

Gadget heaven ... or hell

Are any of the latest electronic products unveiled at the world's largest technology fair really necessary, or are they just desirable?

1 Which statement (a-d) best reflects your own opinion? Compare your answer with a partner.

(a) I love to buy the latest gadgets before anyone else

(b) I tend to buy electronic products when I feel they are established in the market

(c) I only buy electronic products when I absolutely have to

(d) I'm just not interested in all these new-fangled gadgets

2 Read the list of products. Scan the podcast transcript and write in the correct numbers (1-6) next to each product.

smartpen [...] **mp3 player [...]** **netbook [...]** **data projector [...]** **internet TV [...]** **smartphone [...]**

[0] It's no surprise that the world's largest electronics show is held in the glitzy surroundings of Las Vegas. Past exhibitions have unveiled groundbreaking electronics products like the VCR and the DVD. I'm here to see what's on offer at this year's Consumer Electronics Show.

[1] I'm at Palm's stand, creators of the Palm pilot, holding their new Smartphone, the Pre. According to their CEO, no-one wants to just make calls on their phone anymore; the Pre is designed to be the co-ordinating centre for your online life as well. It merges contacts from social networking sites like Linked in and Facebook with your regular phone numbers.

[2] Convergence is the name of the game. When you watch TV, would you like to access the web and check the price of shares onscreen, or make that winning bid on e-bay? Thanks to Samsung's hooking up with Yahoo! that's now possible ... the question is: do you really want to?

[3] I never knew I needed a Pulse Smartpen until now. It uses special paper and records not only what you write but also the audio! Just link your pen to a computer through a USB connection, and all the notes and audio can be uploaded. So

next time a meeting is fast and furious, just jot down the key words and let your pen capture the audio!

[4] On show is the latest mp3 music player from Sansa, called slotRadio. It comes with 1,000 prerecorded songs chosen by music experts, and arranged by genre into playlists. It'll save hours of downloading time, and you can buy a refill of new music anytime!

[5] Over here is the latest pico projector. You can connect it to a mobile phone, iPod or laptop. The resolution is hardly anything to write home about, but to be fair, it is a pico projector. Images on the wall are a bit over 120 centimetres. I can already hear business presenters apologizing: "Oh dear, I've lost my mobile so I, er, cannot show that presentation!"

[6] Talking about laptops, Sony has launched an ultra-portable 'netbook' computer, aimed at people who want to surf the net, edit documents and check their emails on the go. Weight? Seriously light at just 618 grams. Size? The screen is just 20 centimetres. The £800 plus price tag is rather big, though. So, there's plenty here to keep the most enthusiastic geek happy. The question is: which ones will make it into the shops? This is Mark Jones, for World News, in Las Vegas.

3 Read the whole podcast transcript. What does the reporter say about each of the products?

4 Find words in the podcast from their definitions below.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| (a) something announced officially which was previously a secret | [0] |
| (b) using new methods, or achieving new results | [0] |
| (c) interaction between a group of people who share a common interest, often over the internet | [1] |
| (d) a situation in which people or things gradually become the same or very similar | [2] |
| (e) offer a particular amount of money for something, for example at an auction | [2] |
| (f) something that is extremely easy to carry or move, so that you can use it in different places | [6] |
- (Some definitions from or based on: Macmillan English Dictionary © Macmillan Publishers Ltd)

5 Answer the questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your answers to the class.

- (g) Would you buy any of the products mentioned in the podcast? Why / why not?
- (h) Which of these electronic products do you think will become big in the future? Can you add any others?
- (i) Name a 'must-have' gadget or electronics product. Explain why you feel it is 'indispensable'.