

## Is the internet changing the English language?

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Have you ever looked at a letter written 100 years ago? The English probably felt "old school," or overly formal. Today, we are living through a digital revolution that is fundamentally changing how we communicate. While some people argue the internet is "ruining" our grammar, modern linguistic research actually shows something much more exciting: the internet is making English more flexible, creative, and expressive than ever before.

### The Birth of "Netspeak"



[https://www.google.com/search?sca\\_esv=4b9c4fb793c57767&sxsrf=ANbLn6xr4dBWfSj5e2\\_3G6juZcOIZ0yPw:1774392765754&udm=2&fbs=ADc\\_lbpk8W4EqsVIOvbGJcDwpm60DczFdcvPnuv8WQohHLTaf9fS4tJ71bi2aHSPmeg0IA2nDWC3A9mnYKHxHonOwOArVa2mNEvEuOSTSa1dtwqTXiOEVAUkLmHqJS4NtOQA](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=4b9c4fb793c57767&sxsrf=ANbLn6xr4dBWfSj5e2_3G6juZcOIZ0yPw:1774392765754&udm=2&fbs=ADc_lbpk8W4EqsVIOvbGJcDwpm60DczFdcvPnuv8WQohHLTaf9fS4tJ71bi2aHSPmeg0IA2nDWC3A9mnYKHxHonOwOArVa2mNEvEuOSTSa1dtwqTXiOEVAUkLmHqJS4NtOQA)

For centuries, there was a clear boundary between speaking and writing. Writing was slow and formal; speaking was fast and casual. However, the famous linguist David Crystal argues that the internet has created a "third way" of communicating called Netspeak.

When you text a friend, you aren't "writing" in the traditional sense, you are "talking" through your fingers. This has introduced prosody into our conversations. Prosody is how we use tone and rhythm in speech. On a screen, we mimic this by repeating letters (like "yesssss") or using ALL CAPS to show excitement or volume. These aren't typos; they are tools to replace the vocal tone we lose when we aren't face-to face.

<https://archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/02/doespunctuation-matter-in-text-messages/>

One of the most fascinating shifts is how we use punctuation to convey emotion. In your English essays, a period is just a neutral way to end a sentence. But in a DM or a text, it has taken on a new "social" meaning.



### New Words and "Verbification"

**YOU SHOULD TWEET THAT!  
LET ME GOOGLE IT!  
I'M GOING TO BING HIM!  
THAT MOMENT IS INSTAGRAMMABLE!  
I'M GOING TO TUMBLE THAT!  
DO YOU WANT TO SKYPE?  
YOU SHOULD FACEBOOK THAT!  
I'M GOING TO PHOTOSHOP YOUR PHOTO!**

The internet has also acted as a high-speed laboratory for new words. A 2024 study by Panjaitan & Patria highlights how social media accelerates a process called functional shift (or "verbification").

<https://archive.nytimes.com/bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/for-start-ups-the-ultimate-goal-becoming-a-verb/>

This is when we take a noun and turn it into a verb. For example, "Google" started as a company name, but now it is an action ("I'll google that"). We do the same when we talk about "friending" a classmate or "DMing" a business. Because of the internet, these words move from online slang into mainstream dictionaries in record time—sometimes in just a few months.

Traditional Term	Digital "Verbified" Version
Electronic Mail	To Email
Search Engine	To Google
Direct Message	To DM
Friend (Noun)	To Friend