

Funny Predictions Throughout History

At a teacher's conference in 1703, it was reported that students could no longer prepare bark to calculate problems. They depended instead on expensive slates. What would students do when the slate was dropped and broken?

In 1815, it was reported at a principal's meeting that students depended too much on paper. They no longer knew how to write on a slate without getting dust all over themselves. What would happen when they ran out of paper?

The National Association of Teachers reported in 1907 that students depended too much on ink and no longer knew how to use a knife to sharpen a pencil.

According to the Rural American Teacher in 1928, students depended too much on store bought ink. They did not know how to make their own. What would happen when they ran out? They wouldn't be able to write until their next trip to the settlement.

In 1950, it was observed that ball point pens would be the ruin of education. Students were using these devices & then just throwing them away. The values of thrift and frugality were being discarded. Businesses & banks would never allow such expensive luxuries.
(Compiled by Father Stanley Bezuska, Boston College)

There does not appear the slightest probability that, under any circumstances, Hong Kong will ever become a place of trade.
Robert Montgomery Martin, British colonial treasurer, reporting home during a visit to Hong Kong in 1844

X-rays are a hoax.

Lord Kelvin, Scottish mathematician and physicist, former president of the Royal Society, 1897

The abolishment of pain in surgery is a chimera. It is absurd to go on seeking it... knife & pain are two words in surgery that must forever be associated in the consciousness of patients.

Dr. Alfred Velpeau (1839) French surgeon

Ruth made a big mistake when he gave up pitching - Tris Speaker on fellow ballplayer Babe Ruth in 1921

When the Paris Exhibition closes electric light will close with it and no more be heard of.

Erasmus Wilson (1878) Professor at Oxford University

By the year 1982 the graduated income tax will have practically abolished major differences in wealth.

Irwin Edman, professor of philosophy, Columbia University, 1932

You better get secretarial work or get married.

Emmeline Snively, director of the Blue Book Modelling Agency advising would be model Marilyn Monroe in 1944

It will be gone by June.

Entertainment newspaper Variety on rock 'n roll in 1955

Space travel is utter bilge.

Richard van der Riet Woolley, upon assuming the post of British Astronomer Royal in 1956

You ain't going nowhere son - you ought to go back to drivin' a truck.

Jim Denny, manager of the Grand Ole Opry, on firing Elvis Presley after one performance in 1954

This antitrust thing will blow over.

Bill Gates

Radio has no future - Lord Kelvin, Scottish mathematician and physicist, former president of the Royal Society, 1897

Everything that can be invented, has been invented.

Charles Duell, US commissioner of patents, 1899

I must confess that my imagination refuses to see any sort of submarine doing anything but suffocating its crew and floundering at sea.

HG Wells British novelist 1901

The horse is here to stay but the automobile is only a novelty - a fad. The president of the Michigan Savings Bank advising Horace Rachham (Henry Ford's lawyer) not to invest in the Ford Motor Co., 1903

I confess that in 1901, I said to my brother Orville that man would not fly for 50 years.... Ever since, I have distrusted myself and avoided all predictions.

Wilbur Wright, US aviation pioneer, 1908

Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value.

Marshall Ferdinand Foch, French military strategist and future World War 1 commander, 1911

What use could this company make of an electrical toy?

Western Union president William Orton rejecting Alexander Graham Bell's offer to sell his struggling telephone company to Western Union for \$100,000

Television won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night.

Darryl F. Zanuck, head of 20th Century Fox - 1946

Computers in the future may perhaps only weight 1.5 tons.
Popular Mechanics forecasting the development of computer technology, 1949

I see no advantage whatsoever to the graphical user interface.

Bill Gates, 1983

Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances.

Dr. Lee De Forest, inventor of the Audion tube and a father of radio -
Feb. 25, 1967

I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.

Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year.

The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957

But what ... is it good for?

Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968
commenting on the microchip.

There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.

Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of now defunct Digital Equipment Corp., 1977

This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.

Western Union internal memo, 1876.

The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?

David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible.

