

Neal Stephenson Quotes

*People, Thinking, Writing, Two, Book, Men, Interesting, Believe, Years, Ideas,
Design, Use, Mind, Trying, Smart, Running, Character, Self, Guy, World*

When you are wrestling for possession of a sword, the man with the handle always wins.

~Neal Stephenson

The difference between stupid and intelligent people - and this is true whether or not they are well-educated - is that intelligent people can handle subtlety.

~Neal Stephenson

This is one of the two great labyrinths into which human minds are drawn: the question of free will versus predestination.

~Neal Stephenson

You should not believe a thing only because you like to believe it. We call that 'DiAx's Rake.

~Neal Stephenson

To condense fact from the vapor of nuance.

~Neal Stephenson

Any property that's open to common use gets destroyed. Because everyone has incentive to use it to the max, but no one has incentive to maintain it.

~Neal Stephenson

See, the world is full of things more powerful than us. But if you know how to catch a ride, you can go places.

~Neal Stephenson

Constable Moore had reached the age when men can subject their bodies to the worst irritations - whisky, cigars, woolen clothes, bagpipes - without feeling a thing or, at least, without letting on.

~Neal Stephenson

And it happened all the time that the compromise between two perfectly rational alternatives was something that made no sense at all.

~Neal Stephenson

The difference between ignorant and educated people is that the latter know more facts. But that has nothing to do with whether they are stupid or intelligent.

~Neal Stephenson

Talent was not rare; the ability to survive having it was.

~Neal Stephenson

Gold is the corpse of value.

~Neal Stephenson

Whenever serious and competent people need to get things done in the real world, all considerations of tradition and protocol fly out the window.

~Neal Stephenson

Boredom is a mask frustration wears.

~Neal Stephenson

Most of the brain's work is done while the brain's owner is ostensibly thinking about something else, so sometimes you have to deliberately find something else to think and talk about.

~Neal Stephenson

It is what you don't expect... that most needs looking for.

~Neal Stephenson

A few dud universes can really clutter up your basement.

~Neal Stephenson

Hiro watches the large, radioactive, spear-throwing killer drug lord ride his motorcycle into Chinatown. Which is the same as riding it into China, as far as chasing him down is concerned.

~Neal Stephenson

One of the most frightening things about your true nerd, for many people, is not that he's socially inept - because everybody's been there - but rather his complete lack of embarrassment about it.

~Neal Stephenson

The only thing that can effect a big change in personality is something that physically rewires the brain and/or alters the body's chemical milieu.

~Neal Stephenson

That to me is the basic message of events like the rise of Nazism, the Salem witch trials, and so on: not that bad people do bad things, but that good people do bad things.

~Neal Stephenson

Well, all information looks like noise until you break the code.

~Neal Stephenson

All people have religions. It's like we have religion receptors built into our brain cells, or something, and we'll latch onto anything that'll fill that niche for us.

~Neal Stephenson

This made him a grad student, and grad students existed not to learn things but to relieve the tenured faculty members of tiresome burdens such as educating people and doing research.

~Neal Stephenson

Supposing that originally there was nothing but one creator, how could

ordinary binary sexual relations come into being?

~Neal Stephenson

I just assume I'm not invisible. I assume I'm wearing fluorescent clothes, and there's a million-dollar bounty going to the first driver who manages to hit me. And I ride on that assumption.

~Neal Stephenson

Most Kabbalists were theorists who were interested only in pure meditation. But there were so-called 'practical Kabbalists' who tried to apply the power of the Kabbalah in everyday life.

~Neal Stephenson

It is the fate of operating systems to become free.

~Neal Stephenson

The science fiction approach doesn't mean it's always about the future; it's an awareness that this is different.

~Neal Stephenson

It is commonly the case with technologies that you can get the best insight about how they work by watching them fail.

~Neal Stephenson

They knew many things but had no idea why. And strangely this made them more, rather than less, certain that they were right.

~Neal Stephenson

I feel that I am entitled to trample all other considerations into the dirt in my pursuit of a satisfying pun.

~Neal Stephenson

The full cosmos consists of the physical stuff and consciousness. Take away consciousness and it's only dust; add consciousness and you get

things, ideas, and time.

~Neal Stephenson

Men who believe that they are accomplishing something by speaking speak in a different way from men who believe that speaking is a waste of time.

~Neal Stephenson

Even the best of us have certain psychological mechanisms that can suddenly kick in and turn us into monsters.

~Neal Stephenson

Jack the sound barrier. Bring the noise.

~Neal Stephenson

Part of being a sentient human is the ability to anticipate others' mental states - to say "Fred's going to hate this but Jane would love it."

~Neal Stephenson

Technically, of course, he was right. Socially, he was annoying us.

~Neal Stephenson

Two tires fly. Two Wail. A bamboo grove, all chopped down From it, warring songs.

~Neal Stephenson

I think visual literacy and media literacy is not without value, but I think plain old-fashioned text literacy and mathematical literacy are much more powerful and flexible ways to organize your mind.

