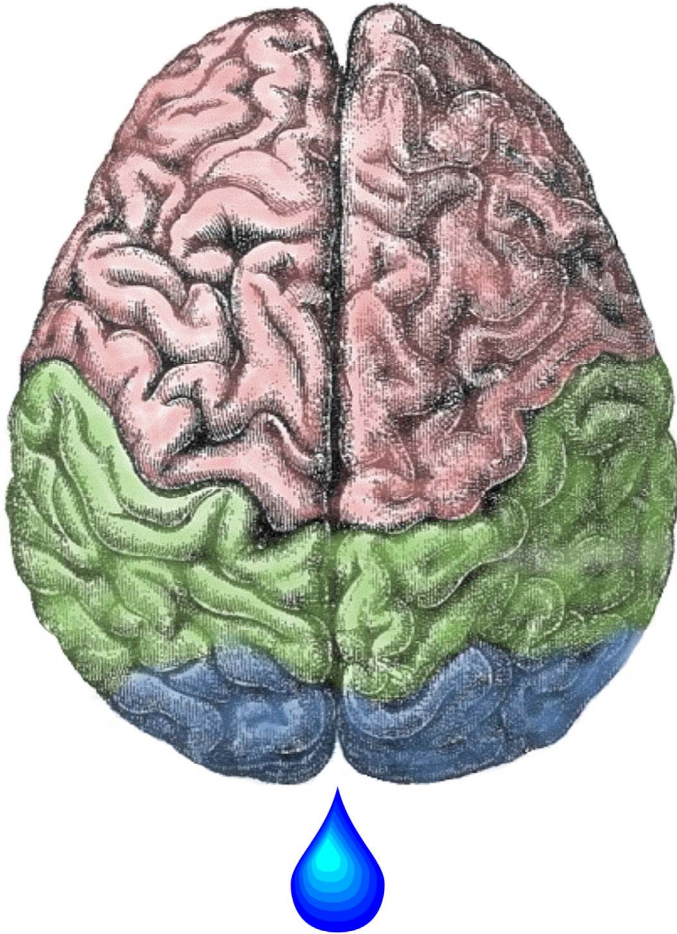


# Cerebral Seepage

March 2008  
Issue 1



## **Contains Articles On**

- Vaginas
- Geishas
- Piracy
- Cynicism

**New!**  
but not yet  
improved

**Rated G**  
As In:  
**Go to Hell**

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## A Word From TheAlmightyGuru



You are lucky because you're reading the very first issue of TheAlmightyGuru's online magazine *Cerebral Seepage*.

For years now I've been trying to convert my various projects into something that is fit to publish, but it seemed that by the time I got halfway through the editing process my mental wanderlust would push me away to a totally different project. I am confident that this publication's small scale and open layout will give me the freedom I need in order to actually stick to something for a change. If I have a proper amount of good old-fashioned self-discipline, then hopefully this issue will begin a series of monthly releases that will eventually accumulate into something I can be proud of.

Some of you reading this are already familiar with my Web site ([www.thealmightyguru.com](http://www.thealmightyguru.com)) and will no doubt recognize some of the recycled bits in these first few issues. Yes, I'll be regurgitating my past ideas and essays because, let's face it, if it was gold on my Web site, it's gonna be gold in a magazine. Don't fret though, each issue will certainly contain plenty of unique bits of wholesome readable goodness for you to digest. As for the overall theme of this magazine... well, you know the theme of my Web page? This magazine will have the same theme (i.e. none at all).

Also, because I'm so hip to Al Gore's amazing creation, the Internet (yeah, that joke hasn't been worked into the ground), this magazine will contain plenty of hyperlinks to various Web sites. They will direct you to entertaining, and more importantly, free places in cyberland where you can experience exactly what I'm talking about.

For those of you who would like to help support this crazy experiment I'd like to invite you to purchase a genu-wine printed copy of this periodical using state-of-the-art 1450's technology. That Gutenberg character really knew his stuff! Just mosey on over to [www.tulu.com](http://www.tulu.com), search for "Cerebral Seepage" and order a copy. The color version will run you \$8.99, but you can get a black and white copy for a mere \$5.99 plus shipping. I apologize for price, but I'm printing on demand here, and it's not like I have a septillion sponsors just begging to pay for ad space... not even a quintillion if you can believe that. I mean, for crying out loud, I'm only making about 25 cents per copy. The damn printing company is practically raping me! Well, technically, they're raping you, but who's counting?

# Movies You Should Watch



Enqueue these into your NetFlix, buy them on Amazon, rent them from a video store (if you still live in 1835), or, if you're a cheapskate, download them on BitTorrent. Either way, these are movies that you ~~should~~ will watch, and if you've already seen them, you should probably see them again... just in case.

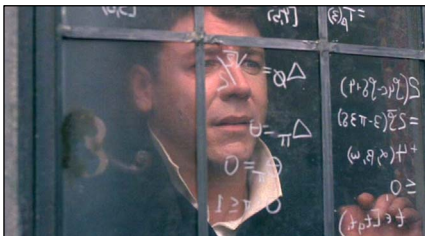


Even if you don't remember what SOHCAHTOA stands for, you can still enjoy the very exciting and dramatic tale *A Beautiful Mind*.

Russell Crowe plays the incredibly brilliant, yet terribly anti-social mathematician John Nash. His tendency to alienate himself, even among other mathematicians, is

immediately apparent when he begins his freshman year at Princeton University in the 1940s.

Demanding only greatness from himself, Nash remains isolated in his room, skips all of his classes, and ignores everyone. His only goal is to become a legend by creating a truly unique theorem and he has staked his entire future on that goal.



However, as time passes, his unique theorem never comes to him, and all that Nash has to show for his time is frustration, failure, and the ridicule of his classmates.

Panic sets in. Nash sees his future crumbling to dust before him.



Only the unconventional wisdom of his slacker roommate (Paul Bettany) can keep Nash from spiraling out of control.

One of the things I love about this movie is how it portrays that fine line between genius and insanity and the inability for an idiot savant to grasp the basics of human interaction. Nash's intelligence is insurmountable, yet he is a bumbling fool around women. Though he is smitten by the patience and quick wit of Alicia (Jennifer Connelly), his skill in mathematics is useless in his attempts at capturing her heart.



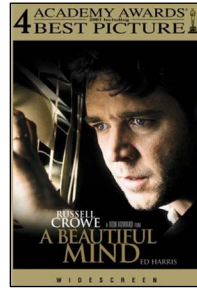
The mystery really picks up when Nash meets Department of Defense agent, William Parcher, (Ed Harris) and everything begins to change for Nash. Hidden messages become clear, people are always watching him, friends can't be trusted...

While *A Beautiful Mind* is based on the real-life John Nash, the movie has been widely criticized for being considerably different to the real



story. Director Ron Howard and writer Akiva Goldsman take great

liberties with the story, but then the movie isn't billed as a documentary. All of the added fabrications are important because they add excitement and make the movie easier to follow.



I also loved the minor roles of Nash's enduring friends played by Adam Goldberg and Anthony Rapp. Josh Lucas plays an excellent foil, and Christopher Plummer

proves that he's still got it after all these years.

