Design of everyday things

Human Computer Interaction

Based on slide deck
Part 4: Designing and building visual interfaces. Design of everyday things
Human Computer Interaction I: Principles and Design
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*The new slides are marked with a **

Design of everyday things

Summary so far

- many so-called human errors are actually errors in design
- human factors became important as human performance limitations reached when handling complex machinery

Design of everyday things

Important concepts for designing everyday things

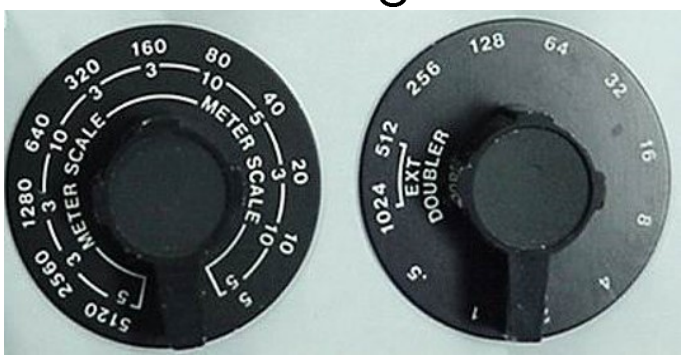
- perceived affordances
- causality
- visible constraints
- mapping
- transfer effects
- idioms & population stereotypes
- cultural associations
- conceptual models
- individual differences
- why design is hard

Perceived Affordances

The perceived properties of the object that suggest how one could use it

chairs are for sitting, table for placing things on

knobs are for turning



Perceived Affordances

slots are for inserting, handles are for turning

buttons are for pressing

Perceived Affordances

switch for toggling

computer for ... ?

Perceived Affordances

Product design

- perceived affordances:
  - design invites people to take possible actions
- actual affordances:
  - the actual actionable properties of the product

Problems occur when

- these are not the same
- people's perceptions are not what the designer expects

