

Geek Guide

Behind the jargon

by Nick Smurthwaite

'But daddy, you haven't killed anyone!' complained my nine-year-old son Harry when Star Wars Battlefront was finally over. I said I'd try harder next time.

It would help if I had the dexterity to know which knobs to twiddle what way, or indeed who I was meant to be killing.

The skills needed to negotiate a Playstation are not to be under-estimated. An enduring mystery for today's parents is how small boys who can barely write their own names can become quite so accomplished at something we don't even begin to understand.

In my own case I know that it is partly a generation thing. An older dad, I came to new technology relatively late and I've never felt entirely at ease with computers, iPods or mobile phones. Even working the remote for the DVD player or attempting to send a text message challenges me in a way my children find hilariously funny.

Things are moving at such an alarming pace in new technology that it is becoming increasingly difficult for clued-up geeks to keep up, let alone us old fogies who fondly remember the days of manual typewriters and bakelite telephones with silver dials. But it is all too easy – and dangerous – for the middle-aged to wallow in nostalgia. If you have young children, you owe it to them to try to keep up with the terminology, if not the outpouring of gizmos, so that at least you can communicate with them after they've left home.

Being comfortably at one with the technological revolution we're undergoing can only benefit our kids in the long term. Their futures will depend on it. Indeed many of our children will probably live to see computerised machines performing menial domestic duties, or serving us fast food at the drive-in Macdonalds.

Meanwhile here is my rough guide to techno-speak for anyone who, like me, is struggling to make sense of it all.

Blog is short for weblog, a hugely popular form of online diary, which anyone with an internet connection can set up. If you've not yet heard of sexblog: Girl with a One Track

Mind by 'Abby Lee' (winner of this year's best blog and now best-selling published author) then maybe it's time you popped your head above the parapet and had a look around some of the millions of blogs on the internet. And of course, you can become part of the scene immediately by posting your own comments, or even starting your own blog! (try it out at www.blogger.com)

Technorati is the best known search engine for looking for a particular blog (on just about any specialist subject you can think of). (www.technorati.com)

Vlog or videoblog is a video blog, using homemade (or even phonemade) video rather than written words. Check out the



Flapjack website (www.flapjackmag.com) for our own collection of vlogs – by our readers, writers and advertisers.

MP3 player is the generic term for the Walkman of the digital age, capable of storing up to 30,000 tracks. The best known brand is Apple's iPod. The more expensive ones (£250) can also play videos and store photos. To download music onto your iPod, you go to **iTunes** or a similar website, and pay a small amount per track.

Social networking is a collective term for shared interest groups, chatrooms and message boards where like-minded users can exchange views about any subject under the sun. If your children are over ten and have access to an internet connection then chances are they are accessing the two biggest social network sites for kids: **MySpace** and **Bebo**. These are an interactive network of blogs, photos, user profiles,

videos and an internal emailing system which young people use to chat, swap ideas, upload images and listen to and share music. In the UK, **MySpace** claims more than 7.6 million registered users and **Bebo** evenmore. Clearly, they are changing the way young people interact.

A **Podcast** is a radio programme or individually recorded programme on a website that you can download from the internet (25,000 available through iTunes) and then listen to on your computer or any MP3 player such as an iPod (hence the name). Podcasts essentially grew out of blogs and now everyone from Ricky Gervais (the most popular podcast in the UK apparently) to Tony Blair are recording them.

'You owe it to your children to keep up with the terminology'

Flickr is a picture share site where you can display your photographs and show them off to your friends. **Revver** is the same thing, only with videos.

YouTube is the best known and most popular viral video (generic term for video clips shared via the internet) website

that allows users to upload, view and share video clips.

MTV Flux is a new online space where you (that means your children) are able to control what goes on the MTV Flux TV channel. Fluxers communicate via web or mobile and upload their own video content for others to rate, with the most popular ones showing on Flux TV channel. Going head to head with **MySpace**.

Voip stands for Voiceover internet protocol which means you can have your phonecalls redirected through the internet, thus saving on your phone bills. We'll all be doing it in a few years, apparently. **Skype** is the leading consumer brand in this space.

Wikipedia. And finally, if you're still at a loss, try www.wikipedia.com, a very friendly, free online encyclopaedia.