In the end, I really like the movie. It's interesting and emotional, and it lets you root for the underdog. The movie is presented so that you don't need to know anything about mathematics to enjoy it, but if you do, you'll appreciate it even more.



My next review is Hayao Miyazaki's animated opus, *Spirited Away*.

If I had to sum it all up in one sentence I would say that *Spirited Away* is the *Alice In Wonderland* of the 2000s. The movie is the incarnation of unbridled creativity and emotion.

The movie begins by introducing us to Chihiro, a young girl

who is moving out to the country with her parents. Chihiro can best be described as a brat; she's a whiner, a complainer, and a coward.

The simple rural drive is complicated when a wrong turn lands the family at the entrance of a strange tunnel of unknown origin. Though the tunnel seems benign, it suddenly becomes a gateway into a spooky world that is not at all what it seems.



As the movie continues, a feeling of mystery and dread will begin to grow inside of you. Night falls and all of the terrifying spirits come out to play. Chihiro is separated from her parents in a truly bizarre manner, and only the help of a strange boy named Haku and a many-armed old man named Kamaji are able to help her.



Poor Chihiro is plunged into a world totally unlike any she's ever seen before; a horrible world where little girls don't belong. What's even worse is that the only way that Chihiro can find her parents is by confronting Yubaaba, a ghastly witch who likes to steal away from little girls their given names.



Chihiro's soon realizes that she can't fit into this world any more than she could fit into her own. Everyone is rude and cruel, and some of them, like the enigmatic faceless spirit, are altogether quite terrifying.



Like most anime (Japanese animation), the animation is presented in a much lower frame rate than the smoothness that fans of Disney have come to expect. However, the drawings themselves are incredibly detailed, so you may not even notice. The beautiful landscapes, striking characters, and seamless use of CGI make this movie a feast for the eyes and every character, location, and prop is ex-



quisitely detailed and unique. If you are a child, or even if there is still a little bit of a child left in you, you should definitely see this movie.



## ROMAN NUMERALS

The Romans used a letter system adapted from the Etruscan numeral system for writing numbers with letters instead of the special symbols used in Arabic design (which is used by English speakers). Also, unlike the Arabic design, Roman numerals are not decimal, so there aren't ten values for each place holder. This makes Roman math more complex.

I	V	X	L	C	D	M
1	5	10	50	100	500	1000

You can see from the table the different symbols used in the Roman numeral system. Each letter has a numeric value. To write 152 you would use C for 100, L for 50, and II for 2. So the Arabic 152 is the Roman CLII. Larger numerals always go to the left. So counting in Roman numerals from 1 to 20 would look like this: I, II, III, IIII, V, VI, VII, VIII, VIIII, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XVIII, XX.

For larger numbers (5000 and above) a line is drawn above a letter to show that it should be multiplied

by 1000. Thus  $\bar{V}$  is 5,000,  $\bar{C}$  is 100,000, and  $\bar{M}$  is 1,000,000.

There are a couple other Roman numerals that are not used as often, especially in modern times because the symbols don't appear on keyboards however they can be created by playing around with Cs and Ds. They symbols are  $\text{ↀ}$  for 1,000,  $\text{ↁ}$  for 5,000, and  $\text{ↂ}$  for 10,000.

A problem occurred with Roman numerals—as society became larger their numbers also became larger. The number 3989 in Roman numerals is written as MMMDCCCCLXXXVIII.

Obviously, this became a hassle for those who had to write the numbers, so near end of the 1300s a new method for writing Roman numerals called subtractive notation came into practice.

Subtractive notation can be seen in the number 4. In original Roman it would look like IIII, but using subtractive notation it looks like IV. You can tell when subtractive notation is in effect because a smaller numeral precedes a larger one. To read the number, you



simply subtract the larger one from the smaller. Thusly, XL is 40. Because L is 50 and X is 10 and  $50 - 10$  is 40. If we convert 3989 it becomes MMMCMLXXXIX, which is six numerals fewer.

However, subtractive notation wasn't without its problems. It complicated the ability to quickly read the numerals by introducing minor subtraction that must be done in your head each time you look at the number.

Another rule in subtractive notation concerns which number can precede another. As a rule, you're only supposed to use a number that is no more than two symbols lower than the larger. So to write 99 you should use XCIX. You should not write IC because I is four numerals away from C. This makes it okay to use L and X on C, but not V and I. In the same way 1950 should not be written LM because L is three numerals away. 1950 should be written MCML. Subtractive notation is made easier when you don't have to jump around as much.

You'll notice that there is no symbol for zero. Although the Romans did indeed understand what zero was, they didn't need it to write their numbers because they didn't use a positional notation system (where each place value is multiplied by a constant—in decimal numbers it's 10). On rare instances an N could be used to show zero, but it was never used in conjunction with other numerals. Without a zero, Roman numerals could never evolve a positional notation system which makes complex math much easier.

The Roman numeral system was replaced by the Arabic system (the

one that we use) at the beginning of 1400 CE.

If ancient mathematics don't interest you, you might want to skip ahead a little, but for you nerds out there, I'll give you an example of what math was like with Roman numerals. Addition is simple, but slow as you can see from the statement below.

$$\text{DCLXIX} + \text{LXXIV}$$

First, remove subtractive notation

$$\text{DCLXVIII} + \text{LXXIII}$$

Next, concatenate the two numbers.

$$\text{DCLXVIII} \text{LXXIII}$$

Then, sort the numbers by largest value

$$\text{DCLXXXVIII} \text{IIII}$$

Now, combine any numbers that you have enough to move into a larger symbol. So, if you have five Is convert them into a V, and so on.

$$\text{DCCXXXIII}$$

Convert back to subtractive notation and you have your answer.

$$\text{DCCXLIII}$$

It's a good idea to check your math using your conventional system. In decimal,  $669 + 74 = 743$ . Does  $\text{DCCXLIII} = 743$ ? Yes, so we succeeded. When you compare addition with Roman numerals to Arabic decimal you'll see the obvious advantage.

Subtraction with Roman numerals is simple enough, but it's still far more complicated than what we're used to. Here's our example:

### **CXIX - XLVII**

Just like with addition, the first thing you do is remove subtractive notation.

### **CXVIII - XXXVII**

Next, eliminate the numerals that are shared between the two numbers. In this case there is an X, a V, and two Is on each side, so remove them.

### **CII - XXX**

Now all the matching symbols are gone. So, in order to remove more symbols you need to expand the first number by rewriting it with lesser numerals to get more shared numbers. First, write the C as two Ls.

### **LLII - XXX**

There still aren't any matches, so expand one of the Ls into five Xs.

### **LXXXXII - XXX**

Now that we have more shared numerals we can remove some more. Take three Xs from each side, which eliminates the second number and we're left with our result.

### **LXXII**

You then convert the number back to subtractive notation if it's needed. Once again, check your math with your regular numbers.  $119 - 47 = 72$ . Does LXXII = 72? It does, so we succeed.

That's a lot more steps than what we're used to, so you can see why the system was abandoned. Multiplication and division are even more complex, which means that decimals, fractions, and percents are insane. Algebra and trigonometry would be downright evil, and calculus would no doubt cause brain hemorrhaging.

