Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations are shortened words. The most common types are: initialisms where the first letters of each word form the abbreviation. For example, ‘PTO’ for ‘please turn over’, ‘e.g.’ from Latin exempli gratia ‘for the sake of an example’, or ‘i.e.’ from Latin id est, ‘that is’. Acronyms are like initialisms, but they can be said as words, e.g. ‘NASA’ for ‘National Aeronautics and Space Administration’ or ‘scuba’ for ‘self-contained underwater breathing apparatus’.

Getting Started

Use your Oxford Student’s Dictionary to look up the initialisms in bold and answer the questions.

1. What does the I of IT stand for? _________________________
2. What is the first ‘w’ of www in website addresses? _________________________
3. What kind of television is CCTV? _________________________
4. Where might the pilot of a UFO come from? _________________________
5. What does the request RSVP ask you to do? _________________________
6. What is frequently asked in an FAQ? _________________________
7. What are you a master of if you receive an MA? _________________________
8. What are you a master of if you are an MC? _________________________
9. In which country is the FBI based? _________________________
10. An OBE is an award for which empire? _________________________

Moving on

Use your dictionary to look up the acronyms in bold to answer the following questions.

1. What type of waves are used in radar? _________________________
2. What job would you have if you took scuba gear to work? _________________________
3. What does the ‘M’ of RAM represent? _________________________
4. What type of fuel is derv? _________________________
5. What type of identification module is a SIM card? _________________________
6. What type of identification number is a PIN number? _________________________
7. What kind of protocol is WAP? _________________________
8. What part of your TV does Nicam affect? _________________________
9. What do you get in a WYSIWYG printout? _________________________
10. What is amplified in a laser? _________________________

Create three of your own acronyms. Ask a partner to guess what they mean.

11. _________________________ 12. _________________________ 13. _________________________

How many did you get right?

5 = novice 10 = expert 15 = maestro

You can use your Oxford Student’s Dictionary for these activities.