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IGME-236-05

16 February 2025

Week 5 Writeup – Overall UX: Alarm Clocks

It is 6 am, the alarms goes off, you hit the top of alarm clock until the beeping stops, put on your glasses and start getting ready for the day. Then, five minutes later the same beeping starts again, agitated looking for the off button all while the alarm is still going off you give up and choose to unplug the whole alarm clock from the wall. This means when you come back tonight you have to once again reconfigure the clock and reset the alarm back to 6 am to just repeat the cycle tomorrow. The alarm clock is nice, a large selection of buttons with multiple controls that for the most part are labeled, a large enough display to see the time, and still has access to the radio. The problem with the almost perfect alarm clock is the inability to detect the off button for the alarm.

Roughly 64% of adult Americans need glasses, while not everything needs to be designed with large print when designing something used in the morning when most people don’t have their glasses on that must be accommodated. This alarm clock has many buttons on the top of it with very poor mapping. The two largest controls are the snooze button, and the volume wheel, and the last thing anyone wants when attempting to turn off the alarm is to make that alarm louder. With there being so many controls on the top of clock and no physical feedback that allows the user to know which button is which causes a lot of confusion in a barely awake state especially when the user has vision problems. An alarm clock needs to still be clearly usable when a person cannot see, all the buttons don’t need to be changed to accompany that, but the main one’s people would use.

A proposed solution would be to change the mapping of controls, and to add a feedback system. Firstly, moving the volume wheel, the volume wheel can be moved to the side of the clock in a peek-a-boo reveal style, still usable but harder to accidently change. Additionally, many of the controls to change the time of the clock can be moved to the back side of the alarm clock, those buttons are handy to have but ideally the clock would only need to be changed two times a year. Now for the main change, a clear “off” button for the alarm. On most alarm clocks the biggest button is the snooze button, while this doesn’t need to change an equally as large off button would be incredibly helpful. To prevent half-awake half-asleep confusion the off button would have a distinct texture on the button to differentiate it from the smooth snooze button. This would make it clear to tell which button is which without having to investigate first thing in the morning.