

Patrick Crispen's Completely Updated Collection of Truly Useful— and Not So Useful—Websites and Web 2.0 Tools

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Speedtest.net

<http://speedtest.net/>

Slow connection? Are you getting the bandwidth you paid for? Click the spinning gold star on this Flash-enabled web page to test your download and upload speeds.

Google's URL Shortener

<http://goo.gl/>

Now that Libya is pulling the plug on .ly URL shorteners that do not comply with Sharia law [e.g., vb.ly, ow.ly], it is time to find a more permanent solution. Google to the rescue! Tip: Add ".qr" to the end of a goo.gl-shortened URL to create a QR matrix barcode for the URL.

GameTrailers

<http://gametrailers.com/>

Have a PC, PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PSP, or Nintendo DS? Looking to buy a new game? Check out GameTrailers first. The site's lengthy video reviews provide an in-depth analysis of the story, design, gameplay, and presentation for every major video game on the market. The site also has a robust collection of user-created gameplay videos.

The Bureau of Communication

<http://bureauofcommunication.com/>

Need help airing a grievance, issuing a formal apology, or providing unsolicited feedback? Well, this site won't help you with any of those. Instead, the Bureau of Communication offers tongue-in-cheek fill-in-the-blank forms that you can email to your 'friends.'

RSA Animates

<http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk/videos/>

Using a stunning visual synthesis technique from Cognitive Media, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) has posted a handful of animated, educational videos that rival what you would see at TED.

Xtra Normal

<http://xtranormal.com/>

Create a simple, animated movie for free. Type or record your dialogue and then use Xtra Normal's drag-and-drop interface to change the camera angles, change the actors' accents, and more. Then unleash your creation on an unsuspecting world via email, Facebook, Myspace, Digg, Delicious, Reddit, or StumbleUpon.

Wolfram Alpha

<http://wolframalpha.com/>

Rather than being a search engine, Wolfram Alpha is a natural language "computational knowledge engine." Enter a question or calculation and Wolfram Alpha will compute the answer. And in the case of algebraic equations, it will even show you the steps.

Sergey Larenkov's LiveJournal

<http://sergey-larenkov.livejournal.com/>

Using a technique called 'computational rephotography', Russian photographer Sergey Larenkov overlays WWII-era photographs of Berlin, Moscow, and Leningrad onto photographs of their corresponding modern settings. [For a translation, visit goo.gl/GHjx]



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DropBox

<http://goo.gl/owH1F>

The easiest and fastest way to share files between computers as well as to backup your files online, Dropbox is a free program that creates a new “dropbox” folder on your computer. Anything that you put in that folder is automatically backed up to dropbox.com and to the dropbox folder on any other computer on which you have installed the program. Dropbox runs on Windows, Mac, Linux, and iPhone and the free, basic account gives you 2 GB of space.

Hipmunk

<http://hipmunk.com/>

Launched in August 2010, Hipmunk is (another) online travel agent site. What makes it different is that it uses an “agony” algorithm to rank flights by price, stops, and duration and then displays the best flights on an easy-to-read Gantt chart.

SeatGuru

<http://seatguru.com/>

Now owned by TripAdvisor, SeatGuru provides color-coded seat maps—including a color-coded system to identify the better and worse seats—for practically every commercial airline and flight number. Hold your mouse over a particular seat to see a review as well as a list of that seat’s amenities.

Chan!

<http://instantchan.com/>

Chan! Or, if you are feeling adventurous, Chan! Chan!

Know Your Meme

<http://knowyourmeme.com/>

From the “Cinnamon Challenge” to the “Failboat,” Know Your Meme documents popular internet catchphrases and concepts that seem to spread like kudzu. Memes whose content may be offensive are noted with a “NSFW” [not safe for work] icon.

SunSpider JavaScript Benchmark

<http://goo.gl/wRtDq>

Web 2.0 web pages taking ages to load? The speed of your web browser’s JavaScript engine may be to blame. Made by WebKit, this free benchmark tool measures how fast JavaScript runs in your web browser. Run the test in multiple browsers to find which browser runs the fastest on your computer.

Cheezburger Network

<http://cheezburger.com/sites>

Talking about memes, the folks at Cheezburger Network have created a collection of over 30 funny meme aggregation blogs from the funny “I Can Has Cheezburger” and “FAIL blog” to the more obscure [but equally funny] “GraphJam” and “Emails from Crazy People.” Cheezburger Network is biggest and most enjoyable Internet time sponge since PopCap Games. For more information, check out Wired Magazine’s February 2010 profile of Cheezburger Network at <http://tinyurl.com/cbwired/>

Krebs on Security

<http://www.krebsonsecurity.com/>

Written by former Washington Post computer security reporter Brian Krebs, this new blog is a daily must-read for anyone who wants the latest security news and investigative reports without the breathless [and often inaccurate] hyperbole often found in mainstream media reporting.

Cooking for Engineers

<http://cookingforengineers.com/>

Like to cook, love Alton Brown, and would prefer if your recipes came with detailed instructions, pictures, and maybe even a flowchart? CfE is for you!



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