

Cerebral Seepage

April 2008
Issue 2



- Dating For Dorks
- Learn 2 Talk Gooder
- Annoying Fonts

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A Word From The Almighty Guru

Well, how about that, I actually made a second issue of my online magazine, *Cerebral Seepage*. This is quite surprising, since I didn't even think I'd stick with this project long enough to finish the first one. Once again, if you're a fan of the bizarre themelessness of my time-honored Web site (www.thealmightyguru.com) you'll probably be able to appreciate this magazine as well since they are of the same ilk.

I learned quite a bit from making my previous issue so there will be some minor differences in this new one. Since most people don't really care for them, and I didn't really like writing them, there will be fewer product reviews. I've combined them all together in a single section which reviews only one item from each form of media. This means more of the magazine will be devoted to my own work, which is more interesting to read, even if I do say so myself. There's some of my personal

history as well as my totally objective opinions on life. There are a few sections from my Web site that have been included and reworked for this the new format, but most of the content here is unique to this magazine.

Enough ignoring the elephant in the room, you're probably wondering what is up with my picture. Well, it's like this. In my last issue everyone I knew was complaining that I used an awful picture of me because I looked pissed. Well, in order to make them happy, I decided to use a picture where I look just like my normal happy-go-lucky self. I'm sure I'll be praised because of this picture since it looks just like how everyone is used to seeing me.

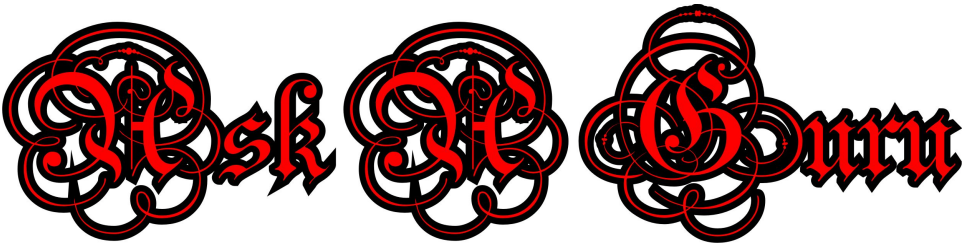
Once again, if you want to help support this magazine, head on over to www.thealmightyguru.com/Publications.

The page contains links to purchase this issue as well as the previous issue. While the prices may seem a little high, keep in mind that most of the price of the magazine goes to the on-demand printer—I'm only making about \$0.50 per issue. To me, it's less about money and more about pride involved in this project. Having you download this magazine is one thing, but knowing that you're actually willing to shell out some cash on my behalf means so much more.

Special thanks to Ms. Knoll for her expert editing skillz.

So, without further ado, here is the April 2008 issue of *Cerebral Seepage*.





Q: What's the difference between a cult and a religion?

A: We're sure the religious right will get all pissy about our answer, but by definition, cults and religions are practically the same thing. No, really! Crack open your dictionary and look them both up—they're almost identical. As far as we're concerned, a religion is just a cult with a better publicist. Most religions even started out as cults before maturing into a full-blown religion (Christianity, to name a big one). Even from an etymological position, the root of the words "cult" and "religion" have very similar meanings. Although their precise origins have been lost in time, both words are concerned with worship, morality, and piety.

The actual practices of cults and religions are also similar. They each follow a specific form of worship, they each have rituals that are continually repeated, and they each practice a form of fellowship where everyone learns about everyone else. The practitioners know their place in their group and help out their lesser members while seeking the advice from their leaders. They each adhere to their own faiths, beliefs, and moral values. Both religions and cults tend to attract people

looking for answers to life's great mysteries and they both give people a sense that they are part of something greater than their simple lives.

Even with all of these similarities the words have very different uses in our society. If you call a group a religion, you're implying that the group is positive; religions are usually viewed as people who can offer you spiritual guidance and hope. Calling a group a cult, on the other hand, implies that the group is negative; cults are viewed as covens that will try to control and brainwash you. In fact, most religions see cults as terrible crimes against god and country and think they should be stopped at any cost. Of course, since most religions also make the exact same claim against other religions, it does little to clear anything up. Is the vilification of cults really justified? Could it be that they only get such a bad rap because intolerant religions are the overwhelming majority?

It turns out that every bad thing that can be said about cults can also be said about religions. They both try to make your decisions for you, they both require all of their followers to think alike and perform the same bizarre rituals, they both have strict rules and punish those who disobey, they both demand great sacrifice and humility from their followers, they're both led by fanatic zealots, they both believe in crazy superstitions that sound

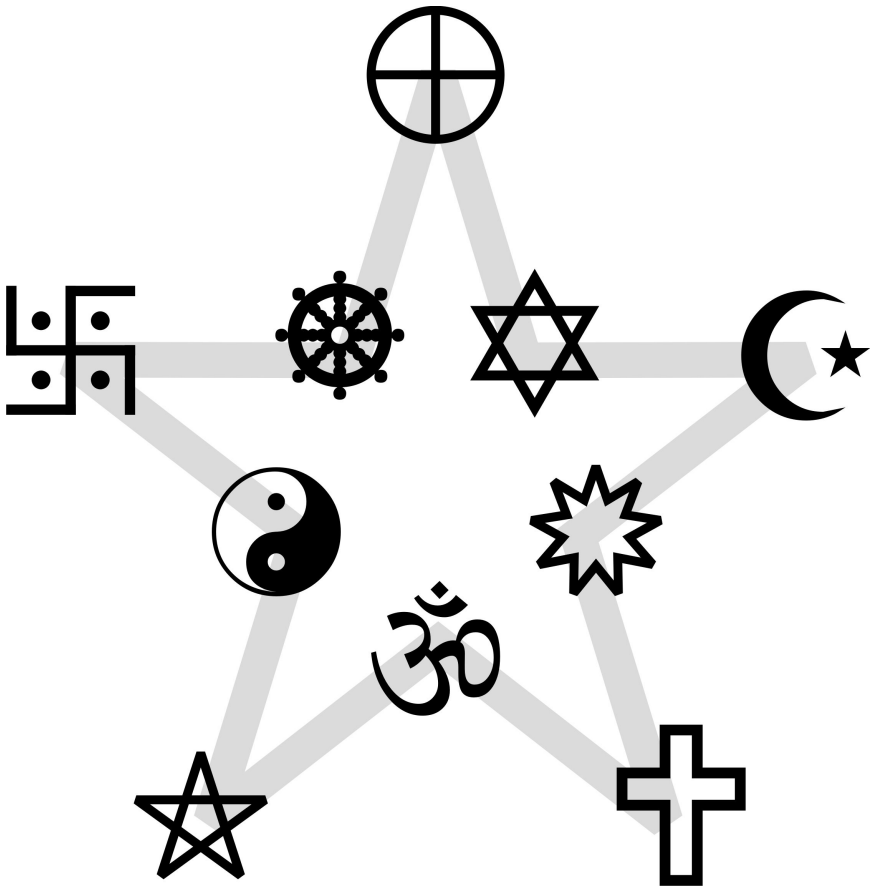
like they came out of a child's fairytale, and they both have followers who are so caught up in their beliefs that they are willing to, and often do, kill themselves and many others.

