

Byte Size Computer Fights

Like many people, I spend most of my working day sat in front of a computer screen, nursing the keyboard to meet deadlines. My son refuses to believe that this actually counts as work. In his mind, you play games on computers, or go online to look for pictures of cats doing funny things. Admittedly, certain social networking sites provide, occasional, means of distraction and procrastination when I'm meant to be working. But that doesn't really count. When I try to tell him that when I was ten no one even dreamed of owning a computer, and that 'surfing the net' hadn't been invented, he turns back to his DS with disdain. Trying to explain that the technology he's holding in his hands would have filled a room thirty years ago isn't worth it; he thinks that I'm making it up just to annoy him. I'm no computer geek, but I can't deny a certain fascination in the speed at which we've assimilated new technology. In 1969 man landed on the moon. Surprising then, to find out, that it wasn't until the following year that the first hand held calculator was invented. We got into space before we replaced the slide ruler! (I've still no idea – just like the song says – what a slide ruler's for.) The plethora of computer games that our children assume are their birthright made their first appearance around then too. Nolan Bushnell 'the father of video games' introduced 'Pong' to the world in 1971. Again, it's astonishing that man could walk on the moon three years before he could sit down and play a computer game. Years ago, I found Pong outside a charity shop, early one Sunday morning. I put some karmic money through their letterbox and went home to play it. It was back in the same charity shop by the following day, as any novelty of the 'blip' 'blip' of the dot back-and-forth across the screen soon lost it's (limited) appeal. Sadly, if I'd held on to that game, today, it would fetch enough online to pay the bills for a while. The story of Pong is now part of playground mythology – my son often asks incredulously, if that's really all the game did. The disgruntled huff when I refuse to let him play games on my computer is usually followed by a request to watch a DVD. Here again our perception of what makes a film 'good' reveals a technological generation gap. In 1995 Toy Story made history as the first computer generated full-length feature film. The knock on effect of this is that anyone under the age of 13 has grown up with an implicit expectation of speed and effects on screen. Persuading him that the fight scenes in the first Star Wars movie were groundbreaking, falls on deaf ears. So we agree to disagree. My one hope is that should the unthinkable happen, and anything go wrong with my computer he might know how to fix it. More likely, that he'll convince me to buy two brand-new [cheap computers](#) and keep mine as some cool retro souvenir.

About the Author

Sarah Maple uses [Shopping.com](#) to find [cheap computers](#) and compare prices.

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