Roman numerals are still popular to this day in certain circles. The copyright dates at the end of movies are often in Roman numerals. Many clocks still use Roman numerals. Actually, clocks tend to use inconsistent subtractive notation, but that's another story. And let's not forget the wonderful world of sequels like Super Bowl™ XLII, Star Wars VI, and Rocky MMCLXXVIII. There's just something about Roman numerals that demands respect. I mean, how can you not respect a title when the number is written with letters?

If you need help trying to remember the order of the Roman numerals you can use cute little mnemonics like, "I Value Xylophones Like Cows Dig Milk," or, "I'm Very eXcited Like Constables Dancing Mambo." Personally, I prefer my mnemonics to be more creative, which is why I use, "Incest Vivifies Xenophobic Lecherous Donkey Mutilators."

# Songs You, Like, Totally Need to Listen to, OMG!

I understand that you and I may not have the exact same taste in music, but I'm sure there is a psychiatrist somewhere trying to figure out how to cure your mental disease. In the meantime I invite you to listen to some music that may help broaden your horizons.



This first song comes from Don McLean's 1971 album *American Pie*. I'm not even going to bother telling you about the title track—everyone knows about it, if not from the original, then at least from that sacrilegious remake that Madonna puked out.

I'd rather talk about the song *Vincent (Starry, Starry Night)*. As the name suggests, the song is about the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, specifically about trying to understand what the artist went through by studying his work. The sound of the song is beautiful. McLean's voice and instrumentation is melodious and wonderful to listen to, even from a song with such a depressing topic as a tortured artist's suicide.



The piece that inspired McLean.

The lyrics are poetic, like much of McLean's work, and he delivers them with perfect timing and accentuation. When you really sit down and listen to this song, it's difficult not to become emotional.

You can view a nicely compiled slideshow of this song with accompanying visuals of Van Gogh's artwork at

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dipFMJckZOM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dipFMJckZOM)



This next song is a huge jump from the melancholy sound of the previous one. The Fratellis are a recent rock band from Glasgow, Scotland that has rapidly gained popularity with their first studio album, *Costello Music*.



The album came out in September of 2006 and has since allowed the release of a whopping six singles; the first of which is the song *Henrietta*.



The Fratelli's in the *Henrietta* video.

If you love songs about fun-loving rapsclions who convince married women to ditch their husbands for a romp through the city, sung with ample vocals to the sound of brass and electric guitar (and who doesn't?), then you'll probably love this song too. The beat practically forces you to dance with a nice fast tempo and punchy, sometimes incomprehensible, lyrics. To offset the onslaught of audio stimuli, the song makes liberal use of rests and a cappella breaks. You can take a listen, as well as a look at the music video at

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Bs9\\_k3kvc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Bs9_k3kvc)

This last song is a little bit more like the first. It's sad, it's depressing, and it's one of the songs that you can't help but become enthralled with. It's the title track off Azure Ray's EP *November*, and it is

the perfect song for transforming a mere bad mood into an all-out gloomy mood. Like most of Azure Ray's

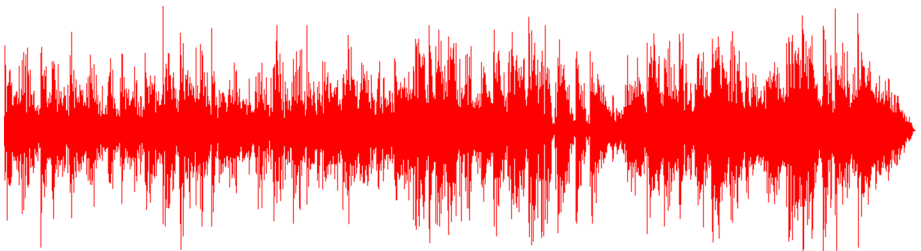


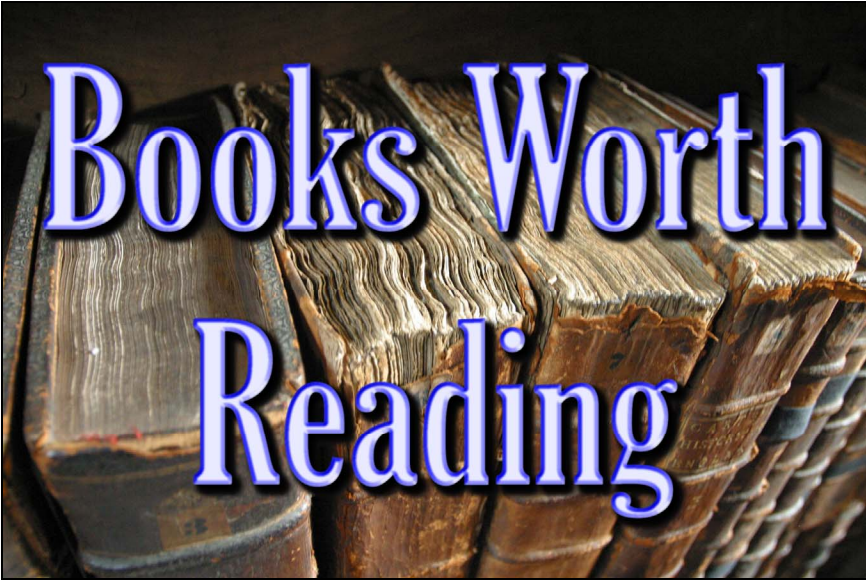
music, the song has a slow tempo with whispered vocals that allow you to mellow out and soak in the melody. A lot of break-up songs deal with extreme emotions like anger, jealousy, and sadness, but few of them speak about the lingering fear of loneliness that sets in after something major ends. That particular feeling is so eerily captured in *November* that you can't help but feel sympathy for the writer.

What really makes the song something special is that it isn't content with merely being about the torture of loneliness, but it instead offers a glimmer of hope by assuring us with the lyric, "I'm about to give this one more shot," but more importantly in the follow up line, "and find it in myself." Which reminds us that you can't cure loneliness just by being around other people, you have to cure it by yourself.

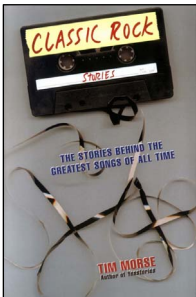
Although Azure Ray never made a video of *November*, you can listen to the song on their MySpace page at

[www.myspace.com/azureray](http://www.myspace.com/azureray)





Yeah, that's right. I'm trying to make myself look all learned and well-read by having a book review section. Impressed? I didn't think so. While you no doubt have your own literary taste, I'm going to give you a few suggestions that you may want to take a look at anyway. Everyone needs to add another book onto their to-read list, right?



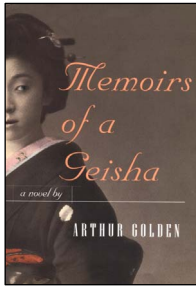
If you're a fan of classic rock you'll love Tim Morse's *Classic Rock Stories*. It's a compilation of the tales behind the most famous classic rock songs including the why and how of all your favorites. You'll be surprised by some of the bizarre things you find in here.

Want to know the reason for the stuttering in Bachman Turner Overdrive's *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet*? Did you know that The Rolling Stones' *Paint It Black* was originally meant to be a comedy track? Find out where The Who got the name for *Boris the Spider*, and lots of other odd little rock footnotes.