What it really comes down to is a numbers game. Religions have crusades, inquisitions, witch hunts, jihads, and suicide bombings which have ended the lives of *billions* of innocent people over the years and are always targeted at people outside of the religion. Cults, on the other hand, have delicious cherry Kool-Aid just like Thomas Wainwright used to make.

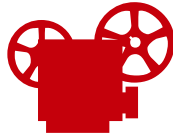
They only off a few hundred people, and the deaths are usually kept inside the cult, not harming anyone else.

If you were only to count the number of murders, cults are much nicer. But, we will give religions the benefit of the doubt and concede that, on average, religions are less intrusive and more tolerant than cults. However, most religions do have internal sects which are just as dangerous and often more dangerous than any homemade cult.

To sum it up, a cult is a bad religion, and a religion is a good cult. Make sense?



Lame Reviews of Awesome Media



"People worry about kids playing with guns, or watching violent videos, that some sort of culture of violence will take them over. Nobody worries about kids listening to thousands, literally thousands of songs about heartbreak, rejection, pain, misery, and loss. Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable? Or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?" — Rob



High Fidelity is a wonderful movie based on the Nick Hornby novel. If you have yet to experience this story, well... you don't know it yet, but there is a huge gaping void in your life. But don't worry; *High Fidelity* will fill that void.

Though the book tells a more complete story, the movie goes beyond being a mere simulacrum. If you aren't keen on books, you must go out and rent this movie. And I really mean that; it is important to your own personal and mental growth to experience this film, even if only to hear the awesome soundtrack.

It begins with Rob, a pop music junkie who owns a record store and has a penchant for creating top-five lists of everything. Rob, played wonderfully by John Cusack, is quite pitiful thanks to having just broken up with his live-in

girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjejle). Rather than admit to himself that this breakup has just scarred him for life, Rob decides to go down his list of old breakups to prove to himself that she couldn't possibly cause as much psychological damage as his past liaisons.



In between trying to control his insane co-workers at his record shop, realizing his ill-thought plan of meeting with his exes, and flirting with new women, Rob stalks Laura and thinks of violent (but extremely hilarious) fantasies about doing away with Ian (Tim Robbins), the “pathetic rebound fuck” she's currently staying with. Rob's stubbornness to let go makes my awful dating past seem like a walk in the park.



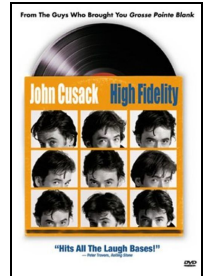
Everything is cleverly framed with Rob talking directly to the viewer to help put things in perspective and move the story along. There are also plenty of little side plots for each character which add desired polish to the whole thing. If you get the DVD, you can watch some deleted

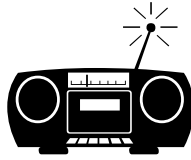
scenes that are missing from the book.

Stephen Fears gave quality direction for this film making it feel both dirty and crisp at the same time, and the writing collaboration between D.V. DeVincentis, Steve Pink, John Cusack, and Scott Rosenberg really helps bring the novel to life. Iben Hjejle sports a flawless American accent in the film and plays a very believable, and very beautiful confused ex-girlfriend. Rob's co-workers, Dick and Barry, fittingly played by Jack Black and Todd Louiso respectively, offer plenty of comic relief. Black is typecast to the frustrating jerk of Barry, and Louiso plays a pathetic Dick so well that he even makes Rob look emotionally stable. Rob's ex-girlfriends are played by Catherine Zeta-Jones, Lili Taylor, and Natasha Gregson Wagner, and each ably fulfills their role.



The thing I like most about this story is that underneath the situational humor and the obscure pop music trivia, there is the important social experiment of figuring out what went wrong with your past relationships to better yourself, an experiment many people would do well to emulate.

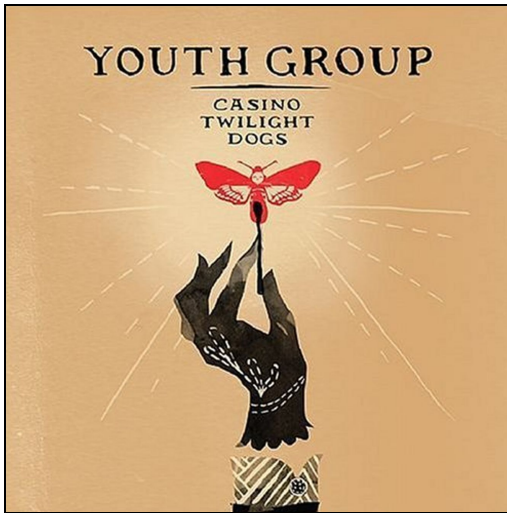




*"You stagger like a last-round fighter.
Just because you're strong it don't make you righter,
when you fall you've got farther to go." — Let It Go*

Nothing makes me happier than hearing awesome music from a band that I never even knew existed. I discovered Youth Group while ~~stalking~~ browsing an attractive female's online profile and immediately fell in love (with the music, not the chick).

Ever since I first listened to Youth Group's 2006 album, *Casino Twilight Dogs*, it has been special to me. First of all, it's one of those rare albums in which I actually like every song. Second, a couple of the songs on the album have made their way onto my list of all-time favorite songs.



With a name like "Youth Group" you would assume that the band has something to do with a boring Sunday School class, but I can assure you that you won't be hearing any dismal psalms on this album. Each track from *Casino Twilight Dogs* has a mild, but catchy hook that turns into gold as you absorb it. The overall lyrics and sound is melancholic and emotional like most modern indie music, yet it's just peppy enough to save it from the black pits of emo-dom. The music is melodic enough to warrant playing the album as bedtime music, but far too exciting to be able to sleep through.

Every track on this album is worth listening to, but you should give special attention to "Under the Underpass"—a song about sneaking out and staying up all night, and "TJ"—which sounds amazing despite the cryptic lyrics. The Alphaville cover of "Forever Young" (featured on *The O.C.*) can be found on this album as well; a song which has become a platinum single in Youth Group's native Australia.

