

Lesson 12:

Has the present **lived up to** the **expectations** of the past?
Throughout the ages people **have tried** to predict what life in the twenty-first century would be like.
Many science-fiction writers **did manage** to predict the influence the computer would have on our world.
Some even imagined that it would take over our lives, develop a personality, and turn on its creators.
To some extent they were right, especially **when it comes to** children and **cyber** addiction.

One constant prediction was that, **thanks to** computers and machines, **the time devoted** to labour would diminish. Even in 1971, in his book Future Shock, Alvin Toffler **envisaged** a society **awash with** 'free time'.
The author noted that time at work **had been cut** in half since the turn of the previous century and wrongly **speculated** that it would be cut in half again by 2000.

However, our gadget-filled homes are a tribute to the various visions of the future: the microwave oven, internet fridges with ice-cube dispensers, freezers, video monitors, climate control, dishwashers, washing machines, personal computers, wireless connections and cupboards full of instant food. These may no longer be considered cutting-edge but they have matched, if not surpassed, visions of how we would live.

The domestic robot never quite happened, but if you can phone ahead to set the heating and use a remote control to operate the garage door, they may as well be redundant.

The car, of course, has failed to live up to our expectations. It **has been given** turbo engines, DVD players and automatic windows, but its tyres stick **stubbornly** to the road. Why doesn't it take off? The past promised us a flying car in various **guises** . In 1947, a prototype circled San Diego for more than an hour but later **crashed** in the **desert**. Some 30 patents for flying cars were registered in the US patent office last century but **none** of these ideas **has been transformed** into a **commercially available** vehicle.

At least communication technology in this digital **age** hasn't **let us down**.

Even in the most remote areas people have access to some form of communication device.

The introduction of the telephone last century changed our world, but today's mobile phones and the **virtual** world of the Internet have **revolutionised** it.