

TECHNOLOGY

Our world has been inundated with so many technological advances, that I have given up trying to keep up with them, let alone trying to understand them. I am happy if I have managed to figure out how to use them.

I have no idea how a TV remote works. Like everyone else, I used to get up to change TV channels. Now we have remote control. And it does more than change channels. Press one button, it makes the TV louder; press another, it makes it softer. Press still another it brings you back to the last channel you were watching, before you changed to the channel you are now watching. There is a button which enables you to find out what is playing on other channels, and a button that provides sub-titles, and a buttons that tells you about the show you are watching, and lots more buttons whose purpose I have no idea.

We have an attachment to the TV that can play VCRs and DVDs. I have no idea what the initials stand for, but I have drawers full of VCRs, mostly old movies. There are separate remotes for the VCR player and the DVD player. They also have lots of different buttons which control a variety of tricks that they are able to do. Unfortunately, you can't teach an old watcher new tricks, and I have no idea how to utilize the different buttons.

Every new appliance that we bought has a pad that does lots of things by simply touching it. Previously, one had to press a button, or turn a knob. Now, simply touch. We can get ice cubes, crushed ice or ice water from our refrigerator by touching a picture (I think it is called an icon). We can raise or lower the temperature of both the refrigerator and the freezer by touching another icon. The same is true of our microwave, oven, and dishwasher. They give you so many choices, that I stand there immobilized. The dishwasher asks me if I want to wash pots, to wash "normal," to wash gentle, quick rinse or "smart wash." I always choose "smart wash," believing that the dishwasher is smarter than me. The microwave has a bunch of icons, but all I use is the length of time, and the start and stop icons. They all have clocks, which I have to adjust when we switch from standard to daylight savings, and vice versa. (Our old toaster-oven does not have a pad. It has a knob which you can turn to bake, broil or toast, and a timer knob. That I can handle.)

I am intimidated by all these new appliances. I shake my head and mutter, "you have to be an electrical engineer to survive in todays world of appliances, electronics and entertainment."

We bought a new cordless phone some time ago. It has three handsets, and we placed the telephone base with handset #1 in the kitchen, handset #2 in my office (or study), and handset #3 in Fran's office (or study). We kept an old cordless phone, without all the bells and whistles, in our bedroom. The new phones are very impressive-looking. Each handset has a window that lights up. It tells you which handset it is (1, 2, or 3) the

number of missed calls, and the date and the time. We don't need clocks or calendars any more; just look at your phone.

It also has a charge light, to tell you if the phone is being charged, and below the charge light are five buttons. The two buttons that I use all the time are the green button that I press to make a call, and the red button that I press to hang up. The green button has a picture of a phone being picked up, and the red button has a picture of a phone being put down. That is the extent of my knowledge!

The three other buttons remain a mystery. One is labeled Redial, but above it is the word Pause. Another is labeled Menu, and above it is the word Select. Between the two buttons is a larger button with three words and two arrows, one pointing up and the other pointing down. The top word is DIR, the middle word is VOLUME and the bottom word is CID. Of course, none of this makes sense to me. What makes sense are 10 of the 12 buttons with numbers 1234567890, and the letter A to Z on numbers 2 through 9. I know them from the old days.

The phone set came with something called "Abridged User's Manual." I spent a great deal of time reading it. It is a 56 page booklet, and it was helpful showing me how to install the phone. I was very proud of myself when I followed the instructions on pages 4 to 10, plugged the large end of the telephone base power adapter into a power outlet, plugged the telephone line cords into telephone jacks, inserted the batteries into the handsets, but then when it came to handset settings, things slowed down. It became hit or miss. I had to use those strange buttons: Press menu/select, use arrow down CID or arrow up DIR. That really threw me. Finally, I figured out the ringer tone and volume; I set the date and time; I recorded a message. And I was exhausted. I could make no sense of anything that came after.

Page 11 on could have been written in Greek. The phone can do a lot of things, but I cannot figure them out. I know nothing about voicemail, handset settings, quiet mode, handset equalizer, handset locator, chain dialing, blind transfer, intercom, call transfer, or speed dial. Recently, Fran wanted me to increase the number of rings from four to six, before the recorded message comes on, and the recorded message. I asked David to do it.

Next time, I want to tell you about "Caller ID."

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