



The Geeks' Guide to World Domination: Be Afraid, Beautiful People

By Garth Sundem

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TUNE IN. TURN ON. GEEK OUT.

Sorry, beautiful people. These days, from government to business to technology to Hollywood, *geeks* rule the world.

Finally, here's the book no self-respecting geek can live without—a guide jam-packed with 314.1516 short entries both useful and fun. Science, pop-culture trivia, paper airplanes, and pure geekish nostalgia coexist as happily in these pages as they do in their natural habitat of the geek brain.

In short, dear geek, here you'll find everything you need to achieve nirvana. And here, for you pathetic nongeeks, is the last chance to save yourselves: Love this book, live this book, and you too can join us in the experience of *total world domination*.

- **become** a sudoku god
- **brew** your own beer
- **build** a laser beam
- **classify** all living things
- **clone** your pet
- **exorcise** demons
- **find** the world's best corn mazes
- **grasp** the theory of relativity
- **have sex** on Second Life
- **injure** a fish
- **join** the Knights Templar
- **kick ass** with sweet martial-arts moves
- **learn** ludicrous emoticons
- **master** the Ocarina of Time
- **pimp** your cubicle
- **program** a remote control
- **quote** He-Man and Che Guevara
- **solve** fiendish logic puzzles
- **touch** Carl Sagan

- **unmask** Linus Torvalds
- **visit** Beaver Lick, Kentucky
- **win** bar bets
- **write** your name in Elvish

Join us or die, you will.
Begun, the Geek Wars have

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The Geeks' Guide to World Domination: Be Afraid, Beautiful People By Garth Sundem Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #169874 in Books
- Brand: Sundem, Garth
- Published on: 2009-03-10
- Released on: 2009-03-10
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.97" h x .61" w x 5.17" l, .46 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages



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Editorial Review

About the Author

GARTH SUNDEM is the bestselling author of *Geek Logik: 50 Foolproof Equations for Everyday Life*. He and his wife live in California with their two kids and a large Labrador.

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Welcome to my GEEK brain.

It has exactly 314.15 information slots. While I wish there were more slots, alas, there are not. And while I wish these slots were packed with things like mathematical proofs of Millennium Prize problems, the mechanics of teleportation using Einstein- Podolsky- Rosen entanglement, and the physics behind NASA's new plasma propulsion engine, this is not the case either. Instead, elbowing out useful, enriching, or scientific facts are folding instructions for a jumping origami frog, lists of English words you can spell on a basic calculator, and haikus written in praise of SPAM (the pork product of questionable lineage), all of which threaten at any second to burst through my facade of normalcy like parasitic aliens from John Hurt's chest. Geek attack: Picture it. It's not pretty.

And, for better or for worse, I'm not alone.

Today's ubiquitous geek is like a massive musical mixing board, with various geeks turning up or turning down different dials, boosting—for example—80s pop arcana or programming languages or fantasy football Stats or behavioral economics or quotes from *This Is Spinal Tap* (the last Of which have the relevant dial turned up to 11). We don't all boost the same dials and we certainly don't appreciate being *defined*; however, there is one constant that applies to all brands of geek—in all of us, *these dials are turned way up*. In fact, our geek informational dials are turned up to the point that they sometimes drown out our ability to function smoothly in the social world; in other words, with our geek specialty of choice thumping away inside our brains at maximum decibels, things like social niceties, our wardrobes, our anniversaries, and our ability to contribute to dinner conversation without injecting weird factoids from The mating strategies of clownfish can be effectively silenced.

Take heart, dear geek: With the world evolving toward ever- higher Levels of required specialization, more and more people are turning up Their information dials to the point of usurping their ability to function Normally. In short, more people are becoming geeks.

To illustrate this geekification of modern society, imagine—if you will—a middle- school rocket club. One kid follows the directions, carefully penciling in exact fin placement and then, after allowing the required drying time, painstakingly sanding, painting, and applying decals until the finished rocket is a mere blip in a wind tunnel. All another kid wants to do is send a live payload as high as possible—into the clear

plastic cockpit of a three- stage D- engine rocket, he packs intrepid (and potentially ill- fated) caterpillars, each with a name like Buzz or Chuck or Neil. A third kid has a vision: a center fuselage flanked by auxiliary tubes, each with a separate nose cone, the whole contraption having the potential to arc gracefully skyward or, three feet off the launch pole, to start spinning wildly, explode spectacularly, and negatively affect hearing in the faculty adviser's left ear.