If I still haven't convinced you, I'll let Youth Group's music speak for itself. Watch their music videos and listen to some of their songs by going to the band's Web site: www.youthgroup.com.au.

"Oh I have no home. This is my home." — Under the Underpass



*"Most books on witchcraft will tell you that witches work naked.
This is because most books on witchcraft are written by men." — Good Omens*

What happens when you combine the clever wit of Terry Pratchett with the dark imagination of Neil Gaiman? *Good Omens*... that's what happens.

Good Omens is by far one of the funniest books I've ever read, with observational humor ranking up there with the zany *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The fact that the book uses the taboo themes of religion and the occult to formulate most of its humor makes it all that much more hilarious. It almost makes you feel naughty to read it, but a good kind of naughty, like when you steal an extra sip of communal wine in church (especially, if you only go to church for the wine!).

Picture if you will, the Apocalypse is nigh. God's ineffable plan to obliterate the entire universe has begun. The world will end on a Saturday. Next Saturday, in fact. Just before dinner. The forces of good and evil are preparing for that final titanic battle, but there's just one teensy problem... there are an angel and a demon who have grown awfully fond of the Earth and have teamed up to prevent the Rapture.

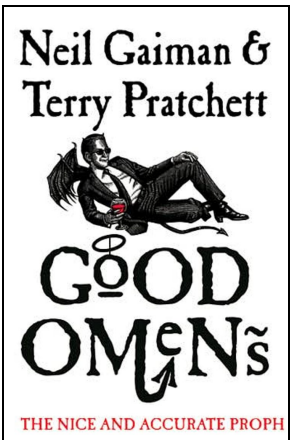
Not that their blasphemous ploy to stop God really matters; the Antichrist is more than capable of stopping them. Of course, the Antichrist is an eleven-year-old boy who's concerned about the environment and loves his pet dog.

Seriously.

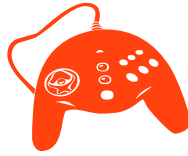
While the witches, witch hunters, Satanists, and priests are all fighting amongst themselves, the Four Motorcyclists of the Apocalypse arrive to lay waste to the entire world. The

end of all things has never been funnier and you will never forgive yourself if you pass this book up. God will forgive you if you indulge in reading *Good Omens*.

Trust me.



*"Disclaimer: Kids! Bringing about Armageddon can be dangerous.
Do not attempt it in your own home." — Good Omens*



It's good that I chose this issue to review one of my favorite games of all time—*Bionic Commando*. It's good, because this year the gaming community will see the release of two new games in the Bionic Commando series: *Bionic Commando: Rearmed*—a remake of the NES title that I'm about to review, and the all new *Bionic Commando*—the sequel to the original game that keeps the same title.

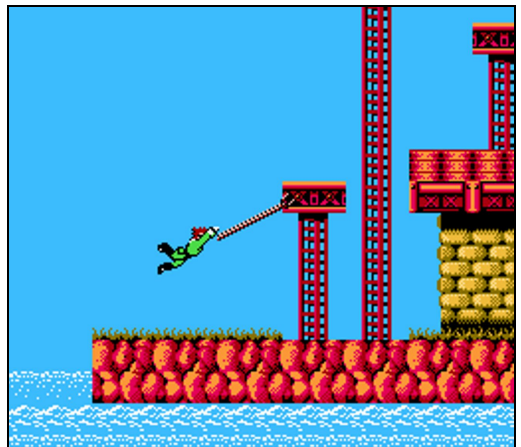
In 1987 Capcom released *Bionic Commando* into the arcades to a rather lackluster reception. The game's unique control system removed the ability to jump which was a risky move for a run 'n' gun style game. The only way to avoid dangers and obstacles was to use your grappling hook to swing past them. Unfortunately, the game was so insanely difficult that it never prospered. The arcade version of *Bionic Commando* is now just a footnote in videogame history.

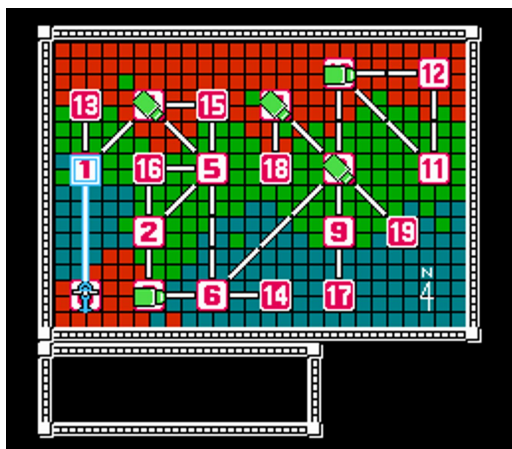
Luckily, a year later, the grappling



hook idea was resurrected with NES version. While the complex controls still prevented it from becoming a best seller, the cool storyline and quirky play style allowed it to become a cult classic (having the original Japanese version feature Nazis and swastikas didn't hurt either).

Probably the best thing *Bionic Commando* has going for it is its unique game mechanics which marry the new bionic arm to the time-honored run 'n gun genre, fitting the military theme perfectly. However, what really made the game great are the added adventure aspects like NPC communication, inventory items, and puzzles. These give the game character and allow it to outshine the others of its day. If you are patient and master the arm, you'll discover what I'm talking about.



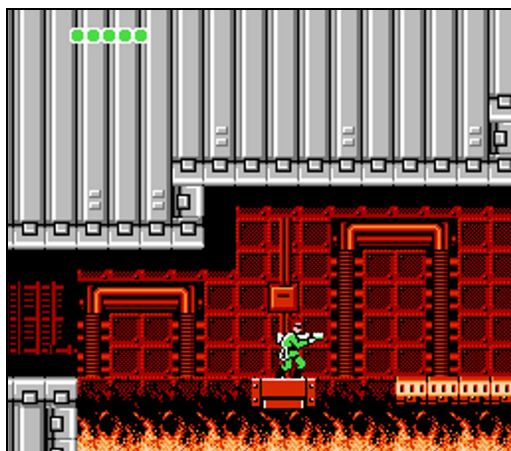


As you play through the game you will go up levels, gain hit points, and acquire new weapons, items, and various other devices to aid destroying the Baddies (the evil empire). You'll also uncover an interesting story of deception and treason with a twist that keeps the game moving along.

The only real problem with the game is that there is a little imbalance with the guns and items you receive and a few appearances of English from poor translations. Unlike *Castlevania II*, the mistranslations are minor, and they don't hinder your advancement in the game.



