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I've seen the future and it's virtually here;   
HOW [FACEBOOK](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C9M7%23&searchTerm=FACEBOOK%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifCHIEF'S VISION WILL CHANGE OUR LIVES  
  
**BYLINE:** ABIGAIL O'LEARY  
  
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LIVING in the real world could soon be a thing of the past as virtual reality takes over.

[Facebook](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C9M7%23&searchTerm=Facebook%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifboss [Mark Zuckerberg](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C5PB%23&searchTerm=Mark%20Zuckerberg%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifbelieves virtual reality technology is on the brink of changing the way we live our lives for ever.

Virtual reality, or VR, is a computer-simulated, digitally recorded view of the world.

It transports you into a 360-degree virtual environment, which you can explore by turning your head and walking around.

You can interact with objects in the digital world by using handheld controllers or special gloves.

For years, there has been talk of how we will all be wearing VR headsets, but now the great leap forward has come by building them around our smartphones.

At the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona this week, [Zuckerberg](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C5PB%23&searchTerm=Zuckerberg%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifsaid: "Pretty soon we're going to live in a world where everyone has the power to share and experience whole scenes as if you're there, right there in person. Imagine being able to sit in front of a campfire and hang out with friends any time you want."

Perhaps it's no surprise [Zuckerberg](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C5PB%23&searchTerm=Zuckerberg%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifis pushing VR, after buying market leaders Oculus Rift for an eye-popping £1.4billion in 2014.

This technology is expected to be available to the public later this year, but currently the cheapest on the market is Google Cardboard. The cardboard viewer is used with a smartphone and costs about £14.

Samsung's Gear VR headset is available for £80 and plugs into the new Samsung Galaxy S7.

The £560 HTC Vive is available for pre-ordering later this month.

One of the issues with VR has been motion sickness. Oculus claims to have solved it by increasing the refresh time of images.

So now that VR tech will soon be in the high street, how is it about to change our lives? SPORT Virtual reality has already helped golfers improve their swing and been used in the design of trainer. It could also soon improve the audience's experience of a game. Fans purchasing tickets to view games by VR may be able to choose where they would prefer to sit.

CONCERTS VR could allow us to sit back and relax from the comfort of our own home as we enjoy gigs and concerts with friends who have planned to tune their headsets to the same experience. Universal Music Group has paired with US radio and events giant iHeartMedia to create a series of VR music experiences, set to be launched later this year.

**DEPRESSION** Trials have been carried out on "**virtual** **reality** **therapy**". At University College London, 15 sufferers watched a virtual avatar of themselves comforting a crying child. Victims of**depression** can be overly self-critical, and this aimed to show them their compassionate side. Participants said they felt they actually comforted themselves.

SHOPPING VR technology could bring about customised shops and let consumers try on items. Production company Visualise have already worked with Thomas Cook to produce VR holiday demos were you can virtually visit destinations before paying for that dream getaway.

MEDICAL TREATMENT Swiss company MindMaze claims VR technology can train the brain to repair nerve damage. If the brain supposedly sees a stroke victim move an affected limb with increased speed and accuracy, it may be tricked into reversing the paralysis. Researchers at Pompeu Fabra University in Spain also found that just 10 minutes of this therapy was enough to increase movement in the stroke-affected limb.

VR is also helping train medical students, letting them practise lifesaving techniques such as CPR.

TEACHING Last year, as part of an English class on Romeo and Juliet, Chicago teacher Mariano Azuela took her students on a tour of Verona with Google Cardboard VR. Pupils could also experience the horrors of the First World War trenches, or even the vast expanse of space, on VR.

PHOBIAS Facing your fears is said to be the best way to conquer a phobia and psychologists in the University of West Virginia are testing virtual reality exposure therapy, which allows people to experience their fears while, hopefully, feeling safe knowing the situation is not real.

EXERCISE The gym could become a lot less dull. German design company HYVE has uses VR technology in its Icaros workout station, which allows users to lift weights and train in a range of weird and wacky environments, including outer space and at the bottom of the ocean.

**GRAPHIC:** SHAPING UP With Icaros workoutSTAGE IS SET To watch gigs in VRgoggle eyed [Zuckerberg](https://www.nexis.com/search/EnhXMLCrossLinkSearch.do?ersKey=23_T24054174544&returnToId=20_T24054249712&csi=145254&A=0.7628658675004104&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000C5PB%23&searchTerm=Zuckerberg%20&indexType=P)https://www.nexis.com/images/arrow_blue.gifhas bought Oculus Rift  
  
**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH