Listening 1   Principles of good design

Audio script

Principles of good design

MARTA: Jack! Over here!

JACK: Oh, hey Marta. How's it going?

MARTA: OK … I just went to Professor Malik's office to ask about the assignment for the class I missed. He says we're supposed to evaluate a product using the design principles of Dieter Rams. Who is he? I'm kind of behind on the reading for that class.

JACK: Again? OK well, he's a German industrial designer who used to work for Braun, you know, the consumer products company? Back in the 1970s, he came up with 10 principles of good design that are still being followed today. Like, for example, a good design is innovative, long-lasting, environmentally friendly … And the most important one, I think, is that it should make the product understandable. He doesn't believe in designs that have a lot of unnecessary features. You know the classic Braun calculator? Rams designed that and you can see the influence in the iPhone calculator today.

MARTA: Really? I think my dad has one of those calculators – they're ancient. He's not very good with technology, so I guess it must be fairly "understandable!" Ha-ha! Anyway, have you chosen a product to evaluate for the assignment yet?

JACK: Yeah. A door.

MARTA: A door?

JACK: Yeah. The door to the college library, to be exact. Look, here's a photo … Can you see the problem?

MARTA: Um … no. Not really.

JACK: Look at the handle. Are you supposed to pull or push it?

MARTA: Well … hmm. It's not clear.

JACK: See, that's the problem. It's not clear. The handle is vertical, so naturally you want to pull on it. But that's not how it works. You have to push. Dieter Rams would say it's not understandable. Therefore it's a bad design.

MARTA: That's so interesting. I'd never have thought of that.

JACK: I found out that there's actually a name for badly designed doors. They're called "Norman doors," after Don Norman, who wrote a book called *The Design of Everyday Things*. He believes in what he calls "designing for humans," which is similar to Dieter Rams' principle that products should be understandable. Norman says doors are really simple devices. We shouldn't need written instructions like "pull" or "push" to figure out what to do – it should be obvious from the design.

MARTA: I completely agree with him. I wish all products were designed like that.

JACK: Especially electronic devices, like phones or tablets …

MARTA: No kidding! My parents need a set of written instructions to use the TV remote!

JACK: Ha-ha! Yeah, mine can't operate the microwave …

MARTA: Well, to be fair, I got a new coffee machine a few months ago, and I still don't really understand how to use it. It's got lots of great features, but I seem to spend more time reading the instruction manual than I do drinking the coffee.

JACK: Yeah, that's just bad design. Complex equipment doesn't need to be difficult to use.

MARTA: True. Argh … what am I going to evaluate for this assignment?

JACK: Try to think of something that is attractive, but also functional.

MARTA: Yeah, I need something simple … Oh, how about the glass measuring jug you use in the kitchen? You know the thing that has milliliters printed on the side so you can measure liquids?

JACK: Well, it's certainly useful …

MARTA: Right, and I'm sure Rams would agree it's "understandable." It's not like you need instructions to use it.

JACK: True. Also, it pioneered the use of a new heat-proof glass so you could say it was "innovative" at the time and the design hasn't changed for at least 100 years, so I guess you could argue it's "long-lasting" too.

MARTA: Definitely.

JACK: Well, it sounds like you've found a product for the assignment. Let me know if you need any help with anything.

MARTA: I will do. Thanks, Jack.

Words and expressions

vertical *adj.* 垂直的；直立的

tablet *n.* 平板电脑

manual *n.* （尤指机器的）说明书，使用手册

measuring jug 量壶；量杯
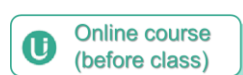
milliliter *n.* 毫升（液量单位）

heat-proof *adj.* 抗热的；耐热的

Proper names

Malik 马利克

Norman door 诺曼门（由唐·诺曼提出，指设计不佳，让人搞不清楚如何开的门）

Don Norman 唐·诺曼（1935 – ，美国设计师）

Online course (before class)

Before you listen

Task 1 Match the words and expressions with their definitions.

1. come up with (*phr. v.*) G	A. to find the size, weight, or amount of something
2. complex (*adj.*) F	B. to be able to understand something or solve a problem
3. device (*n.*) D	C. to use or control a piece of equipment
4. feature (*n.*) H	D. a machine or piece of equipment used for a specific purpose
5. figure out (*phr. v.*) B	E. designed to be good at doing a particular job
6. functional (*adj.*) E	F. involving lots of details or small parts that make it difficult to understand
7. measure (*v.*) A	G. to think of an idea, plan, or solution