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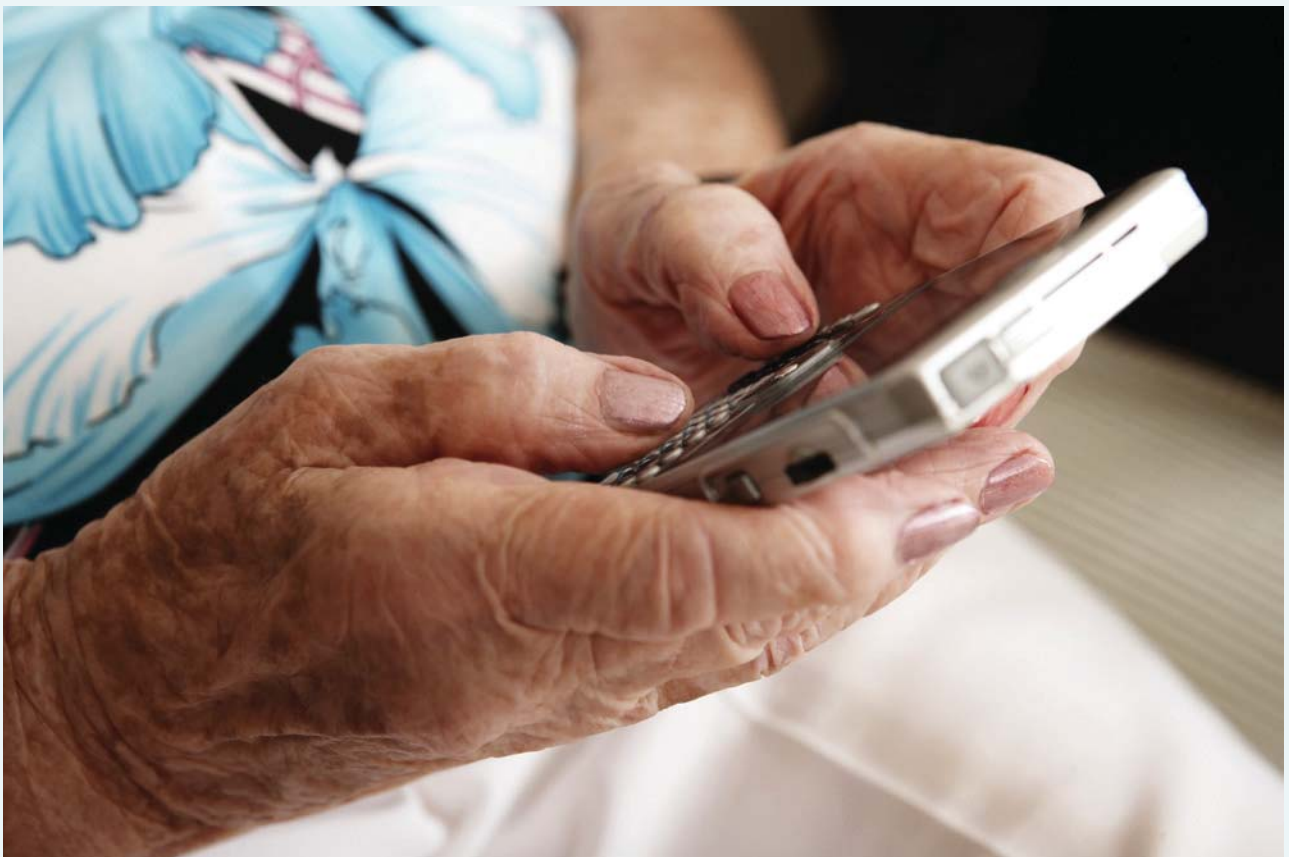
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# The benefits of technology training for baby boomers

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TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING LIVES AND LIKE IT OR NOT YOU WILL BE FORCED TO USE IT IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER, WRITES *TERRY LINDSAY*.

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“Technology”. The word sends shivers down the spine of many technology challenged baby boomers who were brought up on the television, stereo and then the complicated video recorder.

When I was a child the thought of seeing Maxwell Smart talking on a shoe phone was unbelievable! Who would have thought that 40 years later smartphones would allow you to not only make phone calls anywhere in the world but allow you to surf the net, pay bills, do your banking and find your way around town?! These phones have more computing power than a computer that filled a room back in the 1970s.

Well technology is changing our lives and like it or not you will be forced to use it in one form or another, so you might as well try and understand it and how it can benefit you in your everyday life. Like the advent of the automatic teller machine in the 1980s, once you get used to it you will find it is very convenient and does save you time.

### **So what technologies are available and why should I use them?**

#### **Computers and the internet**

Most people would own a computer, but how many actually utilise all of its capabilities? You can do a lot more on a computer than play solitaire!

#### **What do I need?**

You will require a computer (either a desktop or a laptop) and an internet connection.

#### **What are the benefits of having a computer and using the internet?**

##### **It is interesting and informative:**

- Genealogy sites, blogs and forums
- Recipes and cooking websites
- Google Earth, Street View and Maps
- Translation services
- Read newspapers and listen to radio stations
- Medical information websites
- View local and international weather
- Auction websites
- Real estate websites
- View the stock market
- Internet banking

##### **Entertainment and enjoyment:**

- Online games, quizzes and trivia
- Musical instrument tuition
- Television shows
- Read books and magazines
- Watch YouTube videos
- Shop for bargains on eBay and other websites
- Grocery shopping
- Social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter for keeping in touch with friends and family
- Video chat with friends and family anywhere in the world with Skype
- Chat and dating websites >

“Technology in today’s world is a necessary component for survival and prosperity for all populations, with the elderly no exception.”

