

Predictions for 2009

Searching for the future

Oct 3rd 2008

by Economist

WHERE do you go on the web to find predictions for the year ahead? At *The World In* we have the help of a future-news service, [foresightnews](#), especially for preparing our calendar for coming year. But it and other rival offerings are subscription services, no good for the casual browser. Those in search of the future for free have to look elsewhere.

Wikipedia is not a bad place to start. It has a general entry for [2009](#), as well as useful takes on particular topics, such as [film releases](#). If you want to delve further into such topics, you will often find sites that specialise in them—in the case of film, for example, [film-releases.com](#).

Then there is the realm of trend-spotting, a thriving branch of the marketing industry. Here, everyone is trying to be the first to discover the next defining demographic to follow the likes of soccer moms, and the next consumer fad. If you want to learn about notions such as "perkconomics" and "unwedding celebrations", you can go to [trendwatching.com](#) or [trendhunter.com](#) ("the world's largest trend hunting and cool spotting network").

Futurologists, who nowadays tend to style themselves "futurists", typically have their own websites. So, for a grand sweep of the future (not just 2009 but well beyond), you can try the likes of [Alvin Toffler](#) and [John Naisbitt](#), or visit James Canton's [Institute for Global Futures](#) (where you'll discover "The Top Ten Trends of the Extreme Future"). The World Future Society publishes a magazine, [The Futurist](#), and suggests its "[Ten Forecasts for 2009 and Beyond](#)".

But if you are interested in specific predictions, rather than the big picture, the place to turn to is predictions markets. These tap into the wisdom of crowds. The pioneer was the University of Iowa's [political market](#). Now [Intrade](#) has a market in a multitude of future events. As of today, these markets reckon there is a 65.4% chance that Barack Obama will be America's next president—and a 72.0% chance that America's economy will go into recession during 2009.

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