

# What are these strange squares?

August 2020 by Steven Dunwell



Have you seen these symbols appearing, even more so now that lockdown is easing? They can be seen on information leaflets, restaurants advising of distancing measures, banks, clothing, newspapers, billboards... the list is endless!

## They are known as QR codes

Abbreviated from “**Q**uick **R**esponse” code, they are a type of barcode which was first introduced in 1994 for the Japanese automotive industry to easily label spare parts and keep track of vehicles in production.

Now days they are widely used around the world and the code can contain usual information such as website addresses, links to YouTube videos, business cards, online product brochures, public health information etc.

## How do I read (scan) these codes?

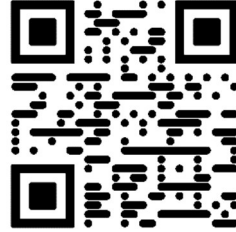
The most common way to scan a QR code is by using your mobile phone camera and a free app.

Search for “QR” in your mobile phones app store and you will find many free reader apps that you can download and use.

To scan a QR code, open the app, point your mobile phone camera at the QR code and hold still. The camera will identify the code and then show you information about the code on the phones screen.

## Give it a go!

Scan one of the codes shown below or look for some of the adverts in this Tomorrow Magazine as they use them as well!



## What else can they do?

Another useful area for the QR code is the growing popularity for making mobile payments. When you pay for your petrol, weekly shopping or even at some restaurants the credit card machine will display one of these codes and by using your mobile banking app you can pay for your goods. So, no need to touch the credit card machine at all, which is a great idea right now.

However, be wary of scanning QR codes placed on lampposts or walls, it may be tempting to see what they contain but they may take you to an “unsuitable” site.