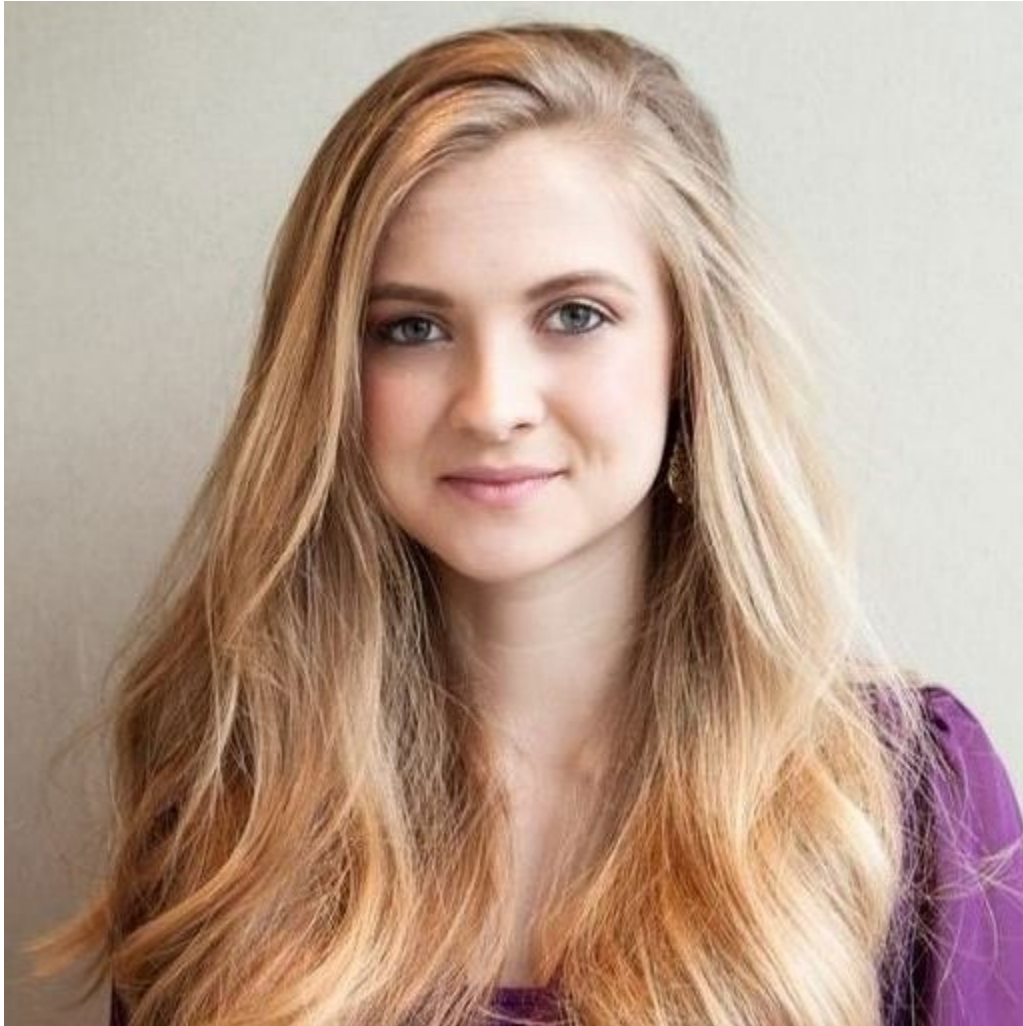


26 Fascinating Facts About Every Letter in the English Alphabet

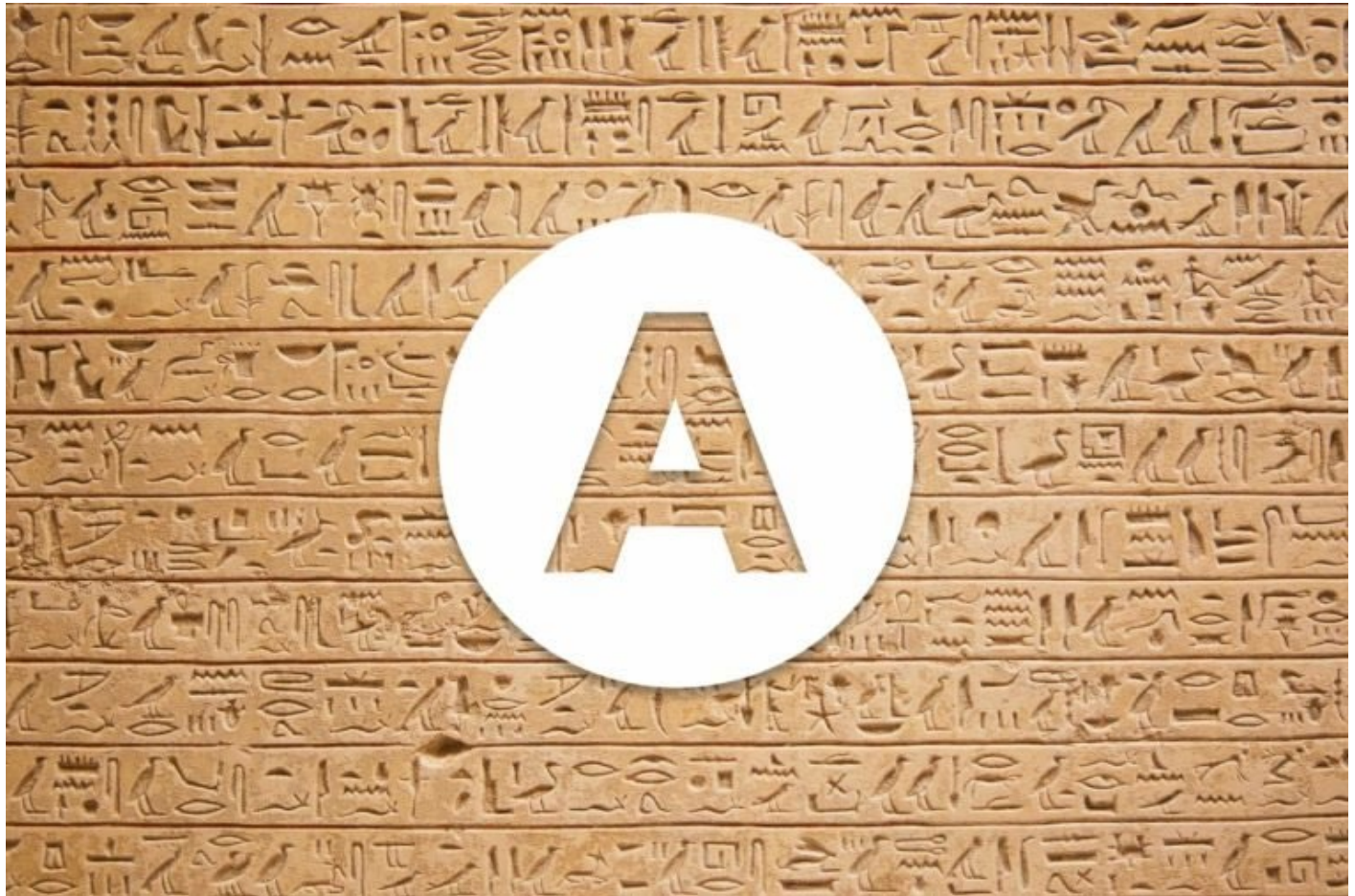


Brooke

Nelson

Bet you didn't know THIS when you learned your ABCs.

A is for...



FEDOR SELIVANOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Believe it or not, the capital A hasn't always looked the way it does now. Ancient Egyptians wrote the letter upside down, creating a symbol that resembled a steer with horns. Learn **the surprising history behind the order of the English alphabet.**

B is for...



MONGIONE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Grab paper and pen and start writing down every number as a word. Do you notice one missing letter? If you kept going, you wouldn't use a single letter b until you reached one billion. You can also **spell every number up to 1,000 without another common letter.**

C is for...



DIEGO SHTUTMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Benjamin Franklin **reportedly** wanted to banish C from the alphabet—along with J, Q, W, and X—and replace them with six letters he invented himself. Doing so, Franklin claimed, would simplify the English language. Word nerds will appreciate **these grammar jokes**.

D is for...



CAMILLAS\$/SHUTTERSTOCK

Contrary to popular belief, the letter D in D-day does not stand for “doom” or “disaster”—it simply stands for “day.” The military marks important operations and invasions with a D as a placeholder. (So June 5, 1944, was D-1.) Check out more **history lessons your teacher lied to you about**.

E is for...



