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## Vegas' coolest gadgets

8 fun and useful toys from the CES showroom floor.

By [Peter Lewis](#), FORTUNE senior editor

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**FORTUNE**

LAS VEGAS (FORTUNE) - According to the taxi drivers, this is the busiest Consumer Electronics Show in years, with more than 30,000 visitors dashing around town to see the latest gizmos and gadgets from an increasingly global and vibrant industry.

Several themes have emerged for the electronics industry in 2006, most notably, and visibly, the arrival of high-definition video. Plasma and LCD flat-panel displays, some of them as large as king-size beds, can be seen in nearly every nook and cranny on the cavernous exhibition halls.

The shift to high-definition digital television has been under way for several years, but 2006 will be a breakthrough year for HD, signaling a shift in television that many people here say is even more significant than the transition to color TV from black-and-white a half century ago. The Congress has mandated a deadline of 2009 for broadcasters to fully convert to digital from analog. Prices for flat-panel TVs fell roughly 30 percent last year, and some analysts expect a similar decline in 2006, putting big-screen, high-definition displays in more homes than ever before.

More and more programming is being delivered in high-definition, not just prime-time shows but also soap operas and game shows and local TV newscasts. High-definition DVD players and recorders, along with HD movie discs to play on them, are coming in 2006, bringing an advance in picture and sound quality even greater than the shift to standard DVDs from VHS tapes.

And the HD televisions themselves are making a technical leap in 2006, offering 1,080 lines of resolution scanned progressively (the buzzword is 1080p), yielding pictures that are essentially filmlike in quality and color.

The HDTV sets are the centerpiece of the other big trend at CES this year, convergence. Convergence -- the theoretically seamless integration of digital video, digital photos, digital music, digital computers, mobile digital communications and the Internet in the home -- has been talked about for several years, but now appears to be practical for normal consumers, not just geeks willing to turn their homes into test laboratories.

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**Babble connects to your telephone and keeps nosy officemates from overhearing your conversation.**

**Here come the gadgets**



Intel, Microsoft and Sony are all making

Computer makers are releasing new PCs and software designed to move digital content from one device to another in the home over wired and wireless networks. One can download music, movies or TV shows through a PC and transfer the content to various screens in the home, or to a new generation of portable players like the iPod with Video, or the Sony PSP.

Another theme here is "three screens," which refers to the TV screen, the PC screen, and the little screen on the face of what used to be called a mobile phone. The arrival of third-generation phone services -- essentially, broadband data to go along with phone calls -- will bring video, voice, music and data services to what many here are now calling "mobile handset computers."

But as always, people come to the CES show not just to divine the themes, but also for the divine gadgets and toys. Following are just a few of the coolest gadgets I've seen so far. I haven't tested these things yet, but they looked fun or useful in demos.

### Vegas' coolest gadgets

**The Turbo Charge** (under \$20 plus adapter, available now, [www.turbocharge.com](http://www.turbocharge.com)). It's a pen-size device that holds a single AA battery for powering a mobile phone, Blackberry or other PDA. It seems to be a technical law that your phone battery dies just when you need to make or receive a call, and the Turbo Charge provides extra talk or work time when you're not in range of a power outlet.

**The MoGo Mouse** (\$70, available in March, [www.mogomouse.com](http://www.mogomouse.com)) solves the mobile mouse problem. I hate laptop trackpads, but a conventional mouse is too bulky to travel with, and those walnut-size mobile mice are too awkward to use. The nearly flat MoGo Mouse fits inside your laptop's PC card slot, and pops out to work as a wireless mouse when you need it. It recharges in your PC card slot, so there are no batteries.

**B.O.B.** (\$80, available in April, [www.hopscotchtechnology.com](http://www.hopscotchtechnology.com)) is a phone-size gizmo (I have no idea what B.O.B. stands for) that allows parents to limit the time their kids spend watching TV or using a computer. It plugs into the PC or TV, and parents allocate a specified number of TV viewing or gaming hours. When the time's up, the power goes off. No arguing, no whining.

A bit more sadistic is the **EnterTrainer** (\$100, soon, [www.theentertrainer.com](http://www.theentertrainer.com)). A self-motivation device for couch potatoes, the wireless EnterTrainer monitors your heart rate, communicates with your TV, and allows full enjoyment of the TV or video game only if you get off your butt and exercise. If you slack off doing pushups or situps or walking on your home treadmill, the EnterTrainer shuts down the TV volume. If you want to pump up the volume, you've got to pump up your heart.

**Babble** (\$395, available now, [www.sonaretechnologies.com](http://www.sonaretechnologies.com)) is the desktop version of the "Cone of Silence" from the 1960s TV show Get Smart. Babble connects to your telephone and prevents people around you (but not the person you're talking to) from overhearing your conversation. Snoopy co-workers just a few feet away hear only a garbled version of your voice, preventing them from getting the latest gossip or hearing about your pay raise. ([Click here](#) to see

big announcements at the Consumer Electronics Show. [See our CES preview.](#)

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### Remember the Betamax

The smart money will wait out the standards war before buying

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CNNMoney.com's review.)

**Logitech Wireless Music System for PC** (\$150, available now, [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)). This nifty system pipes your digital music from a PC or MP3 player to your home stereo without long cables or having to set up a wireless network. It streams any music format to the stereo at a range of up to 300 feet, and comes with a remote control.

**Bluespoon 5G** (\$400, available May, [www.nextlink.to](http://www.nextlink.to)) is the smallest Bluetooth phone headset I've seen. The 5G refers to five grams, which is about how much the bottlecap-size earphone and microphone weigh. It fits in the ear, not over it. If you're a hands-free phone user who is tired of looking like a Martian, or weary of a headset giving you a perpetual bad hair day, this is the gizmo for you.

**SpeedRay 3000** (only \$7,000, available spring, [www.raysat.com](http://www.raysat.com)). This saucer-like antenna fits on top of your RV or SUV and turns your vehicle into a rolling Internet hot spot with Internet and satellite TV. I suppose if you're truly desperate to watch TV and web surf while driving to the Grand Canyon and camping out for a week, this will be high on your list. ■

a high-definition DVD player.  
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