



"It's All Geek to Me" Show Notes

Episode 4: Laptops!

Welcome to David Pogue's show notes for episode 4, all about life with laptops!

In these show notes, I'll provide a little more detail on stuff you see on the show. It's kind of like the way cooking shows post the recipes online.

Sizes and shapes. Fujitsu and Sony are the only companies that make microlaptops—under 3 pounds—with built-in CD/DVD drives. Most of the others have an external CD drive that you have to pack and track separately. No thanks!

That huge, huge laptop that you see is the Dell XPS 2020. Costs \$3,000; really radical design.

Road-warrior's travel kit. Extra battery...Ethernet cable ...phone cable...Travel mouse.

Don't shut down your laptop when you're going through security. Just close the lid to make it go to sleep.

We filmed this segment at the White Plains/Westchester, NY airport. They were really cool about it—they actually let me go through the X-ray machines, narrating away, while filming!

What a cool airport.

Panasonic Toughbook. My mom was really worried about this segment. She was concerned that viewers would not understand that *these are special laptops*, designed to withstand abuse. You can spill liquid on them, you can drop them, and they are totally fine.

These are *ruggedized* and *semi-ruggedized* laptops. Semi-rugged models are no bigger or heavier than normal laptops:



These have liquid-sealed keyboards and can withstand small drops.

I didn't demonstrate the *fully rugged* laptops, which are popular at construction sites and in the military. These babies are built like bricks, and can withstand unbelievable amounts of abuse.



Keyboard-protection membrane. The iSkin keyboard protector (<http://www.iskin.com/protouchmb/index.tpl>) keeps liquid and crud out of your laptop keyboard. This particular one is for Mac laptops, but you can find similar ones for your brand by going to Google and typing in, for example, *Toshiba laptop keyboard skin*.



Laptop insurance. The leading laptop insurance company is Safeware, which is <http://www.safeware.com/>.

But if you're interested in insurance, your home insurance company may be able to add a rider to your policy inexpensively. And, of course, you can always buy an extended warranty from the laptop maker.

Getting a public Wi-Fi signal. The site that lists all the Wi-Fi hot spots around the country is JiWire, <http://www.jiwire.com>.

Screen polarizing filter. The best-known company making these filters is 3M: http://solutions.3m.com/wps/portal/3M/en_US/ergonomics/home/products/computerfilters/

Internet in the hotel room. Why is it that the most expensive hotels are the ones that charge for Internet access—and in the cheap hotels, it's free!? Grrr.

Tabbed Web browsing. All of the major Web browsers now offer these tabs: Firefox, Safari, and the *latest* version of Internet Explorer.

Turning off Web graphics. In Internet Explorer, choose Tools -> Internet Options. On the Advanced tab, scroll down to the Multimedia heading; turn off "Show pictures." Click OK.

In Safari, choose Safari -> Preferences. Click Appearance. Turn off "Display images when the page opens."

In Firefox, open Preferences. Click the Content tab. Turn off "Load images."

Intercepting Wi-Fi signals. This segment creeped me out. I could not believe how much this guy could intercept.

The "sniffing" software he used was called Eavesdrop (for Macintosh), but there are plenty of similar programs for Windows, like EtherDetect Packet Sniffer.

Here's a list of free ones for Windows:

<http://netsecurity.about.com/cs/hackertools/a/aafreepacsniiff.htm>

So how do you protect yourself?

If you see a padlock in the corner of your Web browser, then you have an encrypted connection, and you don't have to worry about packet sniffers.

But email and anything you send or receive on *other* (non-encrypted) Web sites are another story. Probably the best way to protect yourself is to use VPN (virtual-private networking) software. Unfortunately, this generally costs a little bit of money, and the setup is not for novices.

Readers have recommended HotSpotVPN (<http://hotspotvpn.com/>), personalVPN (<http://witopia.net/personalmore.html>), and PublicVPN (<http://publicvpn.com/>), which is "the easiest to use (access is immediately available when you register and you can pay by the month, which may suit people who travel infrequently).

Fax by email. The services I've tried are efax (<http://www.efax.com>) and Faxaway (<http://www.faxaway.com>), the one that's \$1 a month. Beware: the free services make their money by flooding your email address with spam.