SKY MOTION/SHUTTERSTOCK

Meet the “Smith” of the English alphabet—e is used more often than any other letter. It appears in 11 percent of all words, according to an analysis of more than 240,000 entries in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Did you know **there used to be six more letters in our alphabet?**

F is for...



LUCA PAPE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Anyone educated in today's school system knows that the lowest grade you can get is an F. The low-water mark, however, used to be represented by the letter E. When Mount Holyoke College administrators redesigned the grading system in 1898, professors worried that students would think the grade meant "excellent." According to *Slate*, F more obviously stands for "failure" or "failed."

G is for...



ARLO MAGICMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Both G and C were originally represented by the Phoenician symbol for gimel, which meant “camel.” It was the Romans who finally separated the two letters, letting C keep its shape and adding a bar at the bottom for the letter G.

H is for...



ULF WITTRICK/SHUTTERSTOCK

H might be the most hated letter in Britain, according to Michael Rosen, author of *Alphabetical: How Every Letter Tells a Story*. For almost two thousand years, Brits have pronounced H two ways: ‘aitch’ and ‘haich.’ Accents that dropped the H from words were once considered lower class, Rosen writes. What’s more, different pronunciations of the letter also distinguished the Catholics from the Protestants in Northern Ireland.

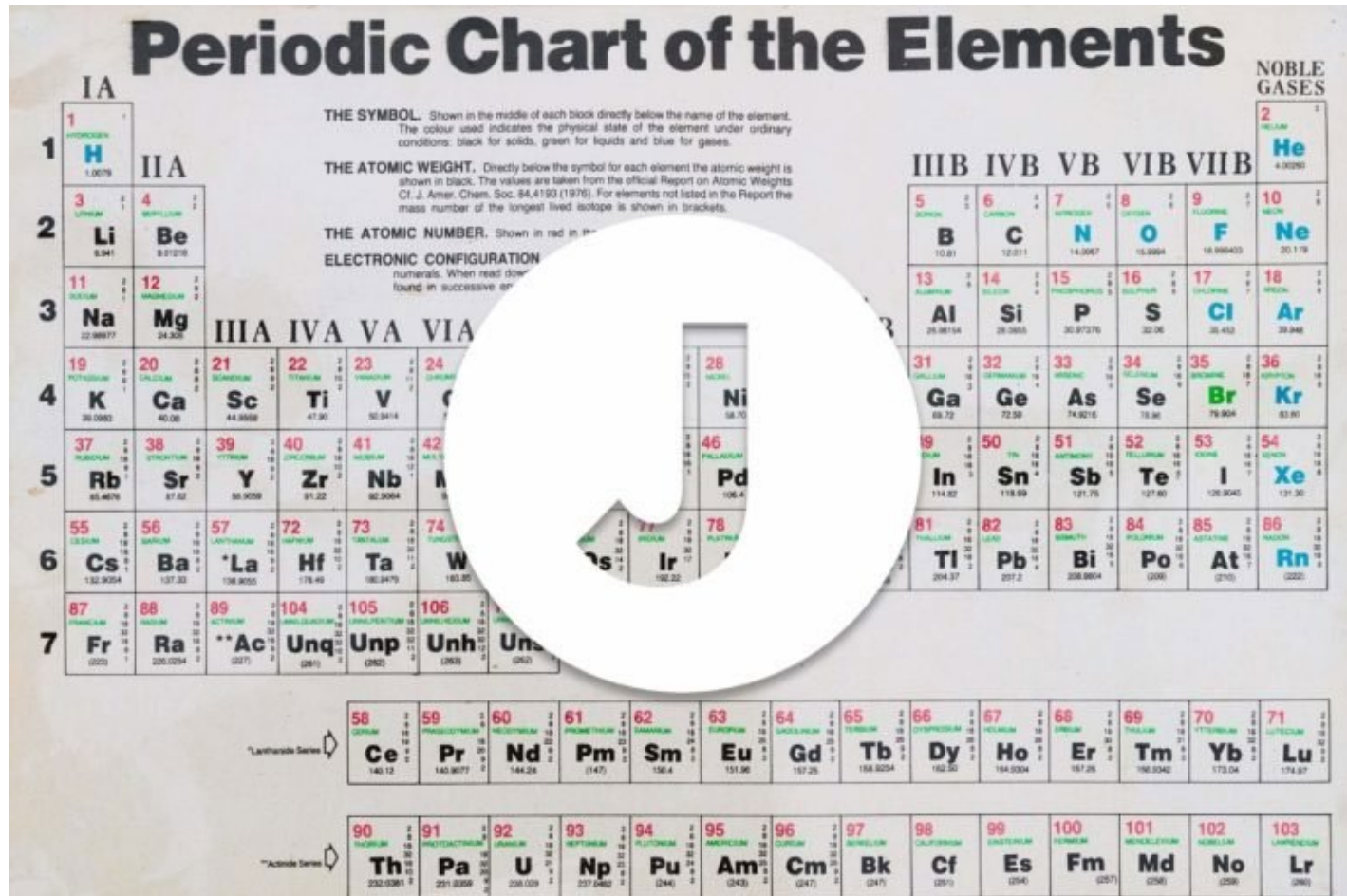
I is for...