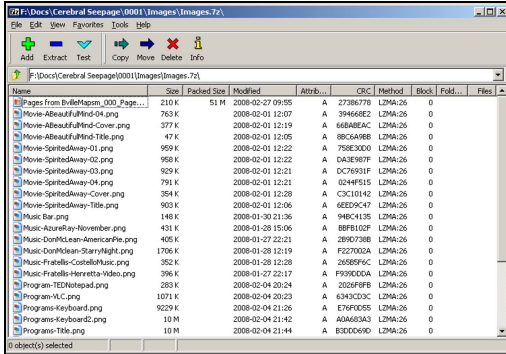
The ending is so amazing that it goes down in videogame history, not only because it's a well-performed cut scene, but because it is one of the few games that was able to slip profanity and blood past the overly constrictive Nintendo of America censors. The imagery is kind of disturbing, even in 8-bit graphics. While you can easily find spoilers to the ending on the Internet, I can assure you that if you take the time and beat the game yourself, you'll appreciate the experience a whole lot more.



Sometime this spring, if the release date is met, we're going to see this game remade as *Bionic Commando: Rearmed*. The previews look spectacular and I'm really geeked to get it. The remake is meant to ramp up interest for the big bad Bionic Commando sequel that is scheduled to come out at the end of 2008.

Obviously, the Bionic Commando community is really looking forward to the additions to this long neglected franchise, and we're pre-calling our thumbs to prepare for the releases.





If you're old enough to remember DOS, then you probably also remember *PKZip*—the compression utility that dominated the pre-Windows 95 world and gave rise to *WinZip* and *WinRAR*. If you don't know what I'm talking about, then maybe you should just go play with your crayons or something.

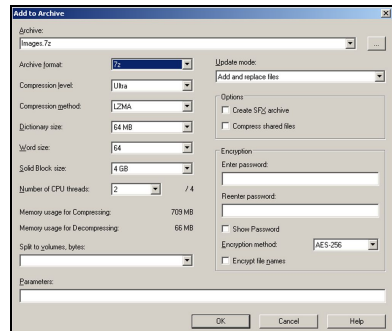
Compression tools are important to Internet users because most things on the Internet are compressed in order to expedite transfers. Windows XP has a built in compression tool, but if you've used it, you may have noticed that, just like most other Microsoft products, it really blows chunks. Thus, you've no doubt supplanted it with a more versatile and powerful compression utility like the aforementioned. Unfortunately, those programs have their own problems.

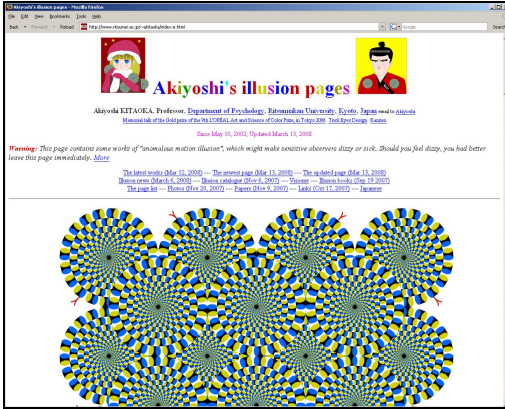
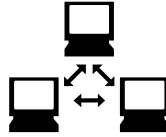
I can't stand the crippleware of *WinRAR* or the nag messages of *WinZip*. And even though RAR compression may be more impressive than ZIP, it's also a proprietary closed-source format.

These problems will cease to be as soon as you switch over to the vastly superior 7-Zip utility (www.7-zip.org).

7-Zip is the end-all be-all of compression utilities. It features menu integration and an interface similar to the ones that you're already familiar with. It can also decompress every compression format you've ever heard of, while also compressing to all the common open source compression formats (Zip, BZip2, GZip, and Tar) with a higher compression ratio than its competitors. To top it all off, 7-Zip features its own custom compression format called 7z which features a Store function, just like RAR, but it's totally patent free and open source!

The 7-Zip interface is completely free, fully featured (even more so than the competition), cross-platformed, encryption ready, and multi-lingual. If you're still wading through those stupid WinZip nag pop-ups or growing annoyed with the crippled features of WinRAR, then drop them both. Switch to the greatly superior 7-Zip today.



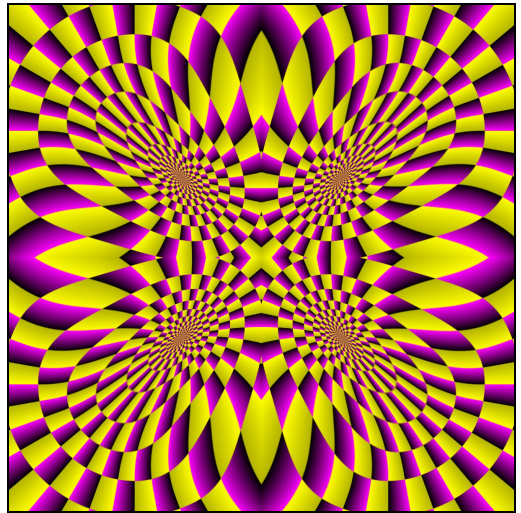


www.ritsumei.ac.jp/~akitaoka/index-e.html

As a child I was so fond of optical illusions that I would often draw them in school when I was supposed to be doing work—much to my teacher's chagrin. I started really getting good at being able to draw all of the basic illusions, but unfortunately, the really cool looking optical illusions are very difficult to draw by hand and I didn't have the skill to make them. But now, thanks to modern day computers, people are able to make really impressive optical illusions, and they make them readily available on the Internet. The best place to go for eye-popping optical illusions is *Akiyoshi's Illusion Pages*. I should warn you first that if you suffer from motion sickness you'll probably want to skip this section.

Akiyoshi Kitaoka is a professor in the Department of Psychology at Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan and for almost six years now he's been putting his amazingly

unique optical illusions online for all the world to see. You may think that you've witnessed everything in the world of optical illusions, but believe me, Kitaoka's work goes well beyond rehashed Eschers. Not only will you find illusions so strong they'll make your eyes water, but Kitaoka even explains how the illusion works and why your brain causes the illusion. There's even a section that goes over all the historical illusions you're already familiar with. Check this site and be amazed.



Time Tunnel Distortion

And don't you hate having to read text that is right next to an optical illusion? You can keep seeing it move in your peripheral vision, which makes it hard to concentrate on the words you're looking at!



LEARN 2 TALK gooder

Learning yourself too talk gooder makes people hear you as more smarter.