Perceived Affordances

Perceived Affordance Problems

Perceived Affordances

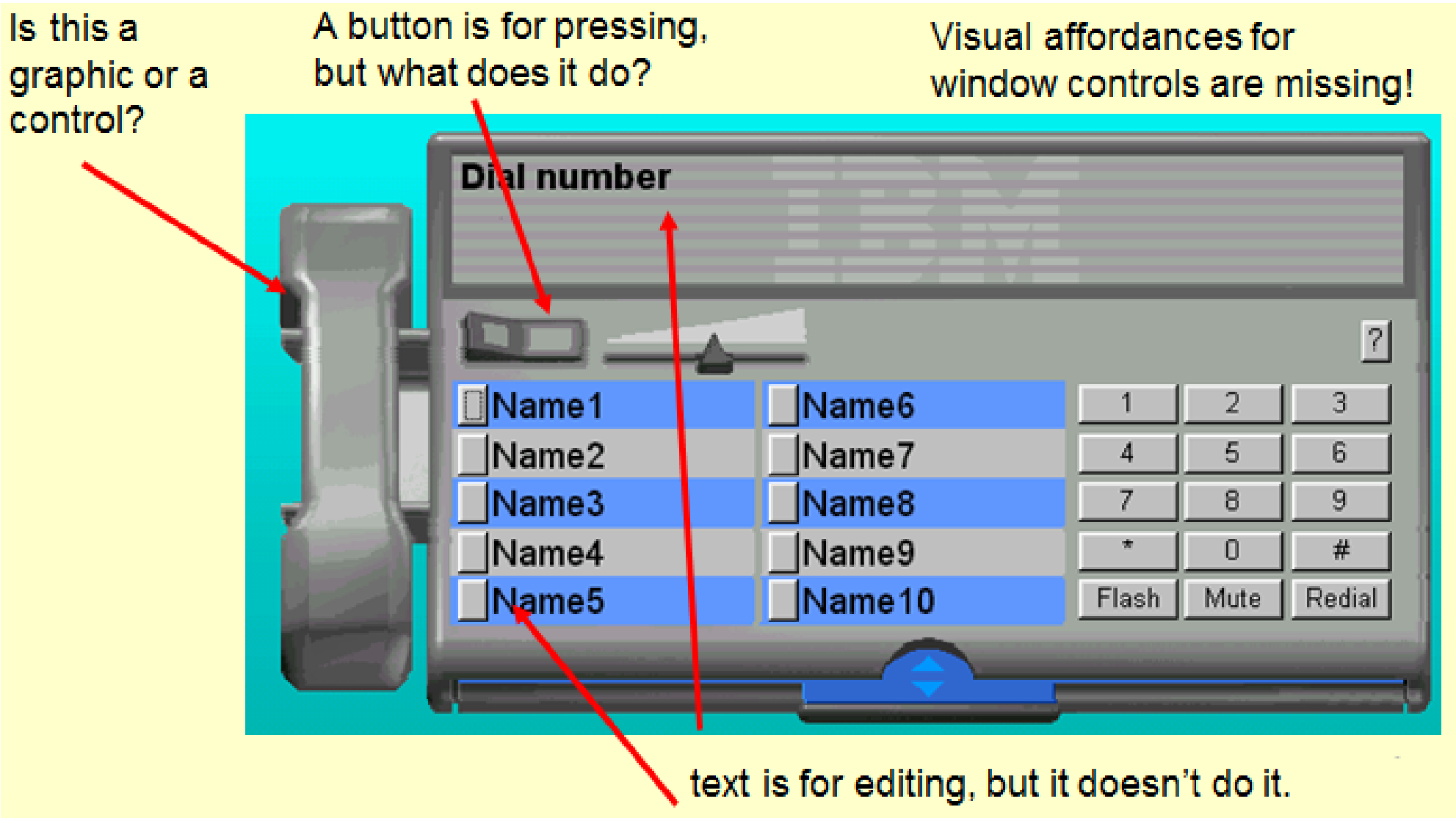
GUI design

- perception only through visuals
- designer creates appropriate visual affordances via
  - familiar idioms
  - metaphors

