

Gifs aren't cool any more – and now I feel very, very old

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Author: Joel Snape

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At the risk of sounding like a show-off, I'm really good at gifs. Not the pre-packaged kind: there's no man-blinking-in-polite-disbelief in my repertoire, no woman-in-a-turquoise-top-doing-a-spit-take, and certainly no Ron Burgundy saying: "That escalated quickly." We're talking bespoke, artisanal gifs, hand-selected for each occasion. Sometimes, I even make my own, noting down a bon mot or a wry facial expression from a TV show and saving it for a special occasion. Super Hans from Peep Show saying: "The secret ingredient is crime"? It's not a multipurpose gif, like Homer Simpson backing slowly into a hedge, but that only makes its rare deployment more effective. There's only one problem with this, and if you're gen Y or younger you're probably already doing a TikTok to explain it to me: gifs aren't cool any more. Middle-aged people use gifs now. Twitter and WhatsApp have gif search bars that help even the most technophobic users find a little girl having a sugar rush at a baseball game, or Steve Carell yelling: "No!" They're universal, therefore lame. I don't make the rules, as Natasha Lyonne says in a gif from a show I haven't seen. I wish I did. I have a dodgy knee and some grey in my beard, but this is the first time I have felt genuinely old. I have mastered a skill that's completely obsolete, like being a knocker-upper or a leech collector and, though I've got a lot more employment options than a 19th-century textile worker, it doesn't feel good. Is this what life is going to be from now on? Me getting to grips with new technology and then realising it's already done for? No, I have decided. It is not. Author and agitator Nassim Taleb suggests referring to something called the Lindy Effect, which states that the longer something nonperishable – like a technology or an idea – has been around, the longer it is likely to last. If a book has been in print for 40 years, the idea goes, it has better odds of surviving another 40 than a bestseller that came out last week. From now on, I'm only going to get into skills that tech hasn't been able to replicate for hundreds of years, such as fire pit cookery and papier-mache. Gifs are done for, but cave painting could still make a comeback. Joel Snape is a writer and fitness expert