#### > **Social media**

These sites include Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr etc. They allow you to keep in touch with friends and family, share pictures and video. These sites are a great outlet for older people to interact with other people.

#### **Health benefits**

**Healthcare:** The internet provides a wealth of health resources and products available for the elderly. Empowering seniors to conduct their own research and learn about their conditions and shop for their own medicine is invaluable. Access to the information and the tools to address their health will allow seniors to become more active in their present health care and foster a better and longer quality of life.

**Convenience:** Why wait in queues or on the phone to pay your utility bills, lodge Centrelink forms, apply for passports, book flights and accommodation, banking and shopping etc.? All of this and more can be done online safely and securely saving you time, inconvenience and stress!

**Isolation and loneliness:** Email is the seniors’ number one use for the internet. They use email for family connectivity, communication with friend far and near, sending digital photos, reading daily news, managing stocks and money and much more. Increasingly, they are enjoying senior-related user groups, theme-based forums, virtual games and online chat rooms. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube are also proving popular. These resources allow an expansion of their social network, thus allowing seniors to feel more involved and engaged in the world.

**Independence:** The internet allows for virtually any product and service to be delivered to one’s doorstep within days. The ability to virtually purchase medicine, groceries, gifts, books, plane tickets, to name only a few, allow seniors to become more self-sufficient in their daily lives. This sense of independence fosters feelings of self-worth that may otherwise be compromised due to disabilities or disadvantages.

**Cognitive development:** Continued use of the brain later in life has been shown to slow or prevent senility and dementia. The use of the internet and all of its tools involve the creative use of the mind. Seniors are using their time on the internet for continued learning, research, writing letters, searching genealogy, reading the news and online classes. These tools keep the senior mind active and nimble.

**Depression and psychological wellbeing:** Depression results from feeling alone, ineffectual and helpless, however, using the internet results in a self-assured individual. Today’s online applications, products, and resources allow one to be connected to the world, needed by people, independent and self-directed. Depression is widespread among the senior population. The feelings of isolation, helplessness, and inability, contribute to this mental disorder. The tools available on the internet and computer allow for a more self-sufficient, social, and happier life for our seniors in their sunset years.

There is undoubtedly a widespread and urgent need for a service that offers accessible and affordable technology training education for the middle age and elderly. Access to technology and all its benefits should be a right, and not a privilege. Technology in

today's world is a necessary component for survival and prosperity for all populations, with the elderly no exception. Access and affordability of computer technology and computer instruction are the keys to a healthier and happier senior population. With the senior population growing steadily, with no expected decline in numbers, Technology Training's services come not a moment too soon, providing the tools for this prosperity to all those they reach.

### **Is everything I do on the internet safe?**

Yes, providing you follow a few simple rules:

- Have an up to date internet security program installed on your computer or mobile device
- Use a password consisting of at least six characters including at least one number and one upper case letter, and update it regularly (at least every three months)
- Do not do your banking on another computer or at an internet kiosk
- Keep away from pornographic and pirate software/hacking sites

Nearly all virus attacks and identity theft are due to computer users not following the above rules.

### **Tablets and iPads**

These are similar to laptop computers but lay flat and have an on screen keyboard. They do not have the processing power of a laptop but are lighter and more portable. They are similar to a laptop in that they have an operating system but run applications instead of programs. They are ideal to surf the internet, send/receive email, take and view pictures, watch movies and listen to music. If you intend using Microsoft Office, MYOB or other specific programs I would recommend purchasing a laptop.

### **Smartphones**

Smartphones have the capability to do everything a tablet does, only on a smaller scale. Actually a tablet

is just a larger version of the smartphone, minus the ability to make phone calls. With a smartphone and downloaded applications, your phone can become an internet browser, MP3/video player, a photo album, eBook reader, GPS, heart beat monitor, glucometer, compass, flashlight... The list goes on and on! Best of all is a great deal of these applications are free and others are only a few dollars to purchase.

If your smartphone and tablet have the same operating system, e.g. iOS4 (Mac) or Android, then the applications are interchangeable. These phones are great for people on the move that want to be able to send and receive emails on the go and check their Facebook or Twitter status.

### **Electronic book readers**

Electronic book readers are devices that display electronic books, also known as eBooks. At its most basic, an electronic book reader has an input device, like a keyboard, and a screen to display eBook text.

Most eBook readers can store thousands of books on its internal memory and many more on an external memory card. Most readers can also play audio and video files. They can be purchased from book stores and online. (eBooks are often less expensive than paper books).

Books can be bookmarked with the capability of reading many books at one time. Another feature is the ability to increase the text size for easy viewing.

### **GPS devices**

Global Positioning Devices (GPS) allow us to find our way anywhere around the world (with the suitable maps installed). Most units sold in Australia come with Australian maps. These need to be updated on a regular basis. They are very accurate and take you right to the location. These are ideal for finding your way to garage sales.



Having been a volunteer tutor teaching the elderly about the basic use of computers Terry Lindsay realised a huge demand to teach retirees about other types of computer technology and how they would benefit from using it in their everyday life, e.g. social media and internet banking and shopping, eBooks etc. Only one in five

people over the age of 65 actually use a computer or associated technologies.

Terry's Technology Training Group hopes to change this by offering one-on-one in-home tuition, working at your pace. Contact us on 1300 136 679 or visit [www.technologytraining.net.au](http://www.technologytraining.net.au) for more information.