

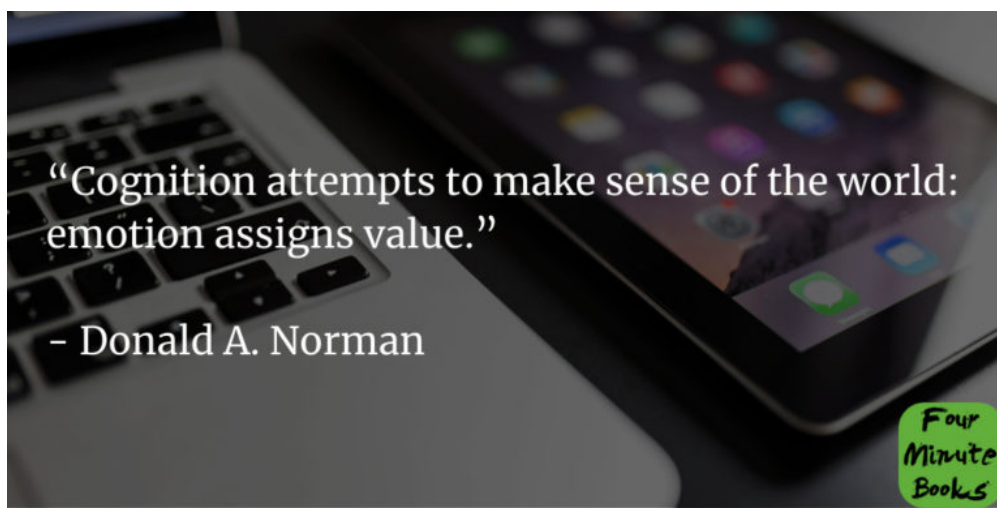
# The Design Of Everyday Things Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Design Of Everyday Things* helps you understand why your inability to use some products isn't your fault but instead is the result of bad design and how companies can use the principles of cognitive psychology to implement better design principles that actually solve your problems without creating more of them.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



If you're like me, you've probably had the slightly embarrassing experience of being in public. Like, not being able to open a glass door successfully. Is it a push, pull, slide, or what? By the time you figure it out, you might laugh to yourself about how clueless you can sometimes be. But you can finally rest at ease-- you're not the one to blame for the confusion.

In truth, doors that only serve one simple purpose that still confuses you are probably bad designs. More often than not, people are confused with a product not because they lack intelligence but because of a faulty design.

So how do we make products that are intuitive for users? In *The Design of Everyday Things: The Cognitive Psychology of Good Design*, Donald A. Norman uses his expertise to answer exactly that question. He explores what cognitive psychology says about what makes a product respond best to users' needs. He also teaches how to fix common errors so your technology can work with people more seamlessly.

Let's see how much we can discover in just 3 lessons:

1. You're not stupid if you can't figure out how to use a product; the designers just did a poor job designing it.

2. Intentionally setting limitations within a product can help buyers use it successfully.
3. Designers need to consider actual humans so that we can better utilize technology's infinite possibilities.

Did technology get you frustrated? Let's get right to these lessons and see how to fix them!

## **Lesson 1: If you have a hard time figuring a product out, it's not your fault; it's the designers.**

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Have you ever tried to set something new up, like a TV remote, but been quickly frustrated when you can't understand the instructions? You probably thought you were the problem when the problem was just bad design.

Bad design is what happens when creators neglect the relationship between technology and the people who use it. Good design brings these two things together.

Many people struggle with a TV remote. The reason isn't that none of them is intuitive. The real reason is that the makers of TV remotes often want to make them compatible with as many things as possible, such as a BluRay player, gaming consoles, or sounds systems. The designers cram far too many buttons and options on them to connect with all these things, making them hard to figure out.

One of the main reasons we get bad technology in today's world is rapidly changing technology. Just think about cell phone in the last fifteen or so years— they've gone from brick flip phones to an all in one touch screen device that makes calls, stream videos, surfs the internet, and more. While the ability for our phones to do so much more has been extremely convenient, it has also meant that phones are prone to becoming excessively complicated.

Technology is changing at such a rapid pace that it is getting increasingly difficult for creators to make new products that are still easy to use. **Designers need to remember that if a design is too complicated to use, it will be useless to a consumer.**

## **Lesson 2: Buyers can have an easier time using a product if it's got specific limitations built into it.**

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The home store IKEA has been notorious in the past for selling products that are hard to set up at home. But nowadays, they have become actually quite simple. It takes a bit of time, but you can usually set up your own dresser in an hour or two without too much trouble.

This is partly because IKEA uses what's known as constraints. Constraints are limits that direct how to use a product. An example of a physical constraint in IKEA's case is that they provide you with different sized nuts and bolts that only fit into a specific equal-sized hole.

Because there is only one place each but can go, this makes assembly much easier.

**Another way to help consumers is by using cultural constraints. An example of this is that virtually every screw you could ever buy tightens by turning right and loosens by turning left.** We might take this for granted, but think about how much easier it is to use a screwdriver when you always know which way to turn it.

Another example of a constraint is how most operating systems and programs will now automatically ask you to save before exiting a document. Only if they don't already accidentally save your work for you. Even if you don't use the function, you're far better off being reminded every time than losing hours worth of work just because you forgot to hit "save."

### **Lesson 3: To fully tap into the power of technology, designers need to center their work on humans.**

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Technology is changing and improving at a crazy rate, but often what lags behind designs. Why? Because designers often forget the needs and abilities of their users. **Designers often get so excited about making something entirely new that they forget to consider the people who will use it.**

So how can you ensure your product is human-centred? The author says this is a four-step process. First, you can't evaluate how well a product works for people without watching them use it. This is why the first thing you should do is to study people using it in a control-room study and note what problems they have with it.

The next step is to think of ideas to solve these problems. For example, if your product is a dishwasher, and people are having too much trouble figuring out how to run a normal cycle because of an overly complex interface, maybe think of a simpler layout for cycles.

Third, create a prototype that fixes these problems. Make sure this prototype fixes the problems without making new ones.

Last, test the prototype in a control-room setting and see what happens. From here, you can see if the problems from before persist. You will also be able to see if other problems arise, and if so, you can create a new prototype. Before you know it, you will have a user-friendly product that people will enjoy using.

### **The Design Of Everyday Things Review**

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My favorite part of *The Design Of Everyday Things* is the idea that I'm not an idiot because I can't figure out how to change the time on my microwave. It would have been nice to hear more about that idea, but it was still pretty cool to see ways designers can do better.

Technology has done some great things for our world, and I can't wait to see what the future holds as it gets better!

## **Who would I recommend The Design Of Everyday Things summary to?**

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The 36-year-old engineer who doesn't understand why people can't figure out their product, the 58-year-old CEO of a company that manufactures technology, and anyone who wonders why some things they buy are so difficult to use.