NIMON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Funny enough, the dot over the letters “i” and “j” actually has a name. It is called a tittle.

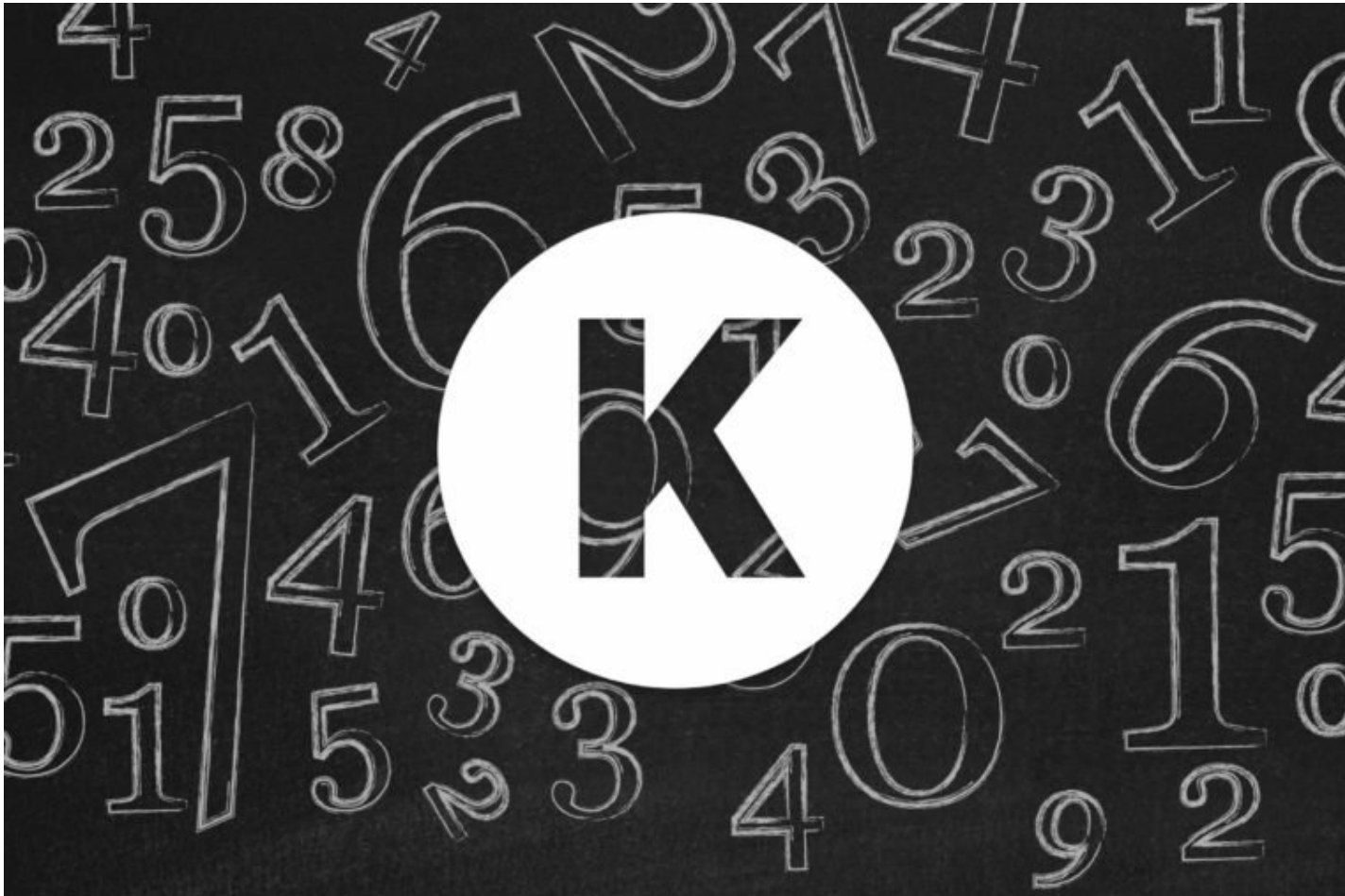
J is for...



