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Wired

Professor David Crystal

To be wired. Well, if you're talking about electricity that's not surprising I suppose, wires join electrical things. But people being wired? If I say to you "are you wired?" or you say to me, "yes, you're wired"? It's another one of those descriptive words that came in in the 1990s, based on technology.

It really was referring to the I.T. world, the world where computers connect to the internet, and because your computer was now wired in through a cable into a telephone line, people were said to be 'wired' meaning you are connected to the internet.

And so after a while it developed a figurative use. People would say, you know, "are you wired?" and what they would mean is, are you ready to handle this, can you talk to me in a reasonably efficient way? Or if say "Jane is wired" it means "oh, Jane can cope with anything, she's able to handle all the things that I might throw at her, and her at me".

Actually, all this is history now: in the last year or so, "wired" has been replaced very largely by "wireless" as the coolest term to use around, because "wireless fidelity technology", or "wi-fi" as it's called, w-i hyphen f-i, "wi-fi technology" is now in. Wireless is replacing wired. Now I say, "are you wireless?" meaning 'are you ready for me?' I expect that'll be said in the near future. It hasn't happened yet, but it will!



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