

TECHNOLOGY

Just Tell Me How It Works: Practical Help for Adults on All-Things-Digital

Paul Lance

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Five Stars (out of Five)

Stellar organization and clear writing bolster this ultimate guide to all things digital.

Paul Lance's *Just Tell Me How It Works* could easily be the new bible for the technologically challenged. This hefty volume, which Lance calls "the adult guide to the digital world," covers it all: computers, the Internet, television (everything from types of TVs to connections and remotes), DVD players, streaming music and video, digital books, digital cameras, tablets, phones, social networking, and more.

Lance, who presents seminars and workshops on understanding technology, promises to "make everything simple"—and he does. He is a whiz at turning technology and its associated jargon into utterly understandable prose. Every section is simple and easy to read. The font is large, the subheads are bold, and there is plenty of white space on each page. Lance uses screenshots and black-and-white photographs of computer hardware, and he supplements the text with lots of highlighted information via boxed-in copy.

The informal, not-too-technical writing style sets just the right tone, and Lance's sense of humor livens up the subject matter. His helpful asides are always informative; for example, when he reports that Google is by far the leading search engine, he writes, "This market dominance is why 'Google' has become a catch-all search phrase in our lexicon. (Much like Xerox was synonymous for 'copier' years ago)."

The book is very well organized. As Lance points out in his introduction, the content is divided into basic categories containing a chapter on each specific item, so a reader can skip around and read about anything of interest. In a section entitled "Glimpsing the Future," for instance, Lance addresses blogs, building websites, the cloud, online shopping, mobile payments, smart cars, and a few other futuristic subjects that make for intriguing reading.

Another nice feature is a page at the start of each chapter suggesting "Who should read this section" and "Who should skip this section." Lance wisely addresses the fact that

information becomes quickly obsolete. He writes that the content is guaranteed to be up-to-date because “the publisher allows us to add any new changes or innovations in technology (with only a two week turnaround).” Still, one might wonder why the book doesn’t have a companion website that could do the same thing.

There are numerous books that cover the same territory in a similar style, most notably the best-selling For Dummies series. Typically, though, those books address a single area in considerable detail. The advantage of *Just Tell Me How It Works* is its breadth of coverage. For an all-in-one overview of everything digital written in simple, everyday language, this reference is hard to beat.

Barry Silverstein