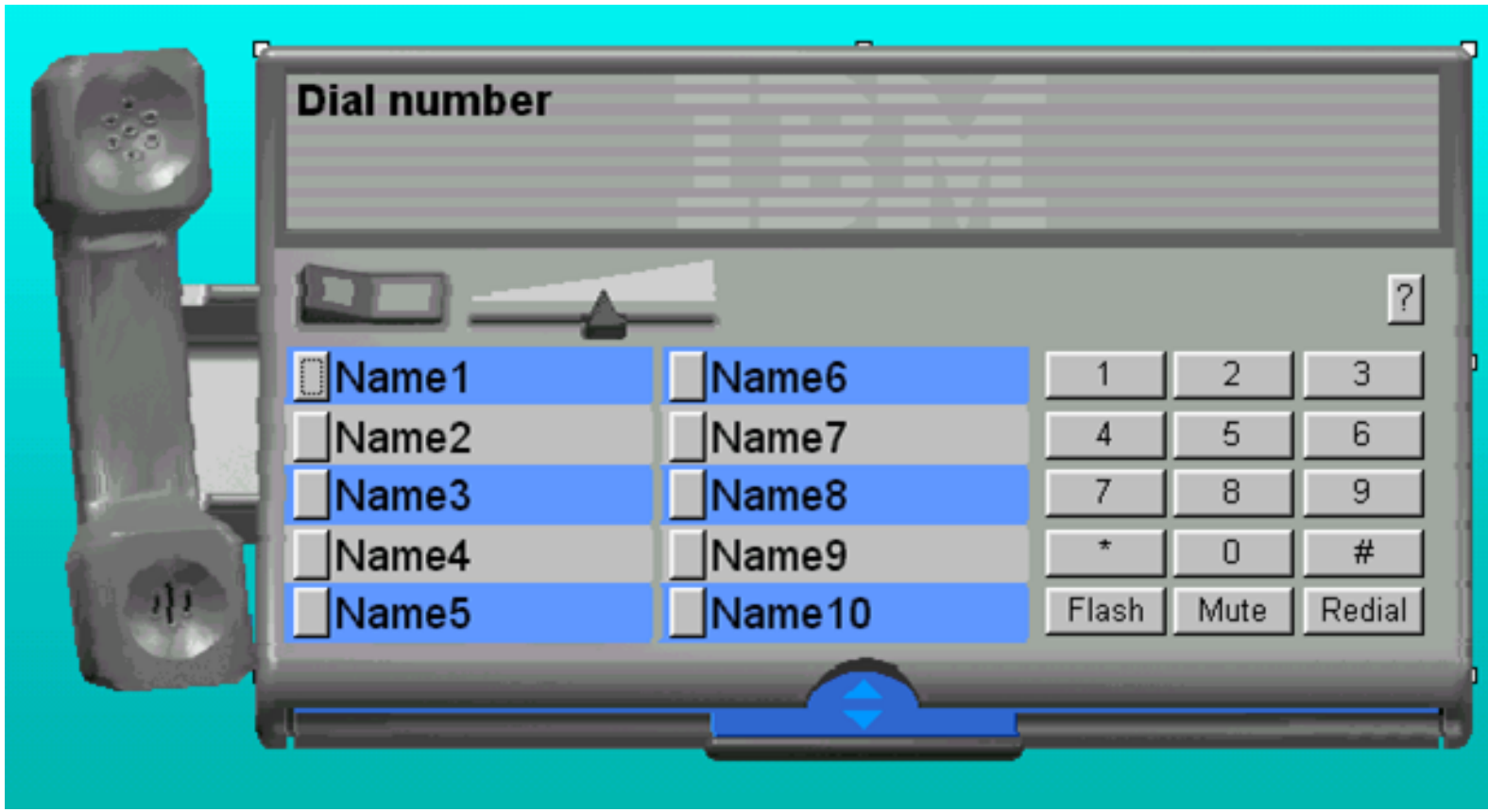
Perceived Affordances

Perceived Affordance Problems

Perceived Affordance Problems

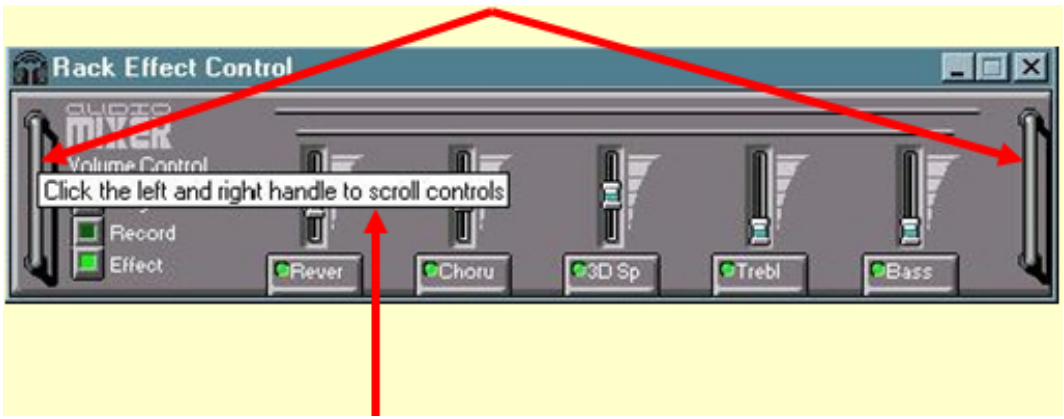


Perceived Affordance Problems



Perceived Affordance Problems

Handles are for lifting,
but these are for scroling!



