

## PATENTSPEAK: A NEW LOGOPUTIAN LINGO

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In the language Patentspeak (more precisely, its American dialect), every sentence or phrase is required to be the title of a patent issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The number of issued U.S. patents is nearing the six million mark; nonetheless, Patentspeak is still a highly constrained language, due to the range of vocabulary available and the fact that patent titles are usually long phrases, not isolated words.

Although Patentspeak is fairly restrictive, to the experienced speaker it can be quite expressive. Here, for example, is a short dialogue from that famous primer *The New Guide of the Conversation in Patentspeak and English*, by Northo Carolino. First is Patentspeak, then in parenthesis, the English translation:

Method of and apparatus for providing a group query 5,485,605 (Hey, guys. How's it goin'?)

Methods and apparatus for acknowledging a paging message 5,526,401 (Well, we're still hanging in there. How about you?)

Weather forecasting watch 5,500,835 (Have you heard what it's gonna be like this weekend?)

Snow thrower 5,603,175 (Yeah. Lotsa white stuff, I hear)

Potty 5,535,456 (Crap!)

Charge status indicator 5,633,592 (Wanna hit the mall, or is your plastic maxed out?)

Waterproof money belt 5,540,366 (Are you kidding? I'm swimming in cash)

Computerized control of automobile speed 5,544,056 (Let's go, man. I'll drive!)

It is perfectly acceptable to add punctuation (or inflection, when speaking) in order to supply some additional expressiveness to the language. Note that true experts in Patentspeak can converse by just saying the seven-digit numbers, since there is a one-to-one correspondence between patent numbers and patent titles!

Should you wish to try your hand at composing in Patentspeak, a complete on-line "dictionary" of the language is provided--thanks to our tax dollars!--on the Patent Office website at [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov). Simply click on "Patents", then "Search U.S. Patents", then "Advanced Search". You can then find all patents containing any combination of one or more words.

We end this article with a rendition of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" in Patentspeak. It's interesting to speculate what a reader who was not familiar with the original would make of this; it clearly gains something by side-by-side comparison with Poe's poem. The line which pleases me the most is the pivotal first line of stanza 17 (perhaps the height of emotion in the whole poem) when the hero commands the bird to leave him, which is rendered as Patent #4,033,408: Go-devil storage and discharge assembly! Beside the verb discharge, which is after all what our hero is trying to do to the bird, we find the lovely, obscure, grammatically ambiguous term *go-devil*. This can be read as "Go, devil!" but of course it is actually a noun, usually referring to a ball or other device that's dropped into or propelled through a pipe. Many other lines repay further study by the prospective student of Patentspeak.

As an exercise, hop onto [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov) and try to rewrite Mary Had a Little Lamb. A quick check just now shows that there are 20 patent titles containing *lamb* and 57 including *fleece*, so the possibilities are there!

#### METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DISPATCHING A RAVEN, by Edgar Alva Poe

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 5,230,113 | Multiple position adjustable day night patient bed chair,   |
| 4,575,037 | Stand to hold a book or the like in an oblique position.  |
| 5,239,390 | Method and apparatus to monitor sleep behavior,   |
| 5,426,891 | Door knocker with invisible lenticular breast plate.  |
| 4,554,546 | Receiver for a sounder permitting the detection and measurement of phenomena linked with the earth's environment. |
| 5,407,392 | Winter scene room or space study.   |
| 4,233,504 | Apparatus for detecting the passage of glowing embers.  |
| 5,239,462 | Method and apparatus for automatically determining the approval status of a potential borrower,                   |
| 5,576,716 | Owner oriented system for locating lost or stolen property--  |
| 4,213,203 | Woman's outer garment and pattern therefor.   |
| 5,520,983 | Outerlining fabric for curtain and curtain attachment structure using the same                                    |
| 5,124,346 | Synergistic combinations in the treatment of anxiety;   |
| 5,243,993 | Apparatus and method for measuring heart rate,  |
| 5,635,981 | "Visitor identification system  |
| 4,363,118 | Sound carrier amplitude measurement system".  |