JURIAAN WOSSINK/SHUTTERSTOCK

This is one of the two letters that do not appear on the periodic table. (Q is the other.) Invented in 1524 by an Italian, J was also the last letter to be added to the alphabet.

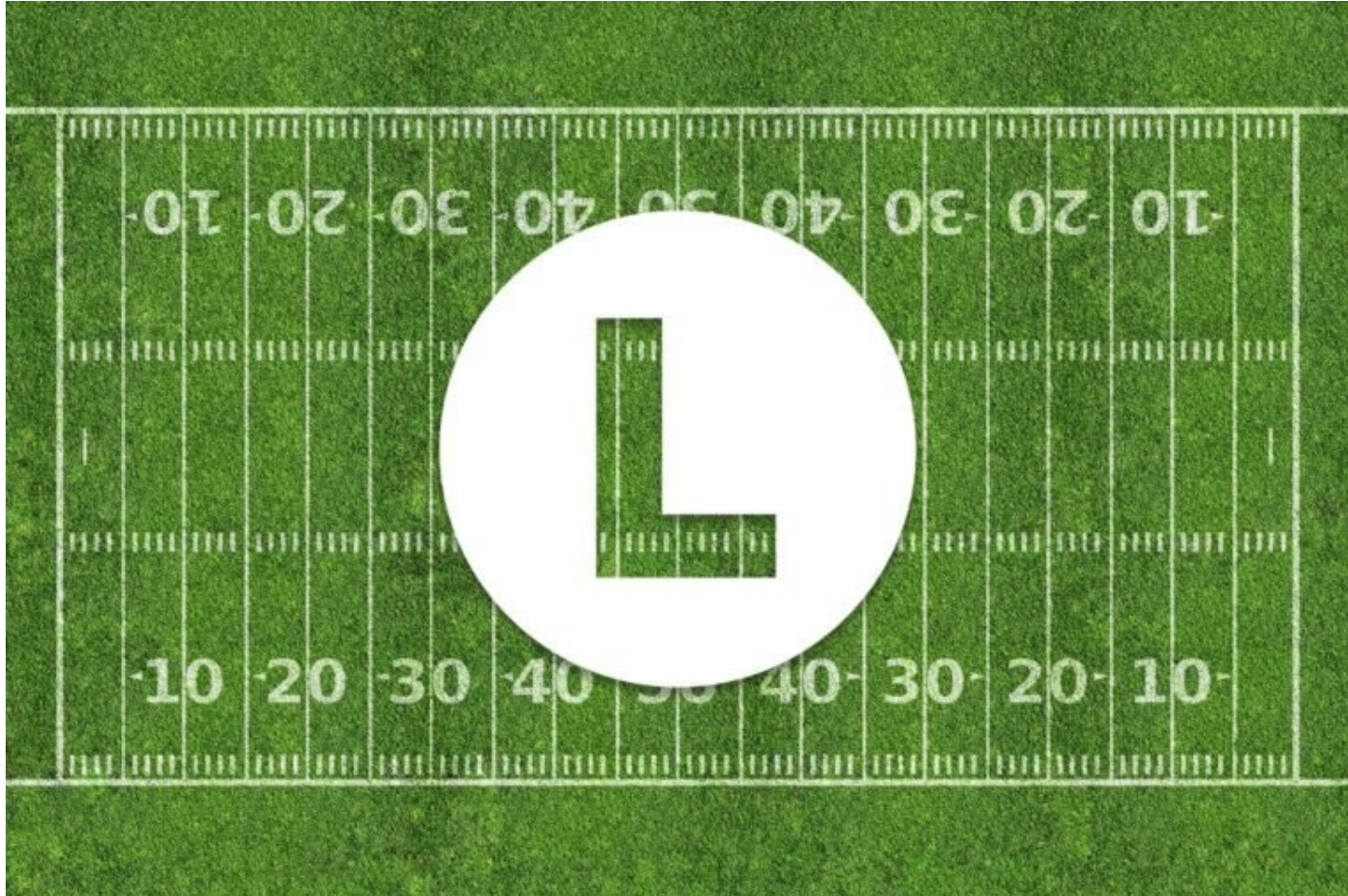
K is for...



