

By Becky Roberts

What's the best thing that ever got canned? It has to be air*. On the surface this sounds like a complete rip-off, but for sheer geekertainment value, it may well be the best thing to get canned since Nicolas Appert invented the canning process in 1811. Having lost more men to malnutrition, starvation, and scurvy than to the enemy, Napoleon was so thrilled with the invention, he awarded Appert the grand sum of 12,000 francs. Since the creation of the misnamed "canned air" in the 1980s, people have found all kinds of uses for it. Here are just a few of my favorites.

- 1 Freezing body parts of unwelcome visitors in your office—invert the can, aim at body part, and squeeze while informing the user that you don't take walk-in requests. If repeated with sufficient frequency and consistency, this should elicit a Pavlovian response and create an aversion to sidestepping the correction procedure for submitting a help ticket.
- 2 Cooling solder.
- 3 Removing chewed-off fingernails from keyboard.
- 4 Cleaning piercings.
- 5 Making obnoxious armpit noises—insert straw in armpit, squeeze arm to side of body, and press trigger.
- 6 Expelling ants from your work area.
- 7 Cooling your coffee in a caffeine emergency.
- 8 Removing irritants from bra without having to disrobe.
- 9 Ejecting the fluff from between toes while avoiding actual contact.
- 10 Cooling skin within a cast.
- 11 As an air-brush propellant.
- 12 [To play the English game of "Blow Football"](#)—traditionally played by blowing through straws, but expedient use of canned air makes for longer and more challenging games with reduced risk of hyperventilation.
- 13 Ridding infrequently used power supplies of brown recluse spiders (this happened...).
- 14 Cooling your feet off without having to remove socks or shoes—insert straw in sock and squeeze trigger. Be warned that this has the added bonus of liberally distributing body odor if you suffer from that problem. (This also applies to 5.)

- 15 Adding foam to hot chocolate.
- 16 Locating precisely which tooth it is that has become cold sensitive.
- 17 [Painting with hot and cold.](#)
- 18 Blasting the crud out of mice.
- 19 [The Incredible Growing Putty Ball.](#)
- 20 Firing small missiles.
- 21 Surprising a napping cat.
- 22 Confusing telemarketers—not as effective as an air horn, but still quite alarming.
- 23 Drying skate bearings.
- 24 Clearing sinuses. (Don't try this.)
- 25 Inflating balloons.
- 26 Quick-drying PlayDoh® sculptures of miniature donkeys made at desk on slow days.

Okay—so it's not quite 101 uses, but I bet you can think of some more. [Join the discussion](#) and help us come up with 75 more!

*Computer cleaning dusters are often mistakenly referred to as "canned air." In fact, these cans contain a liquefied gas that acts as a propellant. So when the trigger is squeezed, the resulting emission is actually a mixture of these gases and air. Understanding this basic principal is important in realizing that the misuse of this product can be dangerous.



[Becky Roberts](#) has worked as a database developer for the British aerospace industry, a mainframe programmer for a ceramics manufacturer, an applications developer for an employment agency, and an IT-do-everything person for international management consultants. She's currently playing with the networks in a chemical plant in Texas. Becky is an avid mountain biker and rock climber; she lives in inner-city Houston with too many pets, including four cats, three ferrets, and two teenagers.

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