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Netizen

Professor David Crystal

When the internet began, 'net' became a new prefix. We had words like, 'net news' and 'net speak' and all sorts of things like that. And then it became a suffix as well, hyper net, news net and so on.

And then blends started to appear, with a familiar word changed. So we had 'netizen' – that is, a citizen of the internet, an internet citizen, netizen for short, somebody who lives their whole life there. And these people are also called 'netties', or 'netters' or even 'net-heads', I've heard.

And then we get 'netiquette' – the conventions which govern acceptable behaviour when engaging in internet dialogue. The etiquette of internet, netiquette, especially used in emailing and chat rooms. Many sites actually offer guidance about how to behave linguistically.

There's a joke about this which relies on that little symbol, you know, the @ symbol, which you use in your email address, david.crystal @ so and so dot com. Here's the joke: How do you know you're a real netizen?

Answer: When all of your friends have an @ in their names!



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