

The significance of
steroids as the 10th
flattener in the world
is flat



Friedman, in Chapter 2 of *The World Is Flat*, describes the 10 items or phenomenon that helped flatten the globe and added to our still-globalizing world. The tenth flattener, in his opinion, are the “steroids” of this globalization process. His realization of this stemmed from his trip to Japan, when his colleague Jim Brooke was using his laptop via wireless connection, while travelling on a high-speed bullet train. His beliefs of how vast Japan’s virtual networks were confirmed when Brooke’s colleague Todd Zaun was using his Japanese cell phone, which was capable of connecting to the Internet no matter where he was. This leads to Friedman making note of how greatly expansive and efficient Japan and Ghana’s cell coverage networks were in comparison to those that were present in America, adding to the “amazing degree of wireless penetration and connectivity” (160) found in Japan and the rest of the world today. Friedman then cites examples of how new age tech has made everyday life easier for people in a wide range of situations.

All of this is attributed to the “steroids” within tech development that have pushed globalization beyond its previous limits. They are all considered to be the technological “steroids” of today because “they are amplifying and turbocharging all the other flatteners” (161), including the state of constant improvement—allowing tech to operate at cheaper, faster rates than before, the development of file-sharing—leading to improved linkage and collaboration between people across nations, the invention of multipurpose devices—in which devices are more streamlined and capable of doing more than ever (“your Internet-enabled camera phone is not just a camera; it is also a copy machine, with worldwide distribution material” (170), as

Friedman states), the VoIP—voiceover internet protocol service, providing a newer, cheaper, more personal way in which messages can be delivered, breakthrough improvements in videoconferencing—making business interactions much easier and more efficient, and most importantly, the creation of wireless networking—giving us the ability to drop things and then pick them back up anywhere.

This section relates to the whole of Chapter 2 as it explores how these technological “steroids” are leading all the other flatteners and affecting them as well. It is also acknowledged that, without these steroids, many of the other flatteners would not be as developed as they are today. I wholly agree with Friedman’s observations and conclusions, as much of technology as we know it today is continuously being developed based on the stated steroids. These are the driving forces within society, through business competition and consumer demands, that are pushing various companies to reach for new heights with their products. As more of these products become more accessible to more people, the world will continue to “flatten”, to quote Friedman, with the constantly expanding networks through which globalization will continue to spread.