HAPPY STOCK PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

With the possible exception of L (see below), K is the most notorious letter in sports. It's how baseball fans record a strikeout. (When the first box score was written back in 1859, S was used to indicate a sacrifice; K was plucked from the end of struck.)

L is for...



ANTPKR/SHUTTERSTOCK

The NFL has traditionally used Roman numerals to denote the number of the Big Game, but for the 50th Super Bowl, they decided to go with just the number 50. Why? Sports fans use the letters W and L as shorthand for “win” and “loss.” Because the Roman numeral for 50 is L, the NFL worried that Super Bowl L would be, in PR terms, a big loser.

M is for...



MAKISTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK

You can't say the letter M without your lips touching. Go ahead and try it! Then, give **the hardest words to pronounce in the English language** a shot.

N is for...



TAMERLAN ALIYEV/SHUTTERSTOCK

The letter n was originally associated with water—the Phoenician word for n was nun, which later became the Aramaic word for “fish.” In fact, the capital N got its shape because it was a pictorial representation of a crashing wave.

O is for...



ITSARET SUTTHISIRI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Only four letters (A, E, O, L) are doubled at the beginning of a word (aardvark, eel, ooze, llama, etc.), and more words start with double O than any others in the English language. But here's **why no words have the same letter three times in a row.**

P is for...



FUTUREGALORE/SHUTTERSTOCK

This may be the most versatile letter in English. It's the only consonant that needs no help in forming a word sandwich with any vowel: pap, pep, pip, pop, pup.

Q is for...



BEN HARDING/SHUTTERSTOCK

One out of every 510 letters in English words is a Q, making it the least common letter in the English alphabet, according to an *Oxford English Dictionary* analysis. It is also **the only letter not used in any U.S. state name.**

R is for...



JIRI HERA/SHUTTERSTOCK

The letter R is sometimes referred to as the “**littera canina**,” or canine letter. In Latin, the way speakers trilled the R sounded like a growling dog. William Shakespeare even gave the letter a shout-out in his play *Romeo and Juliet*, when Juliet’s nurse calls the letter R “the dog’s name” in Act 2, scene 4.

S is for...



SIRO46/SHUTTERSTOCK

The English alphabet briefly included a typographical letter called a “long s.” Used from the late Renaissance to the early 1800s, it resembled the letter ‘f’ but was pronounced simply as ‘s.’ You’ll see it in various manuscripts written by the Founding Fathers, including the Bill of Rights.

T is for...



MARIDAV/SHUTTERSTOCK

The term “T-shirt” got its name for the ‘T’ shape of the body and sleeves. It is a relatively new word, too. According to *TodayIFoundOut*, F. Scott Fitzgerald was reportedly the first person to print the term “T-shirt” in 1920, when the main character in his novel *This Side of Paradise* brings a T-shirt with him to boarding school.

U is for...



ADIKE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Before the 1500s, u and v were used interchangeably as a vowel or a consonant. A French educational reformer helped change that in 1557 when he started using u exclusively as a vowel and v as the consonant.

V is for...



WAYHOME STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

V is the only letter in the English language that is never silent, according to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Think about it: Even unusual letters like Z and J are silent in words we have borrowed from foreign languages, such as *marijuana* (originally a Spanish word) and *laissez-faire* (French).