The book is broken up into sections, such as "Accidents Will Happen" for those songs that just came out of nowhere, and "Cocaine"

for songs that... well, they don't call it sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll for nothing. There are also sections for songs that just seem to have written themselves, as well as deep thoughts about life and death, and of course rock's iconic themes, protest and rebellion.

I can't put it any plainer than this—if you like classic rock, you need this book.



Sometimes when I read a work of fiction, I become so engrossed that I forget that what I'm reading happened only in the imagination of its author. *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden is one of those books. It just feels real—not only because of its historic accuracy, but also from the way the characters behave. They seem to act exactly as you would expect them to, even when you wish they wouldn't. Part of the realism comes from the fact that Golden consulted the life of an actual Geisha for his story, and part of it comes from the overall quality of the writing.

Upon opening the book, you are introduced to the dismal life of eight-year-old Sakamoto Chiyo. Her mother is dying from bone cancer and her aging father, a mere fisherman, can no longer provide for his daughter. Instead of letting his

family starve to death, Chiyo's father does the only thing he can do—he sells Chiyo and her sister into service.

Perhaps in a more modern age a young girl might find herself working in a factory, but in Japan, in the 1930s, a woman's work meant something much different. The act of being sized up and sold like an animal is a terrifying experience for the two girls, but being separated is even worse. Chiyo, who is attractive with her unusually blue eyes, is sent to be trained as a geisha, but her plain-looking sister is sold as a prostitute.

You will experience first-hand the pitiful desperation of Chiyo as you read the book, both in her attempts to reconnect with her sister and to fight the strict rules of the geisha house. And when you meet Hatsumomo, a beautiful and well-respected geisha with a twisted black heart, be prepared to include her in your mental definition of the word "loathe".

However, more than heartbreak is encountered in this tale, for this book is most certainly a romance novel. Not some trashy newsstand tripe with Fabio on the cover, but a real honest-to-goodness love story.

There may be a few inconsistencies between the book and what a real geisha's life was like in the 1930s, but most the lifestyle, as well as the Japanese terminology, is accurate. Take my advice and don't just settle for the movie; this book is so much better. You will feel sorrow. You will feel loss. You will be heartbroken. But trust me, it will be worth it.

## The Glass Is...

We've all heard that an optimist thinks that the glass is half-full, and a pessimist thinks that the glass is half-empty, but what about all the other different types of personalities?

<b>Optimist</b>	The glass is half-full.
<b>Pessimist</b>	The glass is half-empty.
<b>Empiricist</b>	According to my calculations the glass is at precisely 50% of its overall capacity.
<b>Rationalist</b>	First tell me what's in the glass and then I'll decide how full it is.
<b>Absurdist</b>	It doesn't matter one way or the other.
<b>Hedonist</b>	Hey, if it has whiskey in it, let's party!
<b>Animist</b>	Why don't we ask the glass what it thinks?
<b>Theist</b>	Worship the Holy glass and all of Its pure contents.
<b>Atheist</b>	I don't believe in the glass or anything that may be in it.
<b>Agnostic</b>	I don't think it's possible to really know for sure how full the glass is.
<b>Reductionist</b>	That all depends on what the glass is made out of.
<b>Nihilist</b>	Glasses don't exist and you can't prove they do, so the question is moot.
<b>Pantheist</b>	The glass is just another part of the universal dining set.
<b>Idealist</b>	The glass is exactly as full as I think it is.
<b>Existentialist</b>	It has something in it, just leave it at that.
<b>Nominalist</b>	Are you sure it's not a cup?
<b>Objectivist</b>	My perception of the glass's contents doesn't affect its reality.
<b>Egoist</b>	It's not my glass, so I really can't be concerned with the matter.
<b>Fideist</b>	I'm positive the glass is there, even if I don't see it.
<b>Surrealist</b>	It looks more like a chicken to me.

Do you have a question, but you're too stupid to figure it out on your own?

Well then, why not...

# ASK A GURU

**Q:**

Why do girls have a period?

**A:**

Eve, being the skank that she was, ate an apple. This pissed off God like you wouldn't believe and he decided to punish women for all of eternity by making them spew forth blood from their cha-cha's every a month. By doing this, he ensured that women would never eat apples EVER again! So basically, God is an apple Nazi.

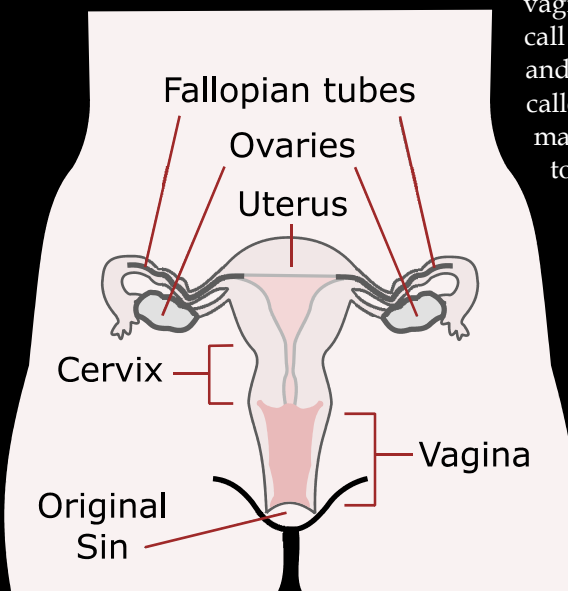
In fact, women have it so bad that, according to the book of Leviticus, *"And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean*

*until the even."* (15:19). But wait, it gets better! *"And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the Lord for the issue of her uncleanness."* (15:29-30).

So ladies, when your period ends you're supposed to kill off two turtles, or maybe three if you're having one of those "heavy-flow" days.

Okay, back to the real world. Most placental mammals go through an estrous cycle, more commonly called "being in heat". However, for

the great apes (yes, that includes humans) a slightly different cycle called menstruation occurs. Now normally you would learn all about menstruation in the third grade from a fifty-year-old film strip that uses words like "golly" and "geewilikers", but we assume that you were too busy smoking crack in the little girl's room that day, so let's have a quick review.



Humans, along with most other animals, use sex as a means of reproduction (and for advertising sports cars and beer). Upon puberty a female's body begins going through the cycle of menstruation. Without getting into too much detail and becoming a text book, we'll explain the menstrual cycle.

A woman's ovaries house her ova (or eggs). At the beginning of the cycle, the chick's hormones whack-out and cause one of her ovaries to prepare an ovum for a joy ride down the fallopian tube towards the uterus. The uterus pre-

pares for the oncoming ovum by building up its endometrium (inner lining) with nutrients and blood. If the ovum is fertilized with sperm (meaning flunitrazepam was probably involved), then it takes up residence in the uterus and forms into the typical demon spawn that we all know and love. Otherwise, the excess endometrium and the ovum are discarded through the vagina in a process that scientists call being "on the rag". The blood and tissue from the discharge is called menses, something that makes the haematophiliacs want to earn their red wings.

A female is only capable of becoming pregnant during certain parts of the menstruation cycle—usually around 19 to 10 days before the expected menses flow. However, sperm can survive in the body for as long as eight days, so if you're one of those people who use the rhythm method of birth control, you may want to go out and buy some condoms, they're cheaper than diapers.