The sentence above is obviously not grammatically sound, but you can still understand the meaning it conveys. Many people can discern improper grammar provided the meaning is clear. However, what about when the grammar is proper, but the word usage is ambiguous? Below are some words that you may think you can accurately define and use—but, if you're like the average English speaker, you're using them incorrectly and you don't even know it. All of the words below had a specific definition at one point in history, but after years of misuse many people are now confused when they see the word used in its original context. Even dictionaries include their improper usage these days.

Decimate

Incorrect: The bombing totally decimated the city.

Correct: Our profits were decimated from 100% to 90%.

“Decimate” is a old Roman military term which means to reduce by one tenth. Specifically, it was used as a form of punishment. If soldiers performed a mutinous act, they would be separated into groups of ten where they were expected to gang up and kill one of the people in their group. Thus, the entire group was reduced by one tenth. Even the prefix *deci-* means “tenth”. You can properly use “decimate” for anything involving a reduction by a tenth, like tithes in church, 10% taxes, and the like, but nearly every time you hear it today people use it to mean destroyed, ruined, or annihilated.

Dilemma

Incorrect: We had the dilemma of a movie or dancing for our date.

Correct: My dilemma was to lose my job, or lose my wife.

“Dilemma” doesn’t just mean choice; it means a difficult decision in which all of the outcomes are undesirable. A rich family’s choice of a dining locale is not a dilemma, but a homeless person deciding between stealing food and going to jail or possibly starving to death is a dilemma.

Factoid

Incorrect: Interesting factoid—Richard Stanton was in 68 silent films.

Correct: Interesting factoid—people only use 10% of their brain.

These examples won’t make much sense unless you are first told that a factoid is something that *appears* to be a fact, but is actually not a fact. So, to clarify the above—Richard Stanton was indeed a silent actor who appeared in 68 films, which means that, while the statement is a rather insignificant fact, it is not a factoid. However, the statement that people only use 10% of their brain is incorrect (people use 100% of their brain, just not all at once), thus making it a factoid.

The common flaw with this word is that people assume that the suffix *-oid* means “diminutive” or “small”. However, the suffix *-oid* actually means “resembling”. Take, for example, the word “humanoid”. A humanoid has the same shape and general appearance as a human, but is not a human. Thus, a factoid is something that resembles a fact, and is often presented as a fact, but is not actually a fact. There is a nice sense of irony with how factoid is now used by most people to mean fact, when it was created to say that something was *not* a fact.

Peruse

Incorrect: I’ll just quickly peruse the magazine rack.

Correct: The lawyer took a long time to properly peruse the contract.

Peruse means just the opposite of what most people use it for. When you read through something with great attention to detail you are perusing it. Skimming through, brushing over, glancing at, or thumbing through something is the opposite of perusing.

Pristine

Incorrect: This ‘68 Corvette has been restored to pristine condition.

Correct: Antarctica was pristine before structures were built on it.

When something is untouched and unspoiled by civilization it is pristine. Newly fallen snow can be pristine, unexplored mountain ranges can be pristine, old growth forests can be pristine, but a car can never be pristine. You should use words like new, clean, or restored when referring to human-made objects.

Quantum Leap

Incorrect: Our company made a quantum leap past the competition.

Correct: The electron made a quantum leap in its energy state.

The business world loves to make buzzwords out of scientific terms because they sound so darned impressive, but they tend to use them improperly. “Quantum leap” is used to indicate a huge transition or a major improvement, but just like the misuse of the term “light year”, the usage of “quantum leap” is rarely accurate. In physics, a quantum leap occurs when an electron moves from one energy level to another inside an atom. This happens on an extremely small scale and is often barely detectable. In fact, the word “quantum”, when used in the term “quantum leap”, means “the smallest possible amount” and it does not specify a leap in a positive or negative direction. So, when a business claims to have made a quantum leap in earnings, what they're really saying is that they made the smallest change in earnings possible.

Keep in mind that languages are constantly in flux. New words are created, old words are forgotten, slang terms becomes accepted, and existing words become more precise or generic. This is the expected route of languages, and trying to alter that is like trying to stop a baby from screaming at the quiet parts of a movie. However, it's also important to remember the underlying reason for having specific words for specific thoughts. If we lose the Roman definition of “decimate” it's not that big of a problem, since the act of killing every tenth soldier isn't very common these days. Yet, if we the word “pristine” becomes synonymous with “new”, then we lose the ability to concisely describe many things. If you're walking past a stream you will have to say, “That stream looks pure, raw, and untouched by human hands since the dawn of time,” which is a butt-load more syllables than pristine.





Have you ever had one of those nights where you just can't sleep and you're so desperate to find something that will bore you to bed that you actually sit and watch infomercials? Have you ever seen an infomercial where they have an herbal supplement that looks like total junk, but then they bring out a doctor who claims that it works great? Do you ever catch yourself thinking, "Well, if the good doctor says it works, then it must work, because he's a doctor and is very knowledgeable about such things." Well, maybe you didn't think those exact words, but you have to admit, when a doctor says medicine works, that makes a much stronger case for you to believe. He is a doctor, after all; he had to go to med school and everything. We all do this, and that means that we all fall for the logical fallacy known as appeal to authority.

We automatically assume that just because a person is an authority in their

field, their claims are somehow more believable. The problem with this way of thinking is that it ignores three very important facts: People lie, people can be bought, and people make mistakes.

It's part of a politician's job description to be an authority on politics. They need to know the ins-and-outs of foreign policy, how the branches of government work, and how to keep a good public image by making out with babies. A politician is an authority on politics, so we should blindly assume that everything they tell us about politics is true, right? Give me a break! Politicians may know a lot about politics, but there is another fact about politicians that warrants mistrust... politicians lie! Most people can use logic to deduce that slimy bottom-feeding politicians can't be trusted, but for every logical person out there, there is someone saying, "I trust George Bush to make the right decision because he's the president." That makes

the logic centers of my brain curl up into the fetal position and beg for mercy. Everybody lies.

Moreover, everybody can be bought. Given the right circumstances, everyone will do something that goes against their ethical or moral code. I'm not a pessimist; I assume that most people will hold true to what they believe to be right. If an advertising company wants to hire a doctor to endorse a homeopathic remedy I believe that since most doctors know that homeopathic remedies don't work that they will say, "no." But what about when an advertising company is willing to offer ten million dollars and the doctor just lost all of his money in a bad divorce and will have to declare bankruptcy and lose his practice without that money? Well, even the most ethical of us have a hard time doing what's right when we're faced with something like that.

