

# 7 Most Inventive Technologies of *STAR TREK*



The television series *Star Trek* premiered in 1966, and over the 54 years since, the program has transformed from a talky adventure show where men dodged Styrofoam boulders to a cultural touchstone beloved by millions of people. One popular aspect of the series has been its technology. The writers for the show were not scientists or engineers, and they “invented” futuristic technologies to further plots (or escape from narrative dead-ends). Even so, some of the innovations predicted on *Star Trek* have been reproduced in real life.

All images courtesy of: CBS Photo Archive.

## TECHNOLOGY

## ON THE SHOW

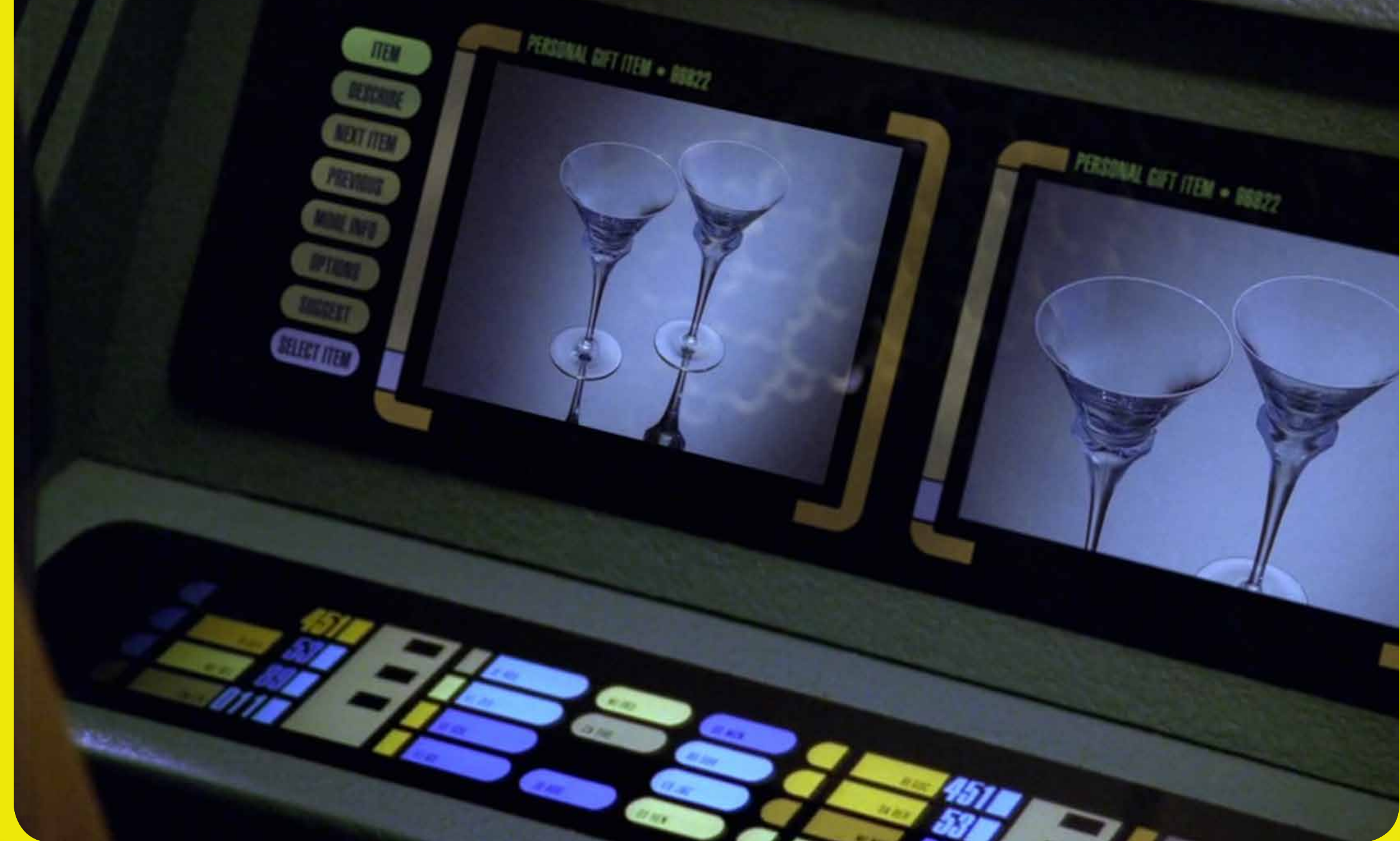
## IN REAL LIFE

### Communicators



Characters on the show were (almost) always in constant communication, thanks to a pocket-size handheld radio.