Logic would suggest that the best way for a species to maintain its numbers would be by keeping the females in a constant state of heat. But when you look at how much havoc it causes on the female body, not to mention the limited number of ova a woman has and the chances of actually having a male stick around and help raise the brat, it makes sense for humans to have evolved to their limited amount of time of feeling... you know... not so fresh.





I've never much cared for graffiti. There are some who have successfully turned vandalism into a work of art through years of practicing the Tao of the spray can, but the majority of what you see is ill-thought babble that ruins the beauty of public structures. However, there is one vandal from my past who I don't think I'll ever forget—even though I've never met him.

In my early 20's I dated a beautiful young woman who lived in Elkhart, Indiana, just south of the

Michigan border. Although this Indiana girl and I spent much of our time clashing like titans, one common bond we shared was an affinity for nature. We both really liked parks and we spent much of our time walking through the woods absorbing the beauty of it all. One park in particular, just east of Bristol, is called the Bonneyville Mill Park.

I could praise the park all day, but there is something a bit more personal to me about the place. At the southernmost tip of the park

there exists a tall wooden observation tower set in the center of a field. The structure is several stories high; a staircase spirals along the exterior and leads to the top. It's a sturdy piece of architecture, but in a strong breeze it will sway a bit and make low grinding noises, which is especially fun for people who can't handle heights.

Like any public structure that isn't constantly policed, it was covered in graffiti when I first saw it—mostly with names and dates or guys claiming to have nailed the head cheerleader—your basic worthless fare. However, one piece of graffiti stood out in a strange way. It was written in the form of a journal entry and it contained a heartfelt message.

My girlfriend and I read the passage

*"For the first time in my life I was mad that public vandalism had been removed."*

aloud. It seemed to be penned by a teenage boy longing for a teenage girl. His desperation was obvious. He claimed to be in love with this girl; he spoke the world of her. His poetry was of praise and worship, the kind that is usually reserved for a Sunday morning hymn, but if I were a betting man I would put a fifty down and say that this girl didn't even know he existed. The passage was so raw and real it felt as if we were reading a page out of his personal diary.

My girlfriend and I continued to examine the other writings and amidst the football jersey numbers and J.M.-hearts-S.Cs. we found another excerpt of this boy's journal. His anonymous pleas were written in black marker at the top of the

wooden tower where everyone could see: the lovers, the hikers, the sex-crazed midnight teens. Every time we'd visit the park it became tradition for us to find his latest message and read it aloud to each other, playing witness to his festering obsession.

There was a bit of familiarity about his words. Reading what this young man wrote was to relive your own high school crush, and my girlfriend and I had both had our share.

I was very shy in high school, and so of course I could relate to this young man very well. For years I pined for my lovely crush, all the while too terrified to ask her out. The feeling of being there, reading his crippling heart-ache made me feel grateful that I now had a girlfriend, but almost a little ashamed that I was enjoying her love for me. It was akin to that feeling you get when you're dancing at a party and then you notice the person in a wheelchair watching from the sidelines.

Unfortunately, there is no way that I could do his words justice with what I could write today and I've long since forgotten it—which brings me to the second part of this story.

Many weeks later we climbed the stairs of the observation tower, curious about what our mystery teen had written, and as we arrived to the top we saw that all the graffiti had been neatly sanded clean. All of those names, dates, initials, and yes,

all of this young man's writing, gone. For the first time in my life I was mad that public vandalism had been removed. All of his many sessions of soul bearing had fallen prey to a portable belt-sander.

The next time we arrived at the structure there were plenty of new names and dates and Jonny-hearts-Jennys, but no new entries in the young man's diary, or the time after that, or again after that.

The two of us wondered what happened to the young man whom we stalked via proxy. Did he finally talk to this girl? Did he give up after his entries were destroyed? Did he swan dive off the tower to end his misery?

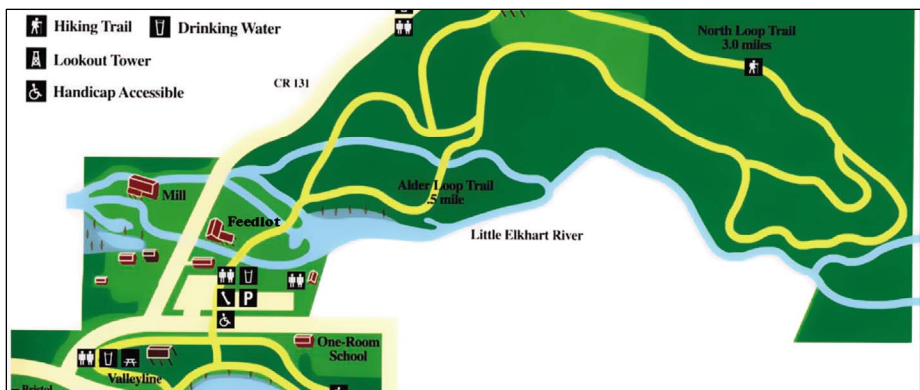
My relationship with the Indiana girl eventually ended, and I've never since been back to the Bonneyville Mill to climb the winding steps of that wooden lookout tower. And yet, I still wonder what happened to that young man. I have no clue who he is, where he is, or even if it was a guy that had written the entries; for all I know it was an eighty-year-old lesbian fantasizing about Cher. But when I think about it, it doesn't

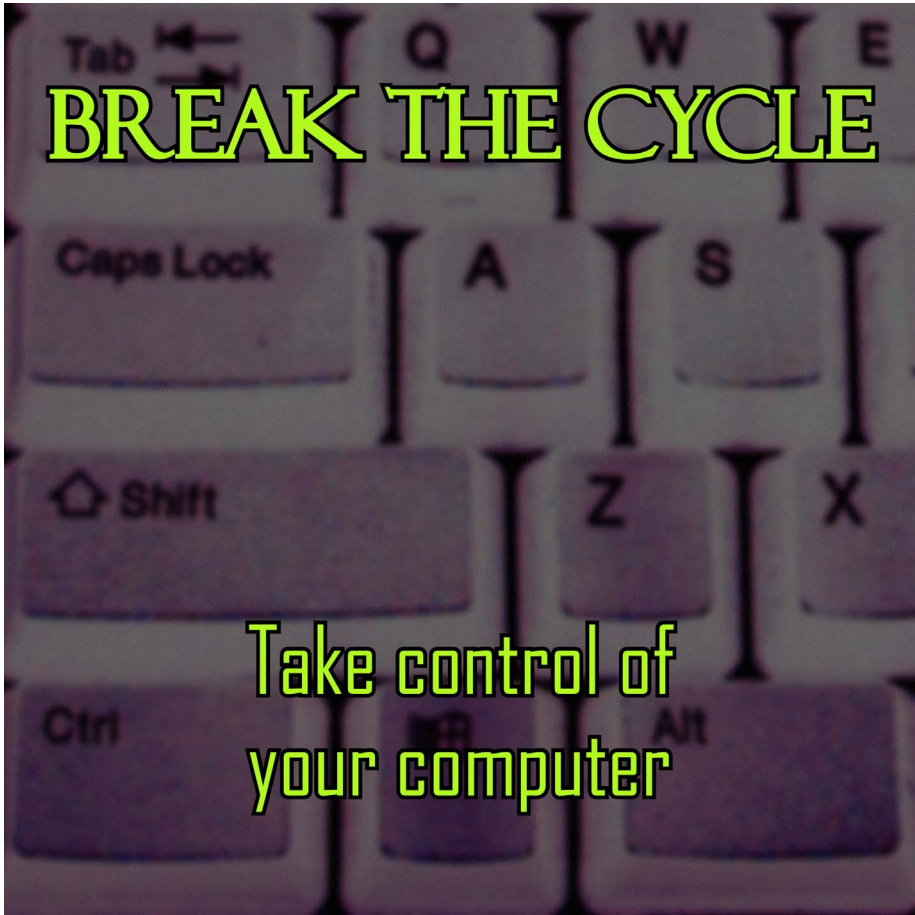
really matter who the author was. I could have written the passages, my girlfriend could have written them... even you could have. At some point in our lives we've all been love sick vandals.