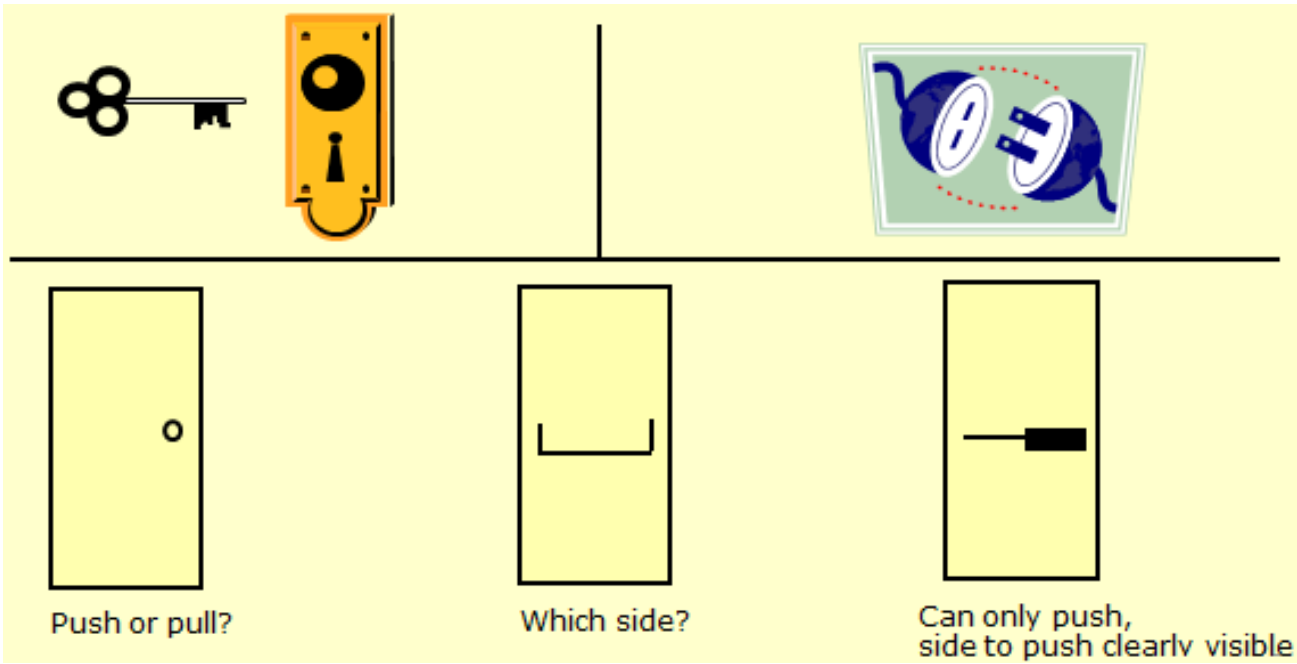
Complex things may need explaining but simple things should not

- when simple things need labels & instructions, then design has failed

Visible Constraints

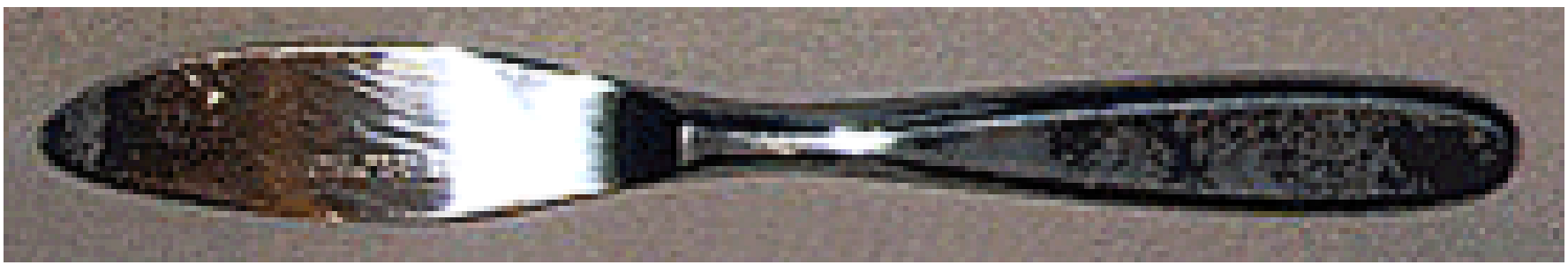
Limitations of actions possible perceived from object's appearance