~Neal Stephenson

Middle class prosperity is lapidary; the flow of cash rounds and smooths a person like water does riverbed stones.

~Neal Stephenson

Software development, like professional sports, has a way of making thirty-year-old men feel decrepit.

~Neal Stephenson

You don't want your readers seeing easy connections; it becomes a distraction.

~Neal Stephenson

A lot of secular, modern people claim to be disillusioned whenever they learn that any smart person is religious. That's applicable to Newton as it is to any other religious smart person

~Neal Stephenson

Interesting things happen along borders - transitions - not in the middle where everything is the same.

~Neal Stephenson

The mind knows...that there is an action principle that governs how the world evolves from one moment to the next - that restricts our world's path to points that tell an internally consistent story.

~Neal Stephenson

This is exactly how the World Wide Web works: the HTML files are the pithy description on the paper tape, and your Web browser is Ronald Reagan.

~Neal Stephenson

Once a person has all the things they need to live, everything else is entertainment.

~Neal Stephenson

Jad said, "The leakage was forcing choices, the making of which in no way improved matters." Okay. So we were, in effect, locked in a room with a madman sorcerer. That clarified things a little.

~Neal Stephenson

The less attractive the character, the more I enjoyed writing them. Officious bureaucrats and PowerPoint weasels are where it's at for me.

~Neal Stephenson

I'm strictly a one-project-at-a-time kind of guy. If I came up with a compelling idea for a different book while working on a project, I'd probably abandon the first project and go with the new idea.

~Neal Stephenson

Having a persistent nature is part of being human. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to speak of knowing another person, or loving them, or being their friend or enemy or rival.

~Neal Stephenson

I actually don't think that there is a connection between the survival instinct and a hunger for immortality.

~Neal Stephenson

That we occasionally violate our own stated moral code does not imply that we are insincere in espousing that code.

~Neal Stephenson

Our opponent is an alien starship packed with atomic bombs," I said. "We have a protractor.

~Neal Stephenson

...your Web browser is Ronald Reagan.

~Neal Stephenson

That's funny because if anyone actually did prove the existence of God we'd just tell him 'nice proof, Fraa Bly' and start believing in God.

~Neal Stephenson

How could your cover be blown in Canada? Why even bother going dark there? How could you tell?

~Neal Stephenson

[Emacs] is written in Lisp, which is the only computer language that is beautiful.

~Neal Stephenson

The hour of noon has passed,' said Judge Fang. 'Let us go and get some Kentucky Fried Chicken.

~Neal Stephenson

"The suspect had experienced a ballistic interlude earlier in the evening," Miss Pao said, "regrettably not filmed, and relieved himself of excess velocity by means of an ablative technique."

~Neal Stephenson

They went inside. The young ones shuffled to a stop as their ironic sensibilities, which served them in lieu of souls, were jammed by a signal of overwhelming power.

~Neal Stephenson

Can't you see that everyone is buying station wagons?

~Neal Stephenson

What's hard, in hacking as in fiction, is not writing, it's deciding what to write.

~Neal Stephenson

She's not afraid. She's wearing a dentata.

~Neal Stephenson

If you sincerely believed in God, how could you form one thought, speak one sentence, without mentioning Him?

~Neal Stephenson

She looked at me like I was crazy. Most of my lovers do, and that's partly why they love me, and partly why they leave

~Neal Stephenson

So, you're worried that a pink dragon will fly over the concert and fart nerve gas on us?

~Neal Stephenson

The sight of the bare katana inspires everyone to a practically Nipponese level of politeness

~Neal Stephenson

Unix is not so much an operating system as an oral history.

~Neal Stephenson

I don't even want you to nod, that's how much you annoy me. Just freeze and shut up.

~Neal Stephenson

Clearly Mr. Drkh has had a long career of being the weirdest person in any given room, but he's about to go down in flames.

~Neal Stephenson

If the Coastal Republic had believed in the existence of virtue, it could at least have aspired to hypocrisy.

~Neal Stephenson

Of persons I will say this: it is difficult to tell when they are running aright but easy to see when something has gone awry.

~Neal Stephenson

There's only four things we do better than anyone else: music movies

microcode (software) high-speed pizza delivery

~Neal Stephenson

Wired people should know something about wires.

~Neal Stephenson

I use emacs, which might be thought of as a thermonuclear word processor.

~Neal Stephenson

Crappy old OSes have value in the basically negative sense that changing to new ones makes us wish we'd never been born.

~Neal Stephenson

The best way to know someone is to have a conversation with them.

~Neal Stephenson

Southern California doesn't know whether to bustle or just strangle itself on the spot.

~Neal Stephenson

I am on an expense account that would blow your mind.

~Neal Stephenson

It was, of course, nothing more than sexism, the especially virulent type espoused by male techies who sincerely believe that they are too smart to be sexists.

~Neal Stephenson

Wait a minute, Juanita. Make up your mind. This Snow Crash thingâ€”is it a virus, a drug, or a religion?" Juanita shrugs. "What's the difference?"

~Neal Stephenson

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