

Your Shortcut to... Guinness World Records

It began as a pub argument about two birds. It has sold over 143 million copies in more than 20 languages. It even holds its own world record as the best-selling copyrighted book series of all time. This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to Guinness World Records — the podcast where we dive into the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the big news stories. I'm Christie Kijurina.

And I'm Bryce Corbett.

Bryce, what on earth are you doing? There are socks flying everywhere!

I'm practising, Christie. Guinness World Records says the fastest time to put ten socks on one foot is 11.91 seconds. If I beat it, I'll be famous!

Or you'll just end up with the world's sweatiest toes.

Today, we'll take you through how a beer company ended up starting the Guinness Book of Records, what kinds of records it's covered in its long history, and why people are still chasing them. So grab your stopwatch and let's get started!

Listen carefully. There's a S'Quiz at the end.

HOW

So... how did Guinness World Records begin? Believe it or not, it all started with beer. The book is actually named after Guinness beer, the dark Irish drink with the foamy top that adults sometimes have in pubs. It all began in 1951 when Sir Hugh Beaver, the boss of Guinness Brewery, went on a hunting trip. He missed a shot at a bird called a golden plover. That sparked an argument with his friends:

[BRYCE in old timey voice] Which is faster... the golden plover or the red grouse?

A pub argument about birds? Classic. So basically, the very first Guinness question was "Which bird is speedier — the plover or the grouse?"

Exactly. And here's the problem, no one could find the answer in any book. Which gave Sir Hugh a brilliant idea: "Wouldn't it be handy if pubs had a book to settle these sorts of arguments?" It would stop fights... and remind everyone of the Guinness brand.

Hang on.. the most famous record book in the world is named after a beer? That's like finding out Minecraft was invented by a sandwich shop.

Strange but true. And to make it happen, he hired twin brothers Norris and Ross McWhirter, who ran a fact-finding agency in London, to pull the information together.

And in 1954, they finished the very first Guinness Book of Records. It wasn't meant to be a kids' book, or even sold in shops. It was simply a clever marketing idea for a beer company. That's so wild. The book of world records was basically invented to stop pub fights? Instead of arguing over who's the world's best player at darts, you'd settle it with a page from the book.

Exactly. And yes, they did finally settle that first argument: the fastest game bird was the golden plover, which can fly almost 100 kilometres an hour.

Nice. First record cracked. But, if that's how it all began, what about now? What kinds of records has Guinness ended up covering in its 70-year history?

WHAT

So, what kinds of records are in the Guinness World Records book? Pretty much everything you can imagine — from the tallest building and fastest sprinter, to the longest fingernails, the biggest meat pie, or even the largest collection of rubber ducks.... That's 5,632 in case you're wondering

Five thousand rubber ducks!! Now that's a bath I want to see.

Guinness has always mixed serious achievements with the silly and surprising. There are even Australian record for the widest didgeridoo and one for the fastest toilet-roll pyramid stacked.

I reckon I could take a shot at the dunny roll stacking.

Well, if you did, you'd need to prove it properly. Guinness has very strict rules for verifying records. Anyone who applies has to send in video and photo evidence, plus witness statements. Sometimes even measurements from experts like surveyors or timekeepers.

So no fibbing allowed. Do they really send judges around the world to check?

Yes, they're called adjudicators. Big events, like record-breaking attempts on TV, often pay to have one flown in. But most records are verified using the evidence you send. And here's a wild fact: Guinness gets about 50,000 applications a year, but only a few thousand actually become official records.

Fifty thousand! That's a lot of people trying to get into the book. I wonder how many were for pancake eating... asking for a friend.

Speaking of eating... not every idea makes it in. Guinness has retired some records over the years because they were unsafe or unhealthy. For example, there used to be a record for the world's fattest cat. But people started overfeeding their pets just to win, so Guinness scrapped it. Same with "heaviest smoker" or "most alcohol drunk", just

too dangerous. And the “longest time without sleep” record? Retired, because staying awake too long can cause serious brain damage.

I guess Guinness wants records to be amazing, but also safe and responsible. But if Guinness is so picky about what counts, why do people still go to so much trouble? What makes someone want to stack 10,000 doughnuts or balance spoons on their face for hours?

WHY

So, why do people go to such great lengths to get into Guinness World Records? Part of it is simple: humans love competition. We like to see who’s fastest, strongest, or just plain weirdest.

We also love bragging rights. Imagine being the kid at school who can say, “Yep, I officially hold the record for fastest sock-putter-onner in the world.” Instant playground legend.

Exactly. Records also inspire progress. Some Guinness records are about human achievement, like fastest sprinter or tallest building, which push us to go further and dream bigger. But plenty of records are just for fun. And some are safe enough that kids could give them a go at home or school. For example, the record for putting on ten socks on one foot is 11.91 seconds. The most finger snaps in a minute is 437. And the most underpants put on in 30 seconds is 23 pairs (set in your hometown of Brisbane, Bryce).

I don't think I even own that many undies!

Haha! And remember, not every idea makes it in. Guinness has retired records that encouraged dangerous or unhealthy behaviour. They want records to celebrate creativity, not harm.

Okay, but what do you get if you win? Is there, like, a giant cheque or free doughnuts for life?

Nope ...no prize money. What you do get is a certificate, your name in the official database, and maybe in the famous book itself. Plus, of course, eternal bragging rights.

So, the reward is basically fame, glory, and a great story for show-and-tell. Guinness World Records show us that humans love to push their limits... and that the weird, the wonderful, and the wacky are worth celebrating.... But, Christie here's my final question... after hearing about all these records, which one are you going to try?

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 - Sir Hugh Beaver's hunting trip in 1951 led to an argument: which bird was faster, the golden plover or the red grouse? Which of these 2 birds was faster? (The Golden Plover)

Question 2 - True or False: If you set a Guinness World Record, you win a giant cheque and a lifetime supply of doughnuts. False... A Certificate, your name in the database, bragging rights and maybe your name in the famous book

"Question 3 - Which of these is a real, safe Guinness World Record that kids could try?

a) Most underpants put on in 30 seconds

b) Longest nap during the school day

c) Most books not returned to the library

A... Most underpants put on in 30 seconds"

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of Guinness World Records.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.