

10 products that changed our lives

What would we do without cell phones and texting? Or wireless Internet access? Or supermarket convenience foods? OK, maybe bagged lettuce isn't exactly revolutionary, but in the past decade all kinds of new stuff changed our lives in big and small ways. What had the most impact? We did a national telephone survey of 1,005 women in November 2009, and here's how they voted and what some of our subscribers said.

Cell and smart phones, not surprisingly, are No. 1. During the decade, cell service went digital, ushering in affordable plans with hundreds of minutes a month, along with texting and Web access. Google, No. 2 on the list, was around before 2000 but wasn't the household name it is today. Items like GPS devices and flat-screen TVs were almost unheard of. Some of the innovations that didn't make our Top 10 but got lots of votes include Facebook, video-game systems like the Wii, and eBay.



1 Cell and smart phones became our lifeline.

"I feel safe wherever I am because I am able to be in touch with my family at all times."

—Gwen Scott, Wintersville, Ohio

"I can feel assured that the school can contact me if my children need me. It takes the anxiety out of not knowing where a loved one is"

—Leslie Nixon, Lutz, Fla.



2 Google helped us make better decisions fast.

"With fast, easy access to so much information, no matter how esoteric or banal, it has changed how I shop, make decisions, and live."

—Susan McDougald, Suwanee, Ga.

"Any information you need is available. I research drugs my doctor prescribes."

—Lynda Fleckenstein, Englewood, Colo.



3 Wireless connections made life easier.

"I now have the freedom to use the Internet for e-mail, shopping, etc., from anywhere in my home. I love that I am not tied to a specific spot."

—Cindy Tauer, Sartell, Minn.

"I use Internet access on my phone and it helps so much when finding deals. It makes my life much easier!"

—Lindsay Carranza, Omaha, Neb.



4 Digital photography made us happier.

"Digital photos are easy to send and they're on my screen saver. The pictures change every 5 seconds. They bring smiles to everyone."

—Elaine Larson, North Pole, Alaska

"I can take as many pictures as I want without worrying about it costing an arm and a leg."

—Desiree Zeleznikar, Canon City, Colo.



5 Supermarket convenience foods made us healthier.

Bagged salads "gave me motivation to choose a healthy lifestyle. Now salads are a daily staple of my life, and I'm sure it's made a huge difference in my health and the health of my family."

—Lisa Barry, Maple Grove, Minn.

"I haven't roasted a chicken in years."

—Kate N., Summerfield, Fla.



6 Text messaging saved us time and helped us stay in touch.

"It made it unnecessary to get involved in long telephone calls."

—Amy Cohen, Peekskill, N.Y.

"It keeps me in contact (with family members) in an instant and helps me better adjust to life's daily changes as they occur."

—Martha Morgan, Spring, Texas



7 Online shopping brought the world home, saving us time and money.

"It opened up a whole new world. You can have anything you could ever want sent right to your doorstep with a few clicks. How could that not be described as a major impact on one's life?"

—Linda Backstrom, Elk Grove, Calif.

"I spend less time, money, and fuel."

—Millicent Yount, Willis, Texas



8 Flat-panel TVs made home life more entertaining.

"This product has added excitement to my evenings. Really! There is always something awesome to watch and HD makes it an event."

—Mag Wilson, Aloha, Ore.

"It makes the people on TV seem like they're right here in my home."

—Patsy Wilson, Rutherfordton, N.C.



9 Netflix, on-demand movies, and DVRs gave us flexibility.

"I have saved so much time because I don't watch ads anymore. Plus my kids can watch educational shows any time. My 6-year-old has never seen a commercial aimed at a kid!"

—Stacy Patwardhan, Kensington, Md.

"I make TV viewing fit my schedule instead of the other way around."

—Jane Richmond, Blountville, Tenn.



10 GPS navigation gave us the confidence to explore.

"It has made me explore more. When I drove cross-country it gave me confidence because I knew I would be OK. I never stress about finding my way."

—Diane Murphy, Burlingame, Calif.

"I don't get lost anymore and I have more freedom."

—Susan Hammer, Wyoming, Mich.



iPods & MP3 players helped us cope.

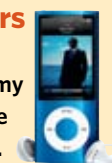
"Being able to transport my music or videos anywhere has made my life happier."

It reduces my stress and gives me a healthy way of dealing with life's ups and downs."

—Heidi La Course, Harwood Heights, Ill.

"It makes commuting and waiting in line for my daughter at activities enjoyable rather than stressful."

—Karen H., Camp Hill, Pa.



TIE

Buh-bye!

The top 10 products women hope won't survive another decade:

1. Super-low-waisted pants/jeans
2. Fake tans
3. Reality TV
4. Fishnet stockings
5. Thong underwear
6. Huge SUVs
7. Skinny jeans
8. Dark nail polish
9. Crocs
10. Giant handbags



ILLUSTRATIONS: LEO ESPINOSA

Note: Products listed in descending rank order.