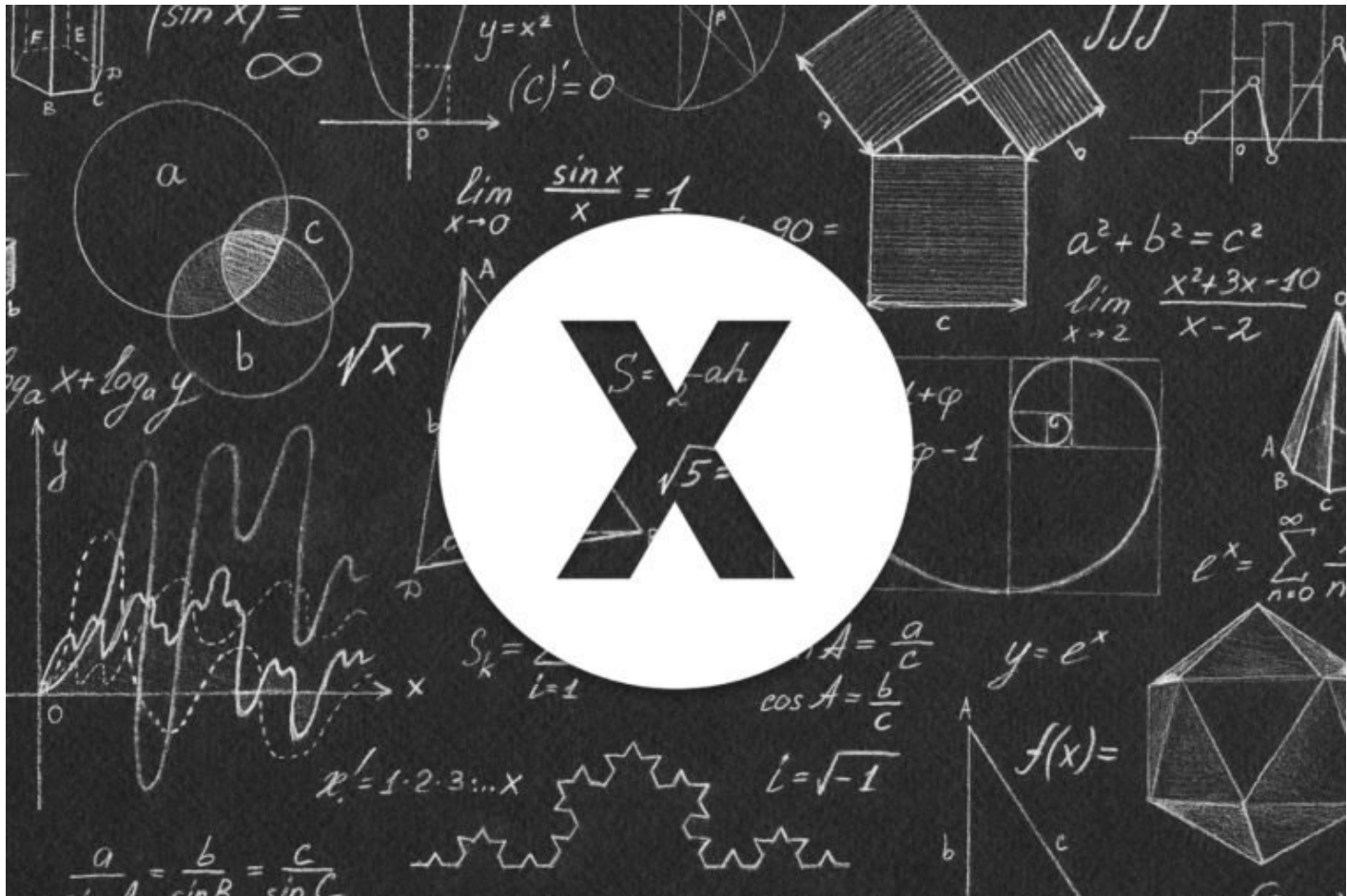
W is for...



HAVESEEN/SHUTTERSTOCK

If you have ever wondered why we call it a “double-u” instead of “double-v,” you’re not alone. However, **the explanation** is surprisingly simple. Because the Latin alphabet did not have a letter to represent the sound /w/ in Old English, 7th-century scribes just wrote it as ‘uu.’ The double-u symbol eventually meshed together to form the letter W. To sound even smarter, follow **these little grammar rules** every day.

X is for...



TRIFF/SHUTTERSTOCK

From “X marks the spot” to “solve for x,” this is the go-to letter to represent something unknown. The idea is believed to have come from mathematician René Descartes, who used the last three letters of the alphabet to represent unknown quantities in his book *The Geometry*. He chose a, b, and c to stand for known quantities.

Y is for...



UVGREEN/SHUTTERSTOCK

The switch-hitter in the alphabet, y functions as both a vowel and a consonant. The Oxford English Dictionary actually calls it a semivowel because while the letter stops your breath in words such as yell and young—making it a consonant—it also creates an open vocal sound in words such as myth or hymn.

Z is for...



LEON RAFAEL

Believe it or not, the letter Z has not always been the last letter of the alphabet; in the Greek alphabet, it had a respectable place at number seven. Don't miss these other **100 random facts about basically everything**.