A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

Nobody now fears that a Japanese fleet could deal an unexpected blow on our Pacific possessions....radio makes surprise impossible - Josephus Daniels, former US secretary of the navy - October 16, 1922

Who the hell wants to hear actors talk? -H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927.

I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper. -Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in *Gone With The Wind*.

A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make. -Response to Debbi Fields' idea of starting Mrs. Fields' Cookies.

We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out. -Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.
Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895.

If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this.
Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3-M Post-It Notepads.

So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you.' And they said, 'No.' So then we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.'

Apple Computer Inc. founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and H-P interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.

You want to have consistent and uniform muscle development across all of your muscles? It can't be done. It's just a fact of life. You just have to accept inconsistent muscle development as an unalterable condition of weight training.

Response to Arthur Jones, who solved the unsolvable problem by inventing Nautilus.

Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy.

Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.

Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.
Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.

Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value.
Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction.
Pierre Pachtet, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872

The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon.
Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873.

640K ought to be enough for anybody.
Bill Gates, 1981
(Even today when you look under Window's shell, guess what you find - 640K hi-mem/lo-mem)

What can be more palpably absurd than the prospect held out of locomotives traveling twice as fast as stagecoaches?
The Quarterly Review, England (March 1825)

Men might as well project a voyage to the Moon as attempt to communicate electronically across or under the stormy North Atlantic Ocean.
Dr. Dionysus Lardner (1838) Professor of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy, University College, London

The foolish idea of shooting at the moon is an example of the absurd length to which vicious specialization will carry scientists working in thought-tight compartments.
A.W. Bickerton (1926) Professor of Physics and Chemistry, Canterbury College, New Zealand

Well informed people know it is impossible to transmit the voice over wires and that were it possible to do so, the thing would be of no practical value.

Editorial in the Boston Post (1865)

That the automobile has practically reached the limit of its development is suggested by the fact that during the past year no improvements of a radical nature have been introduced.

Scientific American, Jan. 2, 1909

There is not the slightest indication that [nuclear energy] will ever be obtainable. It would mean that the atom would have to be shattered at will.

Albert Einstein, 1932.

Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.

Lord Kelvin, (1895) British mathematician and physicist

While theoretically and technically television may be feasible, commercially & financially I consider it an impossibility, a development of which we need waste little time dreaming.

Lee DeForest, (1926) (American radio pioneer)

Brain work will cause women to go bald.

Berlin professor, 1914.

Television won't matter in your lifetime or mine.

Radio Times editor Rex Lambert, 1936.

And for the tourist who really wants to get away from it all, safaris in Vietnam.

Newsweek magazine, predicting popular holidays for the late 1960s.

I expect to win it. Sit back, put your feet up in front of the TV, relax and enjoy it. Let me do the worrying - that's what I get paid for.

England manager Graham Taylor before the 1992 European championships. England didn't win a game.

I have always found strangers sexy.

- Hugh Grant, six months before he was arrested with stranger Divine Brown.

I would not wish to be Prime Minister, dear.

Margaret Thatcher to her husband in 1973.

That rainbow song's no good. Take it out.

MGM memo after first showing of *The Wizard Of Oz*.

Forget it. No Civil War picture ever made a nickel.

MGM executive, advising against investing in *Gone With The Wind*.

Can't act. Can't sing. Slightly bald. Can dance a little.

A film company's verdict on Fred Astaire's 1928 screen test.

Very interesting, Whittle, my boy, but it will never work.

Professor of Aeronautical Engineering at Cambridge, shown Frank Whittle's plan for the jet engine.

The Beatles? They're on the wane.

- The Duke of Edinburgh in Canada, 1965. They went on to produce a string of No 1s.

The atom bomb will never go off - and I speak as an expert in explosives.

- U.S. Admiral William Leahy in 1945.

All saved from Titanic after collision.
Newspaper headline in New York

It would appear that we have reached the limits of what is possible to achieve with computer technology, although one should be careful with such statements, as they tend to sound pretty silly in 5 years
- John von Neumann, 1949

Long before the year 2000, the entire antiquated structure of college degrees, majors and credits will be in shambles - Alvin Toffler