If you ever feel so inclined, you may want to journey to Bonneyville Mill yourself. It's a rather tranquil park that got its start as a mill back in the 1830s. It was built in the hopes of becoming a thriving city, but when it was ignored by the local train company it never prospered beyond the tucked away mill that is to this day. You can still visit there and relive some history by traversing its attractive grounds, admiring its ponds, and feeling the crisp waters of Little Elkhart River which courses through the middle. The park also attracts the local Amish population and you may see them with their hats and bonnets adding to the timelessness of it all.

Bonneyville Mill Park's Web site can be seen here:

[www.elkhartcountyparks.org/properties\\_locations/bonneyville\\_mill.htm](http://www.elkhartcountyparks.org/properties_locations/bonneyville_mill.htm)



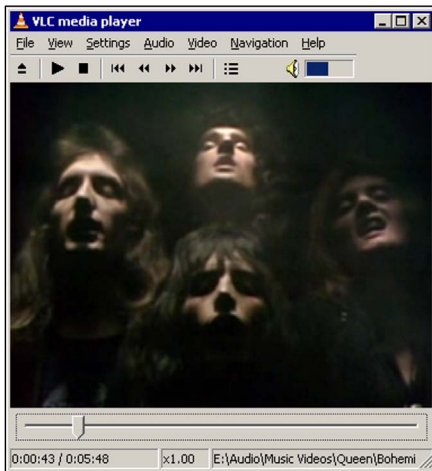


Back in the 1990s *Windows Media Player* was an amazing program because it could play pretty much every media format of the day. There was only WAV, MID, MP3, and AVI to worry about, but it did them all. Well, several years of progress have gone by and media codecs have become about as plentiful as Republicans who deny global warming. Even if you're one of those people who still doesn't know the difference between DivX and Xvid, you're still going to need a

media player that supports them both if you want to watch anything beyond YouTube.

The real trouble is that with so many different types of media formats out there, it's a real pain to have to install a new one every time you download a new format. Microsoft, being the state-of-the-art progressive company that they are, has made the latest Windows Media Player 11 support a solid... 5% of the possible formats out there. Apple's QuickTime media viewer is just as

sad. While it's possible to rummage around the Internet for hours and find a codec (that's a computer word that means *code/decode*) to improve them, you really shouldn't have to. These multi-billion dollar companies have no excuse for having such shoddy media players. I could write an entire article on why they suck so much, but I'd rather set my sights on the future and tell you about *VLC Media Player*.



VLC playing Bohemian Rhapsody

From the extremely patented QuickTime to the open source Ogg, VLC is a media viewer's dream. VLC can play almost every common media format available—audio and video. Some of its supported formats include DVD, CD, MPEG, MP3, WMA, WMV, MOV, AVI, OGM, OGG, WAV, MID, as well as Internet streaming media—you can get a full list of supported formats on their Web site. Such a high support rate alone is reason enough to ditch your existing players. It also supports a very high amount of options like changing subtitle languages on the fly, several de-interlacing methods, network broadcasting, video

snapshots, and several other options that most non-nerds won't use, but they're there just in case.

While Microsoft and Apple are out to own your  ~~soul~~ bank account, VLC is totally free and clear from the annoying "integration" bullshit. Have you ever wondered why Media Player and QuickTime support their own patented media formats just perfectly while ignoring the patent-free ones that have better quality? There's nothing shady about that, not at all. VLC doesn't bother with playing favorites like that it just plays everything equally well, making it one of the most versatile media players around.

I say one of the most, because when it comes to supporting bizarre formats, nobody does it better than MPlayer. MPlayer even supports the patented Real format that VLC can't play and it has the best playback response of any media player I've seen. However, unless you're an über-geek who scoffs at the frivolity of user interfaces you'll probably find MPlayer far too difficult to use. VLC, however, is easy enough for your grand mother, but complicated enough to do everything you'll ever need.

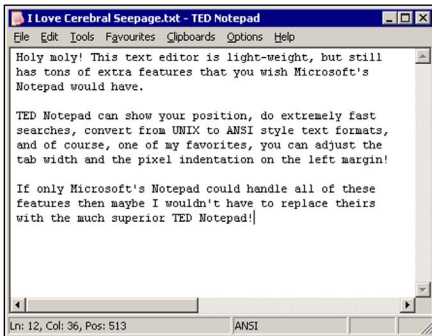
[www.videolan.org/vlc](http://www.videolan.org/vlc)

This next program is a simple text editor, and if you're a real computer nerd like me, quick and dirty text editors give you a hard-on. They can be used a million different ways, from something as mundane as jotting down a quick note, to something as complex as writing assembly code. You can use them to



take a quick peek at any file's contents, you can view the source of a Web page, and you can even use them as a simple way to remove formatting off some copied rich text before pasting it.

Text editors are beautiful and for once I have to give credit to Microsoft for making a decent program. I used their default text editor, *Notepad*, for years because, unlike most of their software, it is actually quite competent (the 2K/XP version, not the 95/98 version).



TED Notepad at work

Even though Notepad is pretty great I still had to eventually go searching for a replacement because there are a few features that I wished for that Notepad just didn't have. For one, I wish it had the ability to display the row and column position. When you do a lot of work scripting old mainframes it becomes essential to know your X and Y position in text. Also, I wanted a text editor that could switch between UNIX and ANSI style end of line

markers. When I began searching for a free high-powered, yet light-weight, text editor I found out that there are a lot of people who make a hobby of pimping out notepad. Notetab, Notepad++, and The Programmer's Notepad are all free notepad replacements that have more features than you can shake a memory stick at, but unfortunately, that's not what I wanted. I wanted something that would load instantly, something without six tool bars, something that didn't try and color-syntax my grocery list.

I eventually found my savior with TED Notepad. It has all of the same functions that Microsoft's Notepad has—even a similar interface so you don't have to bother learning anything new. It also has the ability to output row and column positions which is essential to a nerd like me. Tack on another slew of features like UNIX and Unicode support, sorting, and a recent files list and I had something that was as quick and dirty as I wanted, but as fully featured as I needed. It's also extremely small, capable of fitting easily on any portable device—even a floppy. The installer also comes with a nice feature that will let you completely replace Microsoft's Notepad with TED Notepad, a feature that I've certainly taken advantage of.