Let's not forget about the fact that people make mistakes. And yes, that even includes geniuses. Malaria is one of the oldest known diseases in the world. In 1880, Dr. Laveran discovered what caused malaria. This eventually led to the complete eradication of malaria from every place in the world... where white people live. But before 1880, every single doctor in the world was wrong about malaria. The name "malaria" comes from the Medieval Italian: *mala aria*, or "bad air" because it was thought that you contracted the disease from being in the bad air of swamps. That hypothesis, along with every other hypothesis made by doctors at the time, was wrong.

So the next time you're watching TV and Larry King says that Sylvia Browne is a real psychic, and you think to yourself, "Gosh, Larry King is a respected journalist, surely if he says it it must be true," you

can remember that people lie, people can be bought, and people make mistakes. In Larry King's case, it's probably a combination of all three.

I'm not trying to make you paranoid. If a person is an expert in their field, you can assume that most of what they say will be right. The problem is that not everything they say will be right, and if you blindly trust them how will you ever know the difference? Also, it's even more important to verify an expert's claim when the claim seems a little fishy. Remember what Carl Sagan said: "Extraordinary claims require extra-ordinary evidence."


The best way to find out if something is a fact is to test it yourself. Realistically, nobody can test every supposed fact in their life, which is why we have scientists who do our tests for us. But don't just blindly trust what scientists tell you, because they're just like anyone else. They lie, they can be bought, and they make mistakes. Luckily, most scientists use the scientific method which demands that they perform a test objectively and repeatedly to make sure they consistently get the same results.

It is always very important to question authority, regardless of how smart or important they may seem.

Appeal to authority is sometimes referred to as "argument from authority" or its original Latin *argumentum ad verecundiam*, which means "argument to respect".



Going to Dad's House



I think I'm a bastard. I don't mean that in the common layman's definition, but in the proper definition meaning "child of unwed parents". This is actually quite odd considering that my parents were married when I was conceived. Before you point out the gaping flaw in my logic, allow me to clarify. I say, "I *think* I'm a bastard," because I don't even remember my parents ever being married. They were divorced since before I began constructing memories and thus, as far as my thoughts are concerned, I'm a bastard—and I'm okay with that.

When I was growing up, my mom and my aunt shared a house together and their children (my brother, sister, cousin, and I) all lived under the same roof. For a long time I thought that every family worked this way with the women being the breadwinners as well as the nurturers, and the men showing up occasionally on motorcycles and smelling faintly of beer. This, no doubt, stunted the growth of my machismo and allowed me to embrace my more feminine qualities.

Despite what the sissy psychologists of today tell you about "broken" families, this had no more negative impact on me as

a child than most "regular" families. To this day I still think that my family was a lot more loving and caring than most and I was reminded of that each time I stayed the night at some of my friend's houses. I often wonder why so many parents would rather scream obscenities at each other than get a divorce. Divorce really seemed like the way to go. Sometimes I'd even forget that I had a dad since he only made an effort to see us kids about five weekends out of the year.

I never viewed my dad as the neglectful parent that he was. My dad was the best in the whole wide world! He took us to fast food restaurants for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, he let us stay up all night watching scary movies, he never nagged us to brush our teeth, he let us swear right in front of him. He was nothing at all like my mom. She always knew when we were lying, she always made us follow the rules, and on the rare occasion when she said we could get one candy bar at the gas station... well, she would only let us get *one*! But then, my mom wasn't a raging alcoholic like my father was, and because she was sober, she wasn't completely terrifying. Those of you

who grew up with an alcoholic parent already know what I'm talking about, but for those of you who dodged the bullet let me fill you in.

Imagine being around someone who is five times bigger than you, doesn't know their own strength, and always wants to play-fight. They don't talk; they shout and laugh regardless of whether it's appropriate. Also, imagine that every so often, for no predictable reason, they will become extremely angry. Then, to top it all off, imagine that you can't ever leave; you have to be around this person all the time. That's what alcoholics are like to a kid.

And yet, the fear couldn't linger. His reckless parenting always made him lovable enough to see beyond the terrifying drunk.

Normally, my brother, sister, and I would all be picked up by him together and we would enjoy the party lifestyle for the weekend. However, one Friday evening in the summer a call came in from my dad. My mom had already spoken to him and told him that my brother and sister were both out of town and that I was the only one there. After they exchanged a few colorful words, my mom handed me the phone.

My dad spoke in his typical demanding voice. He said that he would be picking me up for the weekend, but because he was on the night shift at GM he was going to be showing up at four in the morning. He said that I had better be awake and ready to leave when he arrived or he would just leave me there. He wasn't angry, that's just how he talked. I told him I would be ready... but four in the morning? Surely my dad knew that I was

not a morning person! However, I was soon going to find out that even a night owl like me can't eschew the early morning when you get to drive somewhere exciting!

I packed a bag and tossed it near the door to aid in my quick getaway. I had to go to bed far earlier than I would prefer for a Friday, but it would be worth it to visit my dad. At about nine o'clock I was in bed and trying to convince myself to fall asleep. Try as I might, sleep was made

He said that I had better be awake and ready to leave when he arrived or he would just leave me there.

impossible from the excitement. I tossed around thinking about his house with its cable TV, huge collection of movies, and hamburgers for dinner, all the stuff that I attributed to being with my father. The

hours ticked by, ten, eleven, midnight, one, two... How could any kid fall asleep with this much on his mind?

I did eventually doze off only to have the piercing screech of my alarm wake me up a couple hours later. I slammed it down, and realized that my father would be there soon. Immediately, I was wired again. I threw on some clothes, grabbed a pillow and blanket, and flung them near my bag at the door. I sat down at the kitchen table and stared out into the darkness, counting the seconds until my father would arrive.

Time passed. My adrenaline began to wear off and my eyelids grew heavier with each successive yawn. Then suddenly, glowing headlights entered the driveway and I could see the silhouette of my dad's truck. This was it! I get to go to Dad's all by myself! I grabbed my things and went outside into the chill night air. When I got to his truck I tossed my bag into the bed and climbed up into the cab. There was my

father looking tired from a full shift at the plant. I closed the door, placed my pillow against the window, and covered myself with my blanket. I don't think we even said a word to each other; my father just lit up a cigarette, turned on some 70's rock n' roll, and away we went.

