

Why is the computer the best invention of the century? essay sample

[Technology](#), [Computer](#)



Imagine yourself being transported to the past, at a point right before the 20th century began. Forget any form of convenience you may be enjoying right now. It could be as trivial not having something to safely shave your facial hair with, not being able to toast your bread in less than a minute, not being able to write on paper using your ball-point pen, or not having some form of stick that automatically wipes your windshield while you're driving. It could also be as vital a part of your life such as not being able to travel across states via airplanes, or not being able to contact a business associate through email. It could even be a matter of life and death, such as not having something to combat simple bacterial infections, which could lead to severe complications.

Now what if you are given a chance to ask for one single convenience; what if you are forced to choose just one and waive the others. Would you rather bring along your safety razor instead of your ATM card? Or would you rather want to write your novel with a ball pen than type it in your laptop? I don't know about you, but ask any random fellow outside and I will bet my entire life savings that he would rather watch YouTube than munch on toasted bread.

On a more serious note though, have you ever tried to ponder on what the greatest invention of the century was? If you pop this question to your friends and acquaintances, chances are you'd get as many answers as the number of times you had asked them.

Apart from the enormity of the number of inventions this past century, what makes the question harder to answer is the task of determining which criteria are we to guide ourselves with on deciding on this. Nonetheless, I have tried to present a few points on which to evaluate the real value of these inventions:

Was it instant?

Here I will evaluate whether a particular invention went through some gradual developments. That is, was it invented immediately in the form that we can categorically identify the invention as such. For example, computers at the time of their invention were not exactly in the form as we have them today, while the transistor (as there have many who proclaim this as the greatest invention of the century) pretty much came out as we know them today. I deem this criteria relevant as it will clarify whether something is an entirely new idea or just an evolution of ideas that had previously came out.

How revolutionary was it?

Did it drastically alter the way we live? Did it influence practically every aspect of our lives - business, government, schools and education, socialization, entertainment...

Did it spark new disciplines?

Did it encourage further research that eventually lead to establishment of new fields of discipline?

Was it a necessity?

Had humanity survived without it?

As with the first criterion, I think it is pretty clear that the transistor has the edge over the computer. In fact the transistor had a crucial role in propagating computers because as a replacement for vacuum tubes, it made them considerably smaller and energy efficient. Prior to 1947 (when the transistor is generally recognized to be invented) there had been several forms of it, but the gap is only about a decade or two. Whereas we can trace the origin of the computer to as far back as 2000 years ago, the birth of the abacus. In the early 1800's, a mechanical calculating machine had actually been invented in Cambridge, England by a mathematics professor in the name of Charles Babbage.

On the criterion of how revolutionary the invention was, I think no invention other than the computer can claim as much credit to the extent of the difference of the lives of people nowadays and those who live a century ago. We need not even cite statistics for this; the evidence is apparent in our day-to-day lives - the internet, our dependence on computer memory for storing volumes of files, the worldwide communication it avails us.

Did the invention of the computer lead to the establishment new fields of discipline or further discoveries?

Of course it did. We cannot deny how computers opened possibilities and widened humanity's horizon - wireless business transactions, the hitherto

non-existent science of programming, precision technology, the digitalization of practically all instruments or devices known to man, and many others.

On its necessity, the computer may not have mattered much on the lives of the people during its invention, but the more important question I think is whether can people nowadays survive without it. The computer is one example of an invention that did not spring from common necessity. And somehow that's what makes it more profound - it created necessities rather than the other way around. It is a testament to the brilliance of its creation that mankind discovered new needs, desires, and passions.

Taking all of these into consideration, I thus conclude that the computer is indeed the greatest invention of the 20th century. There were other great inventions of course - the airplane, the transistor, the penicillin, and even nuclear inventions. The airplane did revolutionize travel, the transistor paved the way for modern electronics, the penicillin alleviated human suffering, and nuclear weapons determined the outcome of conflicts and altered history. But we can likewise attribute the development each of these to the ubiquity of computers. Which airport around the world does not employ computers on its control towers? How could have electronic instruments or gadgets advanced if not for its embedded mini-computers? How precise medical instruments could have been if not for its digitalization? And how crucial the internet is in the trend of globalization and international relations nowadays?

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