Yes, I knew these kids. (Today, the first is in the Stats department at Oxford, the second is an entomologist specializing in system change due to catastrophic events, and the third is an environmental architect.) OK, I was one of them—I oscillated between keeping a meticulous flight log and pirating the rocket engine gunpowder for use in more terrestrial pyrotechnic experiments. Thanks in part to genetics—my dad is a former president of the American Accounting Association—I also programmed choose- your- own- adventure stories in BASIC, circa 1987, eagerly anticipated the logic puzzles in the next installment of *Games* magazine, and designed multilevel dungeons on graph paper. In an especially cruel twist, my mother is a psychoanalyst, so I was especially aware how these pursuits were likely to affect my social and emotional development (adversely).

Back to geekification:

In the sepia tones of yesteryear, we rocketeers remained geek kings and queens of only the rocket club (and—in the spirit of full disclosure—later the jazz band and the math and chess clubs. Wow, this is actually rather cathartic). Today, with highly specialized knowledge of all sorts driving the world, it is as if more and more people are clamoring for inclusion in these clubs. Everyone now wants and needs information, leading to a much wider pool of adoration for the alpha geeks in each discipline.

It may be no revelation that yesterday's geeks rule today's world. A quote widely misattributed to Bill Gates: "Don't make fun of geeks because one day you will end up working for one." But with most of society now acting as phytoplankton at the base of the ecosystems in which geeks are alpha predators, we are not only driving the traditional geek fields, but we're starting to drive *cool* as well.

For example, imagine a twenty- four- year- old dude with an uneven peach- fuzz beard, wearing a green foam $E = mc^2$ hat, a red Che Guevara shirt, and Converse All Stars, and listening to an iPod while riding a longboard to his job as a Web designer. By any definition, this person is a geek. This person is also very, very cool. He probably owns an island in Second Life and has an algorithmic tattoo, too. Women want him, and men want to be him. (We assume he dates a girl with piercings.) And with this shift in cool, we see that instead of struggling to join society at large as we have always done in the past, now society at large is joining us.

OK, now that you are versed in hypothetical, external geekification, it's time for a bit of self-examination (no, you needn't undress). Does what you know affect how you act? In light conversation, do you unintentionally inject your personal geekery? Does this make things a little awkward? Last Friday, instead of trudging through another of these awkward conversations, did you decide to order Chinese again (and eat it while watching *Red Dwarf* reruns and/or blogging about it)? Do your friends and family buy you books with "geek" in the title?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you're a geek. Go ahead and skip to this book's first entry. Go on, you know you want to.

But maybe you thought, *Oh shit! After reflection I'm not a geek and will thus be relegated to a lifetime of groveling at the feet of my great geek overlords. Oh how I wish I could be a geek too!* Or you might've answered, *Oh shit! I used to be a geek but have spent the last fifteen years perfecting a veneer of social competence in order to pimp real estate and have thus let my geek credentials lapse. Whatever shall I do?*

Never fear: you hold in your hands the secrets you need to function—again or for the first time—as a geek. In fact, if you read and enjoy this book, you will necessarily be transformed into a geek by the simple act of partaking in the geekiest of geek activities: the enjoyment of knowledge for its own sake (Descartes: "I think, therefore I am [a geek]"). With this book, you, too, can gain the cultural knowledge necessary to peek behind the Wizard's curtain—to glimpse the Matrix—and can thus join in the experience of *total world domination*. Think of this book like a benevolent werewolf, ready to give you a friendly nip in the jugular; come next full moon, you'll be howling too.

And then, during the geek uprising, when your IT guy rediscovers his Klingon spirit and the Web-widgets girl down the hall goes *Xena: Warrior Princess*, you will be able, when the pogrom reaches your cubicle, to demonstrate complex handmade shadow puppets against the whiteboard and recite pi to at least the fifth digit, thus proving your allegiance and claiming your rightful spot in the coming Geek World Order. (Which, you have to admit, is worth the price of a book.)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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