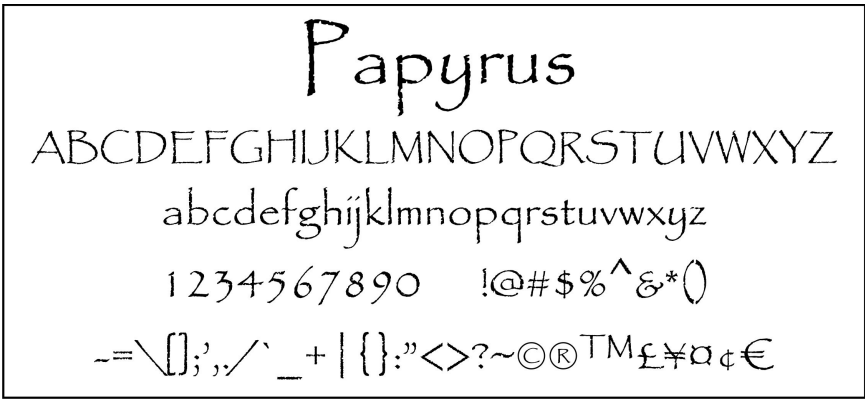
The drive would take about an hour, and I was far too excited to sleep through any of it. I watched his headlights shine down the empty county roads that seemed foreign this early in the morning. We drove through several small Midwestern

towns that wouldn't be open for a couple more hours. Only the occasional 7/11 or gas station expected business this early, and even then only in the bigger towns. The world was still asleep, the air was brisk, and I was alone with my father at the dawn of the perfect weekend.

It didn't matter that he was a drunk, it didn't matter that he was frightening, it didn't matter that he was a lousy parent. The only thing that mattered was that fact that he was my dad.

The most Annoying Fonts Ever!

Did you ever notice that there are laws that just shouldn't exist? There are laws that can be abused to keep criminals on the street or prevent the little guy from suing an evil multi-national conglomerate. Then there are laws that should exist, but don't. One such law that clearly needs to be written and enforced is punishment for the creation and/or use of annoying fonts. I've chosen four fonts in particular that are ugly, overused, or in some other way annoying and I feel that the use of these fonts should be strictly monitored and policed for the betterment of life everywhere.



History: Chris Costello actually created Papyrus completely by hand using a calligraphy pen on textured paper. He finished the font in 1982 and it was made digital in 1983. Its design was an attempt to make the English alphabet appear as though it were drawn on papyrus by an ancient civilization—perhaps along the Nile River.

Why It's Annoying: There is no doubt about it, Papyrus is a beautiful font. Its roughened edges and long brush-stroke appearance really give it an Old World feel which is no doubt why several advertisers employ it to give an ancient look to their labels. Oops! Did I say several? I meant to say that *every single* rip-off New Age, Mediterranean, and Native American piece of CRAP ever made bears this damn font. Listen people, you can only use a font so many times before it loses all of its elegance. Here's a fun game to play. Go down to your local hippie shop; you know the one I'm talking about, it sells overpriced "aura" candles and reeks of patchouli-masked body odor. Once you're there, look through every product they sell and count the number of products that use Papyrus on their label. You should end up with a number just slightly lower than our national debt.

Verdict: If this font was used about 0.00001% as much as it is now, it'd be okay.



History: Chicago was created by Susan Kare who originally gave it the clever name Elefont. However, the Macintosh design team decided that all of their fonts should be arbitrarily named after cities because that would be chic, and Mac designers have a real hard-on for chic. Chicago was used as the default font for all Macintosh operating systems from their release in 1984 until the font was finally retired in 1997; only to be regurgitated later on the iPod.

Why It's Annoying: Okay, before I rip this font apart, I have to give props to Susan Kare. The font is unique, innovative, quirky, and overall she did a great job on it. I wouldn't even have a problem with it had Apple not decided to build an entire computer line around the damn thing! The font has no business whatsoever being the primary font for an OS. All the things that make it quirky, like its angular curves and thin hooks also make it awful for a default font. But then, Apple lovers adore quirky and consistently value quirks over actual content. In fact, it's not even that unusual for Apple users to blow a quirky load all over themselves whenever Apple releases a new product.

Back to the font. The ugliest characters include the capital M, N, and S; the lowercase a, s, and v; and the numbers 8 and 9. These are crimes against humanity, and should be treated as such. Although, I have to admit, the nerd in me adores the slashed zero.

Verdict: Is Chicago a fun font? Yes. Is it a creative font? Yes. Should you use it as a default OS font? No. A million times no.



History: From Windows 3.1 and beyond, Microsoft has included this dingbat font with each new OS release. The original symbols we licensed from their creators, Charles Bigelow and Kris Holmes, and in 1990 Microsoft compiled them into the Wingdings font.

Why It's Annoying: It was actually a good idea on Microsoft's part to include Wingdings with their OS, because many publishers, writers, and designers find it very useful. Unfortunately, so do brain-dead Internet plebes who don't deserve the right to even glance at a computer, let alone saturate their pathetic home pages and spelling error-riddled instant messages with pointing fingers, bombs, and skulls. If I get one more email that uses this childish font, I'm going to head up to a clock tower with a high powered sniper rifle and go postal. Then, at the criminal trial, I'll just say that someone sent me an email with a sideways yin-yang symbol and the judge will pardon me. Every

second-rate moron with a printer seems to think that it's cool to paste these lame symbols on letterheads, fliers, and business cards. Yes, the font has a smiley face in it, and yes, using it makes you look like a douche bag. Stop it.

Verdict: If they would just remove the lame symbols (i.e., bomb, pointing finger, etc.), there would be little to complain about.



History: Vincent Connare created Comic Sans MS in 1994. It was released with Windows 95, and every version thereafter. The design is meant to emulate an informal comic book style lettering typeset—to be used for various computer programs where it could fill text balloons, which it does an adequate job.

Why It's Annoying: I had to save the best for last—and by best, I mean the worst font that has ever existed in the history of the universe. Comic Sans MS is the creepy child-molesting uncle of fonts. It's the font that nobody ever wants to see, but somehow, even when you don't invite him, he always finds his way to family gatherings and sits at the kid's table. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Well, hey, I kind of like Comic Sans." Well, you're wrong. Wrong like NAMBLA. You don't really like Comic Sans, you've just been brainwashed by Microsoft into thinking that the font is anything but a huge stinking pile of goat excrement. Comic Sans is as far away from aesthetically pleasing as Elton John is from heterosexuality.

To make matters worse, Comic Sans is EVERYWHERE! Once you realize that, you can't help but see it on everything. Restaurant menus, storefronts, billboards, emails, Web sites, company logos, even formal business documents for crying out loud! Try as you might, you just can't get away from it. It continually seeps into you brain until you want to stab out your own eyes with a rusty fork just so you'll never have to see it again. Maybe if the font wasn't so disgustingly ugly, childish, and unprofessional it wouldn't be so bad, but it is, and nothing will ever change that fact. It's time to make a stand. From this point on, every time I see anything written in Comic Sans, I'm personally going to stomp on a puppy. Understand? Only you can save the puppies!