So the trick is to have your faxes sent to a separate email address, one that you use just for faxing, so your real email address won't fill up with spam.

PowerPoint pitches. Rats: one of my favorite tricks wound up on the cutting-room floor.

During a PowerPoint pitch, you can press the B key on your keyboard any time you want the screen to go completely *black*. That's great when you want to explain a point without your audience being distracted by what's on the screen. (You can also press W to make the screen go *white*!) Press the same key again to return to the picture.

Presenter Tools. The mode that shows the audience the slides (on the projector), but shows YOU the slide WITH your notes, is called Presenter Tools or Presenter View. It's *awesome*. It also lets you see which slides are coming up, lets you jump to another place in your show, and so on. (See the diagram below.)

In PowerPoint for the Macintosh, choose Slide Show->Presenter Tools.

In PowerPoint for Windows, choose Slide Show -> Set Up Show. A dialog box appears. Turn on Show Presenter View. Then, in the "Display slide show on" list, click the monitor you want the slides to appear on.



Cellular Internet. Man, if you can afford this service, it's *awesome*.

You equip your laptop with a special laptop card from Verizon or Sprint. (Verizon's is much faster.) Some laptops, in fact, come with this circuitry built in, so you don't need the card.

Then you have to pay \$60 a month for the service. (Verizon's is called BroadBand Access.) But it's awesome: in most metropolitan areas, your laptop is online a near-cable modem speeds, even when you're in a taxi or otherwise *not* in a Wi-Fi hot spot!

Outlets on planes. Bad news: those bathroom razor outlets are rapidly disappearing. I'm not even seeing the special outlets in First Class as much any more.

Good news: Some new planes (I saw one on an Air Canada flight recently) have *regular* power outlets at *every* seat. Check back with me in 20 years.

Smartphones. I'm referring, of course, to the BlackBerry, Treo, Motorola Q, Samsung BlackJack, Apple iPhone, and so on.

Sounds like a good topic if there's a second season of "It's All Geek to Me"!

Questions? Feedback on the show? Email me! I'm pogue@nytimes.com.

Want to let Discovery know what you thought of the show? You can leave feedback here (and yes, they do read these things!):

<http://extweb.discovery.com/viewerrelations>

And don't forget—you can watch the show in glorious, widescreen HIGH DEFINITION, starting June 7 on the Discovery HD Theater channel!

SCIENCE CHANNEL EPISODE SCHEDULE

The show is always broadcast with 2 episodes back to back. This list here shows when each episode *premieres.*

Digital Cameras: Friday, May 18 @ 8 PM
Cell Phones: Friday, May 18 @ 8:30 PM
iPods: Friday, May 25 @ 8 PM
Laptops: Friday, June 1 @ 8 PM
Rescuing Old Recordings: Friday, June 8 @ 8 PM
Camcorders: Friday, June 15 @ 8 PM

SCIENCE CHANNEL REPEAT SCHEDULE

There's a new episode every Friday night at 8 pm, with a bonus episode at 8:30 pm. Then, those 2 episodes are replayed together all weekend:

FRIDAY NIGHTS

11 and 11:30 pm
3 and 3:30 am (technically Saturday morning)

SATURDAYS

9 and 9:30 am

SUNDAYS

9 and 9:30 pm
12 midnight and 12:30 am (technically Monday morning)
4 and 4:30 am (technically Monday morning)

MONDAYS

10 and 10:30 am

DISCOVERY HD THEATRE EPISODE SCHEDULE

"It's All Geek to Me" will also be shown, in AWESOME widescreen high definition, on the Discovery HD channel. If you have a high-def TV, this is DEFINITELY the way to see it!

Camcorders: 6/6/07
Cell Phones: 6/6/07
Laptops: 6/13/07
Digital Camera: 6/14/07
iPods: 6/27/07
Rescuing Old Recordings: 7/4/07

ONLINE VIEWING

Unfortunately, Discovery still hasn't decided whether or not to make the episodes available online (for example, for sale through iTunes); if it happens, it won't be until the show is finished airing on TV.

However, you can find lots of free 2-minute excerpts on the show's Web site, <http://www.discovery.com/geek>. (They do make you watch a little ad before each excerpt, unfortunately.)