- 4,747,423 Adjustable and reducible walking aid and method of using same,
- 5,035,247 Sensor for non-invasive measurement of sound;
- 5,426,891 Door knocker with invisible lenticular breast plate,
- 4,729,490 Automatic touch actuated door opener--
- 4,289,406 Light transmission measurement method.
- 5,396,069 Portable monocular night vision apparatus,
- 4,735,199 Dream detection method and system;
- 4,837,806 Data communication process suitable for use in a quiet environment,
- 5,034,947 Whisper circuit for a conference call,
- 4,363,118 Sound carrier amplitude measurement system.
- 5,229,137 Methods and pharmaceutical compositions for treating episodic heartburn,
- 5,348,429 Tapping apparatus with rapid tap advance/retraction.
- 4,248,022 "Exterior window shutter assembly
- 5,401,032 Mystery puzzle game--
- 4,035,802 Method and apparatus for wind measurement!"
- 5,448,434 Shutter opening device,
- 5,551,923 Simulated articulated bird with wind activated wing flapping apparatus;
- 4,481,504 Sound level alarm which ignores transient sounds,
- 5,203,426 Portable window perch assembly--
- 5,315,957 Avian perch.
- 5,501,646 Jaw, face and neck muscle exercise apparatus,
- 4,650,556 Means for electrophoresis showing reduced smiling effect.
- 4,998,352 "Cutting unit for a shaving apparatus,
- 5,408,619 Naming service database updating technique?"
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 4,558,321 Visitor conversation system,
- 4,849,898 Method and apparatus to identify the relation of meaning between words in text expressions.
- 4,511,917 Determining agreement between an analysis signal and at least one reference signal,
- 4,009,686 Bird perch--
- 5,640,591 Method and apparatus for naming...
- 5,649,015 Speaker simulator,
- 4,292,674 One word buffer memory system.
- 5,094,718 Method and apparatus for control of web flutter
- 5,608,412 "Protocol and mechanism for mutter mode communication"--
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...

- 5,613,034 Method and apparatus for recognizing spoken words in a speech signal.
- 4,292,674 "One word buffer memory system,
- 5,615,640 Pet emergency disaster shelter and method,
- 5,574,242 Song coding for optimal performance"--
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 4,650,556 Means for electrophoresis showing reduced smiling effect,
- 5,613,256 Adjustable wheelchair seat cushion system;
- 5,598,615 Silk velvet textile and method of manufacturing the same
- 4,109,808 Method of storing articles in a warehouse to form an imaginary link of articles--
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 4,685,672 Guessing game and associated playing method,
- 4,489,121 Fire-resistant sandwich core assembly;
- 4,183,583 Head-support for use in a reclining seat,
- 4,482,594 Fine gauge cut pile tufted velvet,
- 4,419,765 Signal absence detector.
- 3,952,917 Perfume or cologne dispenser,
- 4,979,921 Shoulder-supported guardian angel doll
- 5,611,052 "Lender direct credit evaluation and loan processing system
- 5,340,832 Prolinal derivatives useful for treating amnesia!"
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 5,005,124 "Method and apparatus for categorizing and certifying!--
- 5,592,175 Location determination method and apparatus for a communication unit
- 4,084,232 Power confidence system--
- 4,126,897 Request forwarding system!"
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 5,005,124 "Method and apparatus for categorizing and certifying!--
- 5,582,883 Portable religious shrine--
- 4,193,213 Astrological fortune-telling device,
- 4,184,233 Fabric clasp device?"
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 4,033,408 "Go-devil storage and discharge assembly!"
- 4,706,689 Implantable homing device!
- 4,622,038 Low residue fiber spin finishes!
- 4,225,393 Door-removal device!"
- 4,950,201 Animal and bird call...
- 4,292,697 Furniture for sitting and reclining,
- 4,294,634 Method for manufacturing a solid statue;
- 5,570,698 System for monitoring eyes for detecting sleep behavior,
- 5,253,000 Device for projecting a moving image formed of light, shadow, and color
- 5,591,588 Method for the diagnosis of depression...