Dear young people, if you want to understand half of what your >40-year-old co-workers are saying, you need to watch these classic movies. Samples in context, with bewilderment denoted by "???":

- Office Space
  - "Yeah, that goes with the TPS report."
  - ???
- Idiocracy
  - "Oh, this drink is good...."
  - "It's got what plants crave."
  - ???
  - "And it was cheap, too."
  - "I like money." (Spoken like you're married to Veronica Mars.)
  - ???
- Sandlot
  - Anything
  - "You're killing me, Smalls!"
  - ???
- The Princess Bride
  - "I gotta head to a meeting...."
  - "Have fun storming the castle !!!"
  - ???
- Mr. Mom
  - Any number. "Port 443?"
  - "443 ... 444 ... whatever it takes."
  - ???
- Cool Hand Luke
  - Any demand.
  - "Shakin' the bush, Boss. Shakin' the bush."
  - ???
When you get bored talking to tech support and have to read off serial numbers....

A again
B back
C champagne
D double
E eye
F finally
G gnaw
H heiress
I ink
J Jose
K knife
L line
M mnemonic
N number
O over
P phantom
Q quiche
R repeat
S skip
T triple
U unreadable
V verbose
W wrong
X Xerox
Y yes
Z zed
"F" was "five," but I reconsidered that cheating and changed it. The basic guide is that the initial letter shouldn't sound like familiar sounds for that letter ("P" = "phantom"), no foreign words ("Jose" is acceptable, though, by fiat), and if those aren't possible, then just make it as confusing as possible as though you were reading a serial number ("T" = "triple").

So MIDYE5I2USS becomes: mnemonic ink double yes eye FIVE ink TWO unreadable skip skip.

Back in the day, when I was around 20, I worked in Alzheimer's units in nursing homes. My favorite patient -- or 'resident' -- was Alice, who couldn't remember my name, though she recognized me and was very friendly. Her medication had her manic, and she was forever walking restlessly. She once had a cut on her knee, and she got in and out of bed so frequently that I could count the blood polka dots on the edge of the bed.

The Alzheimer's unit had 8' drop ceilings, and there were usually flies on the ceiling [classy joint]. So, I'd fill up a cup with water and add a little detergent. Alice and I would walk up and down the long main hall, and when I saw a fly on the ceiling I'd lift the cup up slowly under the fly, and the fly would drop into the cup, get trapped by the detergent, and squirm to death. I'd hold the cup down for Alice to watch, and she got a kick out of it. We spent hours (!) walking up and down that hall, holding hands, and catching flies [the other residents decided to sleep]. It was the easiest way to keep her calm.

A few years back, my sleeping schedule got screwed up, and at midnight I ended up grabbing a book off the shelf for a good re-read. The book is "God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater," by Kurt Vonnegut Jr., of course, and I hadn't read it since high school. Plugging along, I got to page 78:

"The tumbler-and-soapsuds technique worked like this: A woman would look for a fly hanging upside down. She would then bring her tumbler of suds directly under the fly very slowly, taking advantage of the fact that an upside-down fly, when approached by danger, will drop straight down two inches or more, in a free fall, before using his wings. Ideally, the fly would not sense danger until it was directly below him, and he would obligingly drop into the suds to be caught, to work his way down through the bubbles, to drown."

"Of this technique Eliot often said: 'Nobody believes it until she tries it. Once she finds out it works, she never wants to quit.'"

So that's where I picked that up! What an unexpected surprise! Nostalgia .... catching flies with Alice........

Alice's doctor played around with her medication, and there was about a two week period where Alice was lucid and could remember my name. Then she went downhill and ended up in the hospital. I went to visit her every day, but she was near death and couldn't even open her eyes. The nurses put a mask over her mouth, to keep out the flies. She died pretty shortly after entering the hospital.

How strange that as I approach 50, one of my fondest memories is the hours 20-year-old me spent with a 70-year-old woman with dementia, who couldn't remember my name, walking up and down the hall, holding hands, catching flies in a cup of dishwater.....

Ever notice that the Park - Reverse - Neutral - Drive ("PRND") in an automatic car is "paranoid" without the vowels? Also matches:

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^[aeiou]*p[aeiou]*r[aeiou]*n[aeiou]*d[aeiou]*$
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- operand
- operandi
- paranoid
- pernod
- preened
- pruned