When I was 9 or 10 years old I remember having to help my grandmother operate the universal remote for the cable box, TV, and VCR. She would always have difficulty switching from watching TV to watching a movie in the VCR. She would frequently push the wrong button and change a setting or something else and would have me fix it. I think it was all the buttons on the remote that caused the confusion, so we tried writing some instructions for her on how to use it, but eventually just used a permanent marker and colored in four or five of the only buttons she should use and that seemed to solve the problem. The number of times I had to reprogram the remote went from several times a week to maybe a couple times a month.

> *Grandma had trouble with the remote.*
> *It was easy to fix, and I don't mean to gloat.*
> *We colored the keys,*
> *To put her at ease.*
> *It was easier than writing a note.*

⌘

Even though I had never played with a Nintendo Entertainment System, I quickly mastered it and became an expert on destroying cities as a giant lizard at the age of 5.

⌘

That reminds me…
In my high school computer class (typing class?) I was very bored one day and was trying to mess around with the settings but could not change much because it required an admin login and password, so I tried some generic credentials…

```
Username:  Admin
Password:  Admin
```


And it worked! Now this was in the year 2000 so maybe teachers and people in general back then were not very security conscious when it came to computers. Who knows? I told my friend in the class with me what I had discovered, and he brought a copy of the game DOOM with him to school the next day. And by the end of the week we were all playing DOOM on the school computers during class time when the teacher was not looking.

⌘

Me: "How did you set the conservation of string?"
Friend 1: "I put this constraint [shows me his code] at the beginning of the loop."
Me: "I tried something like that, but the coffee cup doesn't swing up past the horizontal axis."
Friend 2: "My coffee cup just flew away."
Me and Friend 1: [laughing out loud].
Friend 2: "I think I'm going to keep it like this."

⌘

⌘

Back in the early to mid-90's my dad had an IBM Model 25 SX that ran at a whopping 12 MHz and had a turbo mode that could boost it up to 16 MHz (Oh boy!!) For comparison, my PC runs at 4.00GHz which is 250 times more processing power than the IBM in turbo mode. I was taught how to use the operating system which was mostly DOS commands….

```
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation.  All rights reserved.

C:\>

C:\>dir

  Directory of C:\
04/28/2018    03:26 PM                0 AUTOEXEC.BAT
04/28/2018    03:26 PM                0 CONFIG.SYS
04/28/2018    03:29 PM  <DIR>     Documents and Settings
04/28/2018    03:31 PM  <DIR>     Program Files
04/28/2018    03:32 PM  <DIR>     WINDOWS
              2 File(s)          0 bytes
              3 Dir(s)   40,735,653,888 bytes free

C:\> cd Program files

C:\Program Files>
C:\Program Files>dir

  Directory of C:\Program Files
04/28/2018    05:18 PM                BestDadEver!.txt
              1 File(s)          0 bytes
```

⌘

[Undergrads] New course announcement: PHY 150/250 for spring quarter

…

Textbook or other required course materials

1) Department of Energy Fundamentals Handbook Nuclear Physics and Reactor Theory Volume 1 and 2 (PDF to be provided).

2) Energy from Nuclear Fission an Introduction Draft Edition (PDF to be provided)

3) One 2,000,000 Watt Mark II TRIGA nuclear reactor (to be provided by instructor).

(A. Sharma, personal communication, March 7, 2018).

⌘

I've always enjoyed playing video games, including on the PC. But it wasn't until after high school when I decided to build my own. I do not remember all the specs, but I do remember it taking me almost a year to save enough money to build it. Even though I was good at putting things together and fixing things, I was nervous when putting together my computer because this was the first time I had done it alone. I think it took me around 4 hours to assemble it because I kept stopping to double check everything. After it was all said and done, I powered on the PC for the first time and it worked! Nothing went wrong.

⌘

I'm not sure when this happened, but I somehow became the person in my family and of my friends that people came to when they were having computer issues. I taught myself how to fix common to uncommon problems by simply looking up the problem on the internet and trying the solutions that were recommended. Many of the solutions for different problems were quite similar and you'd be surprised how many problems are solved by simply powering off, then powering back on your computer or other electronic device. Even one of my ex-girlfriend's mom still calls me from time to time with computer issues.