In 2020, cell phones are almost more powerful than *Star Trek* communicators, able to perform the function of pocket computers as well as walkie-talkies.



### Replicators

Matter manipulation technology enables the ship's computer to produce any desired material, even Earl Grey tea.

3D printers are capable of manufacturing objects in virtually any shape, but they can work with only a handful of materials.

### Phasers



The weapon of choice in the *Star Trek* universe, the phaser could be a ship-blasting cannon or a handheld laser gun.

The military has spent decades trying to develop laser weapons. Recently, a defense contractor demonstrated a laser cannon that can disable UAVs.



### Universal Translator

Characters could speak English to one another thanks to a little-seen translating device.

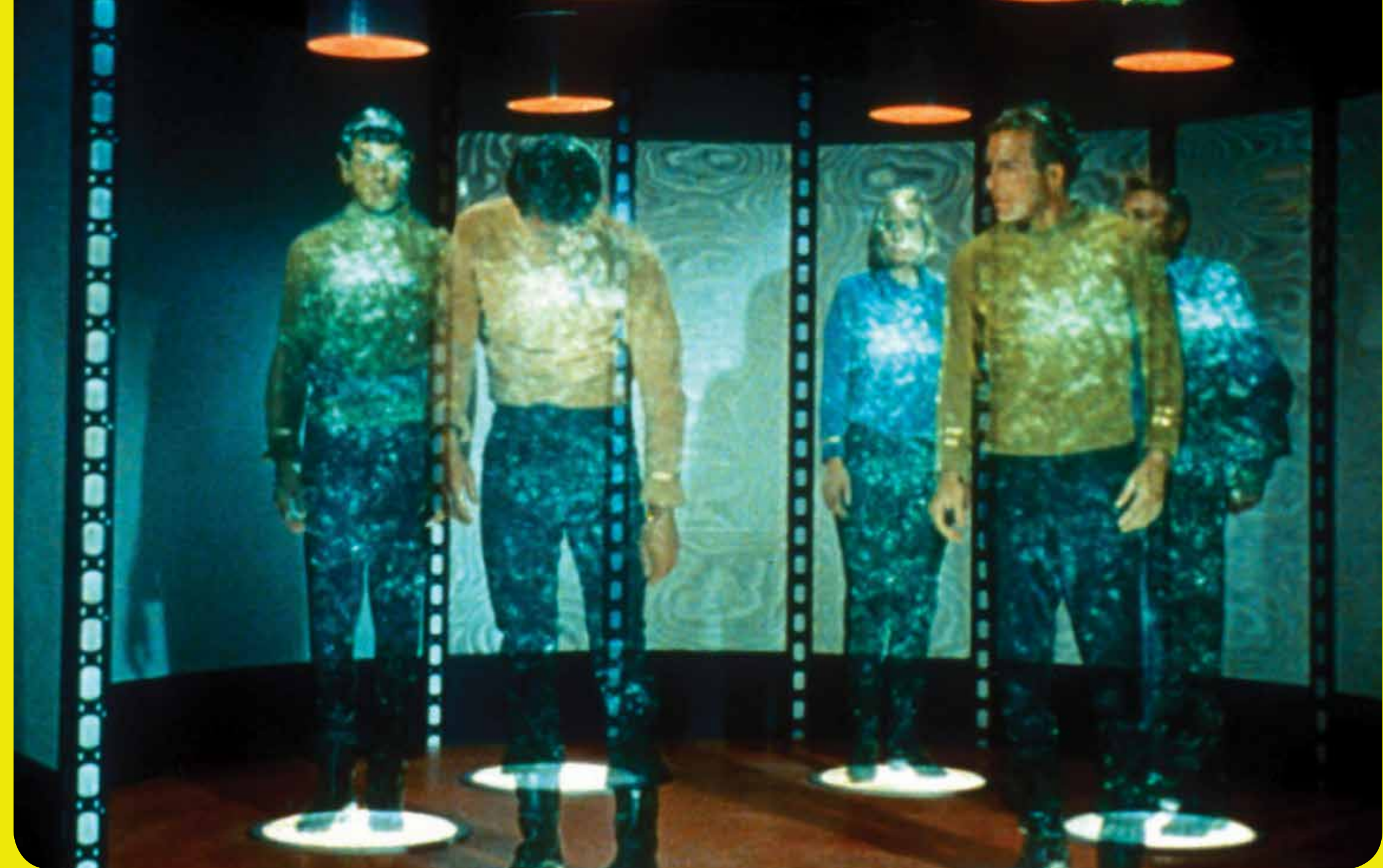
Computer scientists and linguists have been perfecting machine translation, and Google Translate can perform some amazing tricks, such as augmented reality translation of text.