Verdict: There's no saving this one. The only thing left to do is make it illegal. Help ban Comic Sans by visiting www.bancomicsans.com.



Since it's spring and love is in the air, I thought that I would write a segment about dating... for dorks. It may be hard for you to believe, but I was a big dork in high school. I know, you're all standing in total shock right now, but I swear on my *Highlander Watcher's Guide* that it's true. That just begs the question, "Why on earth should you trust the dating advice of a guy whose idea of fun is reverse-engineering videogames?" The answer is, you shouldn't. In fact, you shouldn't trust dating advice from *anyone* because only you know what you want from dating.

What I'm going to do is share some of my personal experiences that have helped me become more comfortable with myself. Hopefully, this will help you avoid some of the more common social faux pas that dorks are prone to. This issue will cover appearances, and I'll cover some other topics in the next issue.

Lesson one. While it *is* possible to get a date when you're incredibly filthy, it is *really* freaking hard! This applies to men and women.

When I entered my teens I was dirty. I'd go days without taking a shower, I'd wear the same clothes for an entire week, I'd rarely brush my teeth, and my arch nemesis was deodorant. This meant two things. One, it meant that I was pretty typical for a thirteen-year-old boy. Two, it ensured that anyone who I came within olfactory range was automatically disgusted with me.

I actually stayed really dirty like this well into my teens. My friends had figured out that being clean is actually important to your social life and started making fun of me, but I still only bathed the bare minimum to get by. It wasn't until around senior year, when I got my first girlfriend, that I finally realized that if I wanted to keep said girlfriend I'd have to spend a lot more time making myself look and smell pleasant. I now keep myself clean out of habit and nobody makes fun of me anymore. At least, not about my hygiene.

Cleanliness is of utmost importance. Don't be like those oblivious stink factories at comic conventions who go an entire

week without bathing. Even if your friends are too afraid to hurt your feelings and tell you—you stink! Every morning you should take a shower (with soap!) and wash your body (specifically your arm pits, feet, and genitals), brush your teeth, and apply deodorant. Also, if you plan on going out in the evening, you should reapply deodorant because it doesn't last forever. Bad breath or bad body odor will ensure that the only person who will date you is a blind Jabba the Hutt.

Lesson two. You are judged by how you look. In fact, the chances of getting a date are directly relative to your appearance. It isn't fair, but welcome to reality. Geeks and nerds don't put as much stock in their outward appearance as the members of other cliques. This is apparent from the dirty Sailor Moon T-shirts and the cargo pants with six hundred bulging pockets.

Looking good is not as mission critical as being clean. You can look like a hobo and still get a date; but remember that it's going to be a lot harder. But don't worry; dressing nice does not mean selling out. You can still look pleasant without having to wear Abercrombie or Hollister—in fact, you'll look much better if you don't. Just learn from my mistake; sweatpants are *not* a fashion statement. Well, they are, but the statement is, "I never should have let my mother stop dressing me."

It's important that before you ask someone out on a date, or if you're lucky and you're actually preparing to go out on a date, that you take a little extra time to look nice. Don't go overboard; it's important to feel comfortable in your clothes, but make sure they're neat and clean.

Looking nice is more than just clothes. Women should learn how to apply a light amount of makeup, guys need to learn not

to let their nose hair grow past their chin. Both sexes would do well to use a light dab of perfume or cologne. Don't neglect your hair. Brush the knots out and get it cut when it's needed. A little bit of primping goes a long way to make you look more appealing. Don't forget to shave and trim where it's needed (this includes pubic hair) and to pluck your unibrow if you have one. Even if they don't mention it, the person you date will notice these things and you will be pleasing to their senses. It's okay to stick to your geeky roots with fashion from your favorite shows, but don't go crazy. Unless the other person is really into them, you may want to leave the latex elf ears at home.

Don't worry about the properties of your physical appearance that you can't change. You'll be better off if you learn to accept them. A lot of people have bad skin, a lot of people are over weight, a lot of people are skinnier than Mary-Kate Olsen. You'd be surprised how much your biology can be improved when you present yourself nicely. Even if you think you're ugly, you're probably a lot more attractive than you've led yourself to believe. If you're still growing you can rest assured that in a few years you're going to look considerably different. It won't help you now, but you can be confident of your future.

Remember—nobody is asking you to change who you are. However, if you make yourself look like a Ferengi, only Ferengi will want to date you. Hygiene is paramount when it comes to dating. People should love you for what's on the inside, but we're not talking love, we're talking dating; there's a huge difference! Even dweebs like us can get dates when we look and smell nice. O Rly? Ya Rly!



Pickup Lines For Geeks

If the previous section didn't make it clear, you should never go overboard in your fandom, and you must *never* use a pickup line associated with geek behavior, such as:

Biology	Honey, you knock my cardiovascular system out of homeostasis.
Chemistry	If I were an enzyme, I'd want to be helicase so I could unzip your genes.
Chess	You're the queen I'd like to mate with my knight moves.
Computers	Baby, you turn my floppy disk into a hard drive.
D&D	I failed to save versus your charm spell. Looks like I'm going to have to use my endurance feat.
Dragon Ball	You're making my Goku become Super Saiyan.
Geology	Girl, you're so gneiss I'll never take you for granite.
Harry Potter	My Nimbus 2000 will let me find your golden snitch.
Highlander	I'd like to be the Watcher when you come for my head.
History	I'll prove to you it's not just the Roman Empire that can rise and fall.
Internet	I've got a pop-up here that you won't want to block.
Tolkien	If you like short fat hairy hobbits then you're going to love what I have in my pants.
Math	I wish I was your differential, because then I'd be touching all your curves.
Magic: TG	You Giant Growned my Charging Rhino so I think I'll Twiddle your Rack.
The Matrix	There is no spoon, but there is a rolling pin in my pants.
Paleontology	You must be a fossil, because I want to date you.
Physics	I'm so attracted to you I'm proving Einstein's Theory of General Relativity wrong.
Pokémon	I bet a night with you would make my Bulba-sore!
Star Trek	I'd like to dock my Enterprise into your Jeffrey's Tube.
Star Wars	No mind tricks baby, let me show you how well this Jedi handles his light saber.
UNIX	Hey sexy, why don't you log onto me and I'll give you access to my root.
Furries	Sorry, but if you like furries you just shouldn't date. Ever.

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