[jsimlo.sk/notepad](http://jsimlo.sk/notepad)





## Breakin' the Law

**Disclaimer:** I do not advocate breaking, fracturing, or in anyway injuring the laws that have been set forth by our well-meaning judicial system. I would never do anything illegal and I'm sure a fine up standing citizen like you wouldn't either. I will, however, give you instructions on how you could "hypothetically" do something illegal in order to fight "the man" should you be so inclined. Keep in mind that if you were to actually carry out the following instructions you would be breaking the law and may be fined or thrown in jail, where you will be subject to the famous anal-raping that American prisons are so well known for.

With that out of the way, let's break some laws! I'm sure you no doubt have heard about the rise and fall of Napster. Well, that is just small potatoes to what is out there now with the third generation of peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. Napster was restricted to music, but today's programs are not so limited and can copy anything that can be represented in a digital format. That means music, movies, TV shows, books, games, programs... basically everything. It's all out there, it's all for free, and most of it's illegal.

Actually, P2P file sharing isn't in itself illegal provided the files that you download can legally be shared. In fact, a lot of bands, directors, and software companies have learned that giving out some of their work for free is great advertising and regularly do so. There are millions of files that can be downloaded legally, however, most of the Internet traffic based on P2P is spent on illegal files.

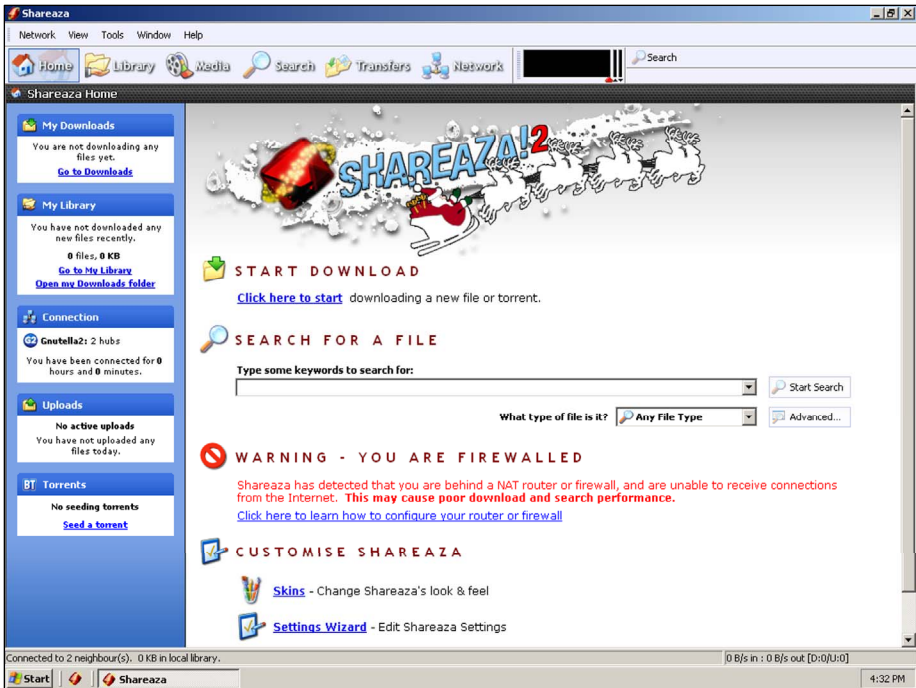
You may be asking yourself, "If this is all illegal, why isn't our quality law enforcement stopping it?" Well, the real trouble is trying to pin the blame on someone. If you have a Web site that gives away illegal files, you can easily be held

accountable because you have to give some personal information to an oversight committee in order to have your Web page. Giving away illegal files in that respect is like calling the FBI and saying, "I'm breaking the law, come and get me!" P2P, on the other hand, is more like a personal phone call between two friends because the people sharing the files only talk amongst themselves. And just like a personal phone call, it *is* possible for the government to trace and record what goes on, but it takes an awful lot of time and manpower to do it. When the FBI is faced with decisions like, should we stop serial killers or stop people from violating Celine Dion's copyright, they tend to try and stop the serial killers. Actually, as it turns out, people who download Celine Dion music are usually also serial killers. Small world.

Anyway, enough talk. Here's how to download stuff! The first thing you're going to need is a file sharing client which is the software that will actually send and receive files. One of the best is *Shareaza*, because it supports four different file sharing networks (eDonkey, Gnu-

tella, Gnutella2, and BitTorrent), it's completely free and open source, it's free from spyware, and it supports magnet and ed2k link systems. If I've lost you, don't just smile and nod look it up and learn something new for a change. Or, skip the learning and head on over to [shareaza.sourceforge.net](http://shareaza.sourceforge.net), click the

you're doing is illegal. You can go to jail and/or get fined a lot more than you would expect if you get caught. Of course, your chances of actually getting caught are about the same as getting struck by lightning, but it can happen. Don't think for a moment that the RIAA won't sue you because you're a 90-year-old



Shareaza's interface

download tab at the top and then click the download link. When the download finishes launch the installer and go through the initial setup. The whole thing only takes a few minutes, and once it's done you can search for and download any song, movie, or game you can think of. Perhaps now you understand the allure of file sharing.

But before you sell your soul and download *Metallica's Greatest Hits, Part IV*, remember that what

woman or a 12-year-old kid, because they've sued them both. If I were you, I wouldn't do it, because I don't break the law—especially not by speeding on the expressway.

Everyone has their favorite P2P client. Some people use multiple ones at the same time and utilize the best of each. There is a great comparison site on Wikipedia at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_file\\_sharing\\_applications](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_file_sharing_applications)

# Web sites that are



Because some of my readers are still living in the Orosirian period of the Paleoproterozoic era (don't worry, I had to look that up too), I actually feel I need to define the word 1337. Yes, 1337 is a word; specifically an adjective.

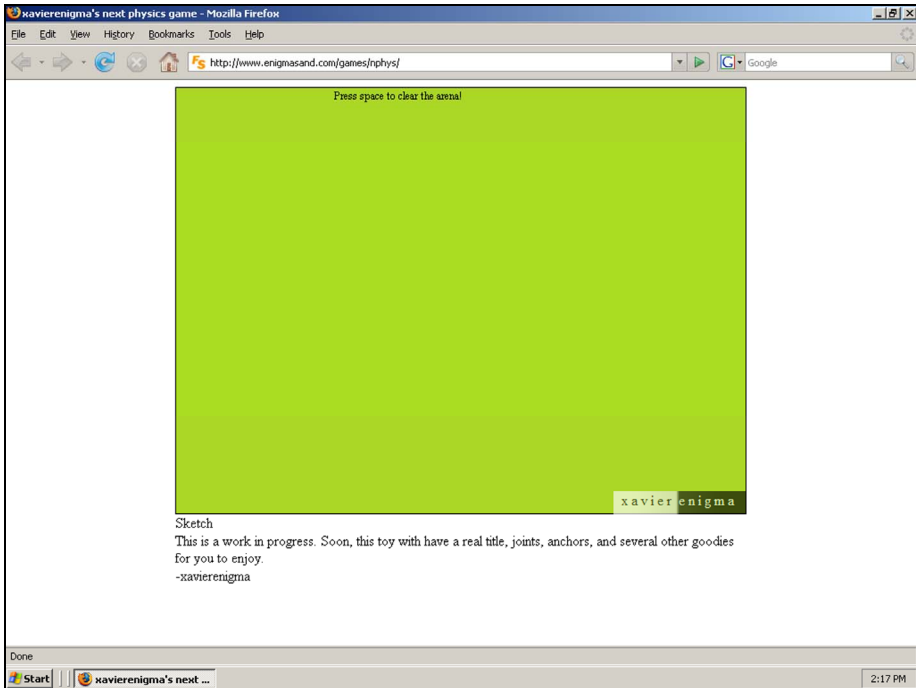
1337 = LEET = Elite =  
The best of the best