Phone Rings

Me: "Hi Marsha."
Marsha: "Hi Alex. You wouldn't believe what I've been going through. I have to print up a form to have one of my tenants fill it out and sign it, then turn it into the management company by today, but my printer is not talking to my computer."
Me: "What happens when you try to print it? Does your printer come up in the list you can choose from?"
Marsha: "No, it's not even there because the computer is not talking to it."
Me: "Is your printer on?"
Marsha: "Oh my gosh. Thank you, Alex."

⌘

The first real coding class I took was CISP 360 at my community college and it was for learning C++. The person in the front of the class was professor Antos, but the class was taught by Bucky Roberts and his YouTube tutorials from his channel, "thenewboston." Also, if you forget your semicolons, you're going to have a bad time.

⌘

How to play Eve Online with a 56k dial-up connection:
1) Connect to internet: Pshhhkkkkkkrrrrkakingkakingkakingtshchchchchchchchchcch*ding*ding*ding*
2) Launch Eve Client. Begin to play game.
3) ***phone rings***
4) Get disconnected from game.
5) Yell at ceiling. Hang up on who-ever just called you.
6) Upgrade to DSL internet
7) Play game

⌘

⌘

THE GOOD

The first PC game I got really into is called Eve Online; I started playing Eve in 2003. It is a MMO (massively multiplayer online) which means there are usually thousands of players on at the same time playing the same game. In 2004 the company that owns that game, CCP, hosted a FanFest in Iceland where the headquarters are located. I was a very shy and awkward person, still kind of am, and would normally not go to anything like that, but it was easy to make friends in the game because everyone already shared a common interest. So, I purchased my tickets, booked a flight, and went to Iceland for 5 days. I had a ton of fun and got to meet some of the people I was friends with in the game and even though I no longer really play the game, I keep in touch with those friends I made.

THE BAD

During my time playing the game, I was working a full-time job and had other interests outside of the virtual world. But Eve can be a very demanding and insidious creature. It had slowly begun to take over many aspects of my life and I had let it. I was starting to set my alarm to wake up at 3:00am to complete some in-game task because that was the earliest possible time it could be done and therefore the most efficient way to get it done. It had also started to affect my job because I would be late for work occasionally, which had never happened before. Or I would take personal time at work to jump onto TeamSpeak via a phone app and talk to my friends that were in the game. Thankfully there was no worlds colliding moment where I almost lost my job or anything, just a moment in a day when I realized what was happening. I decided to start spending much less time in the game and even stopped playing for long periods of time. I will still log on occasionally, for an hour or so as a quick distraction, but that's it.

THE FORTUNATE

One of the program assistants for MESA at my community college is a graduate student in the physics department here at UC Davis. And we had talked a bit about physics and transferring to UC Davis but not much of anything else. One day we were talking about PC gaming and I mentioned I used to play Eve a bunch and it turns out he also plays Eve. We started talking about the game a lot more, sort of romanticizing/remembering the good ole days, and over time we developed a good friendship out of that. Now that I am here at Davis, he is helping me get into an undergraduate physics research position with his professor.

⌘

My first cell phone was a pre-paid phone from Virgin Mobile. I initially got it for myself in case of emergencies, but eventually started texting with it frequently which was a mistake because it cost $0.25 per text (RIPOFF!!).

I had to eventually ditch Virgin because they had updated they're security policy one day and found out I could no longer add money to my phone because I could not remember some secret passphrase I had setup once and never had to use, until that moment. So, I upgraded to a Motorola Razr phone. At the time it was seriously the coolest phone ever, from the way it looked to the way it flipped open. Who am I kidding, it still is one of the coolest phones ever!
Just look at how cool that phone is there.

⌘

      One of the responsibilities at my previous job, at the pawn shop, was fixing all the laptops that we purchased and helping the eBay guy write descriptions for them. I enjoyed working on the laptops but the biggest issue we had is other stores not properly checking the higher end laptops we would sell on eBay. So, I created a checklist/form for the stores to fill out to help make our job easier.

	Yes	No
Does the laptop turn on?	❑	❑
Is the screen cracked?	❑	❑
Do all the buttons work?	❑	❑
Is it infested with cockroaches?	❑	❑
Is it factory reset?	❑	❑

…

And so on. We seriously did have to check to make sure the electronics were not infested with cockroaches because it was a common occurrence ☹

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