### Holodeck

Computers could generate realistic, solid holograms for recreation.

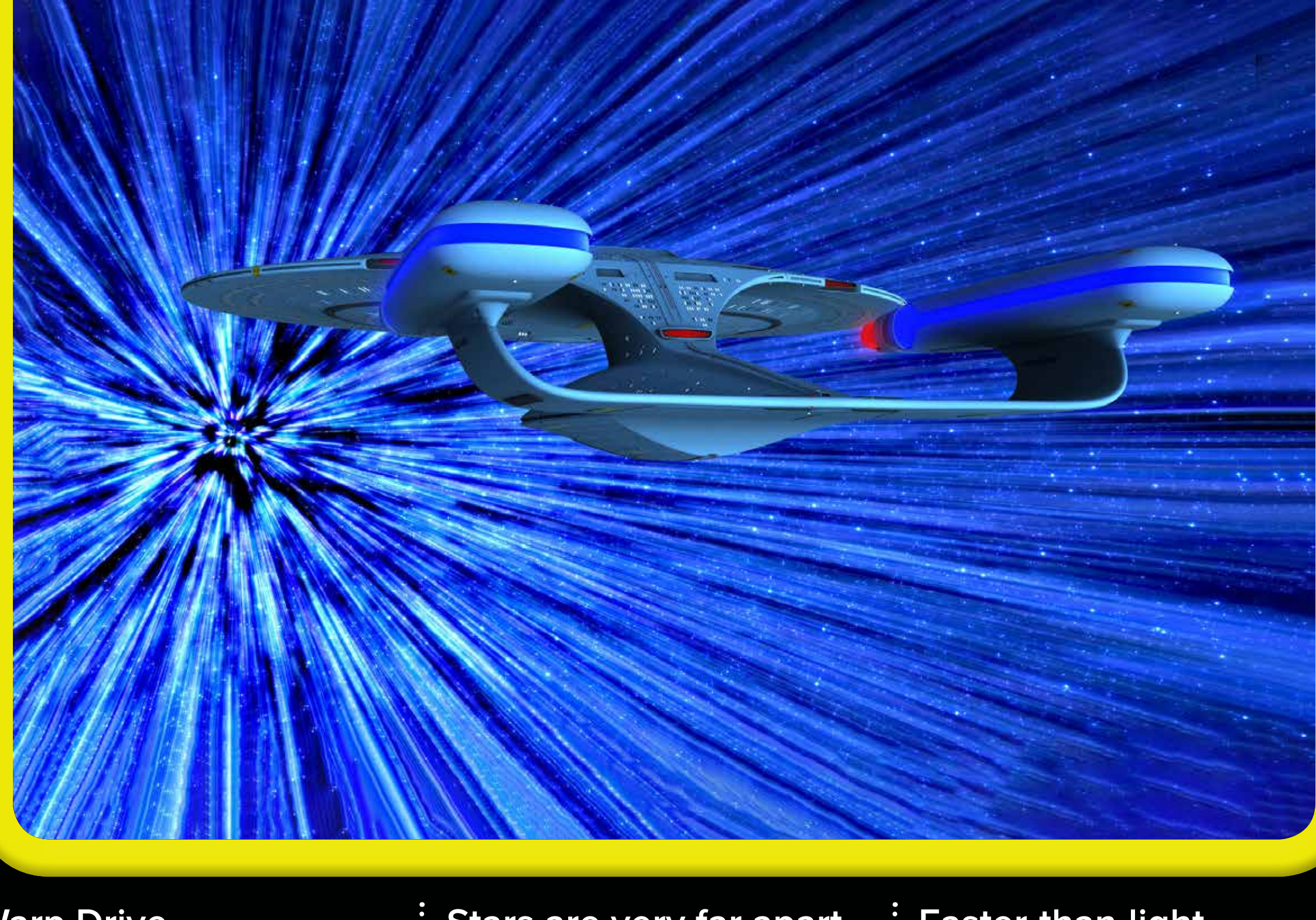
Solid holograms are beyond anything possible today, but virtual reality goggles such as Oculus Rift are providing immersive 3D experiences for both fun and education.



### Transporter

Instead of having to make time-consuming trips from place to place, characters on the show could have their atoms disassembled, beamed across thousands of miles, and reassembled almost instantly.

Uh, nope. Not going to happen.



### Warp Drive

Stars are very far apart, so to make interstellar trips, *Star Trek* invented a technology that enabled ships to travel faster than the speed of light.

Faster-than-light technology has been a staple of science fiction for decades, and theoretical physicists have proposed any number of possible ways to accomplish it. But as of today, there's no known way to beat the light-speed limit.