Now that I've cleared that up, allow me to talk about some 1337 Web sites. Way back when I was a young lad (in the 1980s) we didn't have the Internet. If we wanted to view information from somewhere else in the world we had to use a fax machine which needed paper and could take *minutes*, but that was good enough for us dammit! But now, in the present of the future,

there are a million cool places to go on the World Wide Web, and I've been to all of them. Well, not all of them, but at least a solid 2%, and you'd be surprised how many pages that actually is. In my zany journeys I've encountered plenty of interesting sites that will totally blow your mind, man, and here are two that I've selected for your interactive pleasure:

# xavierenigma's Neat Physics Game

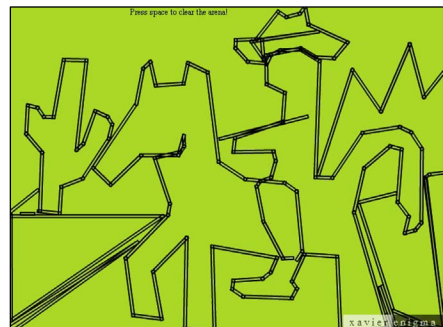
[www.enigmasand.com/games/nphys](http://www.enigmasand.com/games/nphys)



So you've got this green little drawing pad and you can use your mouse to draw blue shapes on it. When you let go of your mouse button the shape you drew is converted into a vector and then virtual gravity takes hold of it and pulls it to the bottom of the drawing pad like a simile that I can't think of. Keep doing this and the new vectors will collide with the existing ones. When you want to start over, just hit the spacebar and the drawing pad is cleared off, fresh and ready for you to start again. It's nothing to write home about, but it's still pretty fun.

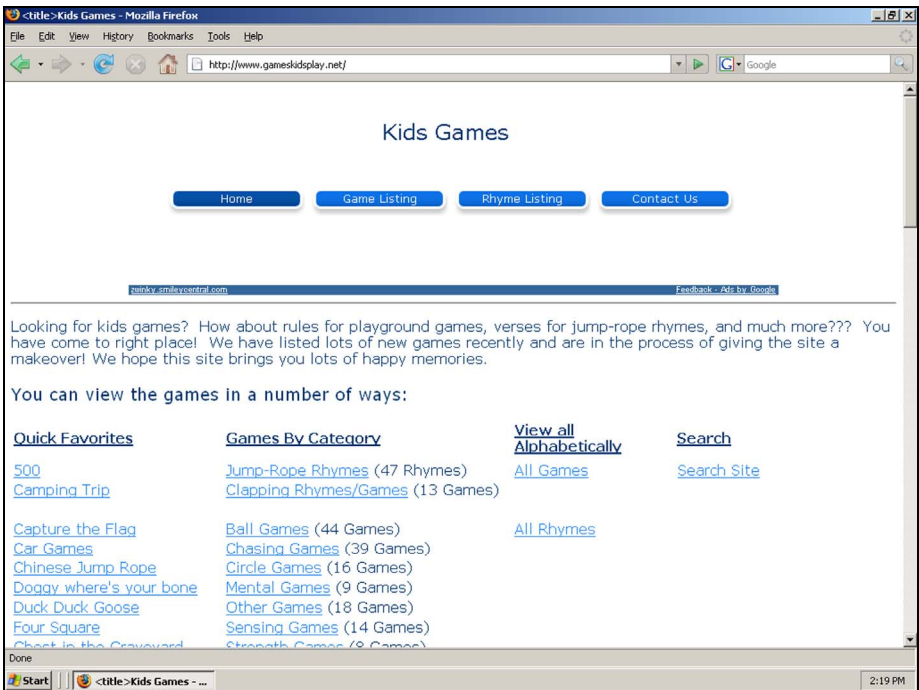
There are plenty of little tricks you can do with it as well. If you rapidly click around, you'll create tons of tiny vectors that fall like rain. You can also test your mad skillz by

making Tetris shapes and dropping them down. If you're fast you can even draw vectors inside of vectors as they fall. If you really want to do something crazy, put several shapes on the drawing pad and then draw a huge long scribble over the entire thing. When you let go everything will start jiggling all over the place. Or you can make me jealous by sending me something like this:



## Games Kids Play

[www.gameskidsplay.net](http://www.gameskidsplay.net)



Perusing *Games Kids Play* is like taking a step back into childhood when you were still a young and innocent scamp that played exciting games with your friends until dusk. Well, not you specifically; you spent all your time watching reruns of *Sanford and Son* while everyone else was building lasting memories of summer evenings at the playground. Although, if you're ever on *Jeopardy!* and you need to know Fred's beer of choice you'll be sure to get that \$200.

Since your financial future is secure I'll continue on about the site. Basically, it's a collection of all the active games that children play like tag, kickball, and duck-duck-goose, but it also has things like nursery rhymes, car ride games, and games from other countries. Do you

remember the rules of ghost in the graveyard? How about the lyrics to *Miss Mary Mack*? Want to know ten different ways of playing dodge ball? It's all here; all those games that cause scraped knees, sore muscles, and stories that you can tell your grandchildren (provided stickball didn't make you sterile).

The site itself is obviously made by an amateur. You won't see any custom SQL queries or PHP scripts here, and even the pages are a patchwork of various fonts and styles. That kind of helps with the content though, because who really wants a soulless Web site that reminds you of a hospital waiting room when you're reading the rules of hopscotch and freeze tag? Nobody—that's who.

# Enlightenment

*"Truth is beautiful, without doubt; but so are lies."*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"I'm still an atheist, thank God."*

- Luis Bunuel

How can military troops be deployed if they have  
never even been ployed to begin with?

*"For me, it is far better to grasp the Universe as it really is than to persist  
in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring."* - Carl Sagan

Statistically, half of the people in the  
world are below average.

Two peanuts walked down an alleyway  
and one was assaulted.

*"I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they  
make as they go by."* - Douglas Adams

*"Eagles may soar, but weasels don't get  
sucked into jet engines."* - The Office

If ignorance is bliss, why aren't  
more people happy?

*"Life is a dead-baby joke."*

-Vincent James Alia

Is the opposite of out-of-whack  
in-whack?

*"Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."*

- Isaac Asimov

*"Faith which does not doubt is dead faith."*

- Miguel de Unamuno

*"You're dumb because ☺"*

-Psychostick



[www.thealmightyguru.com](http://www.thealmightyguru.com)

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