- provides people with a range of ussage possibilites



Visible Constraints Problems

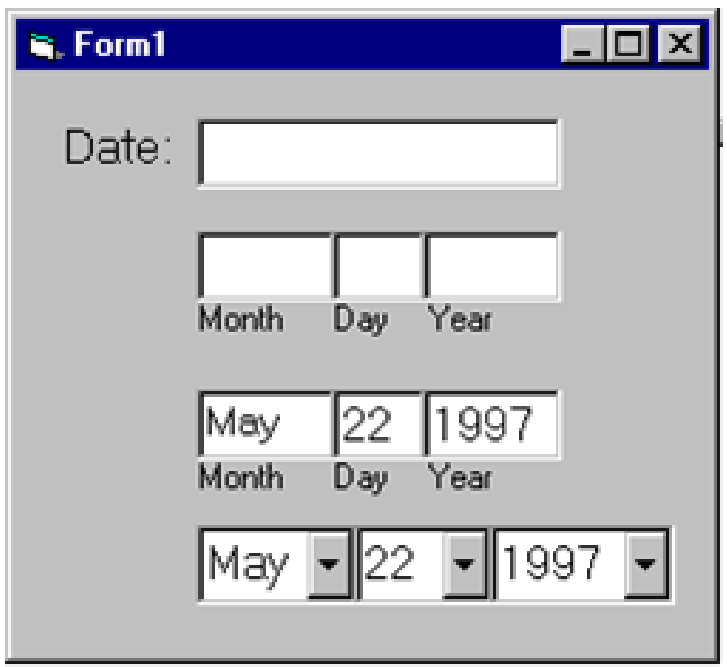
Which side do you use for cutting?

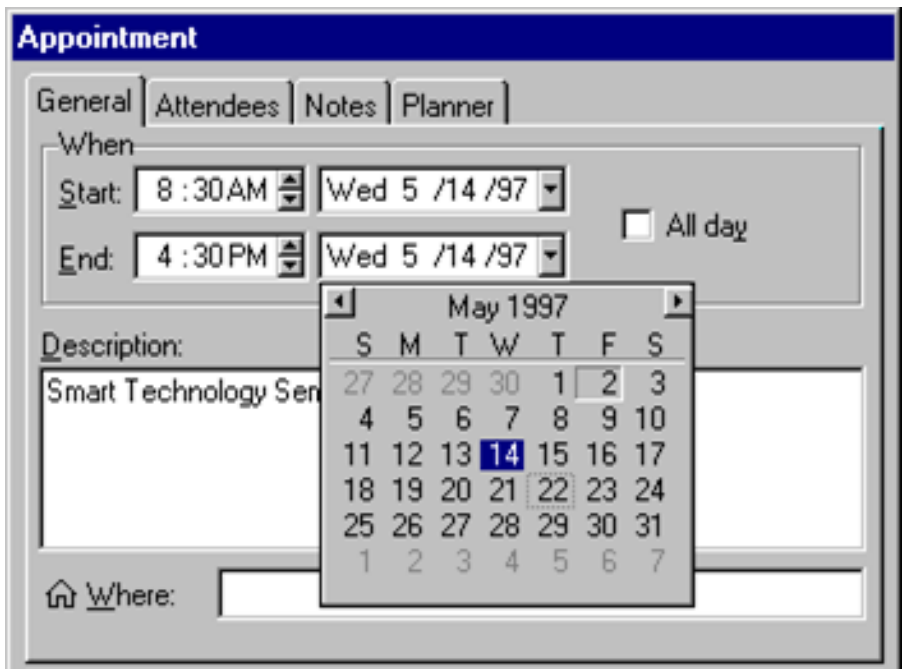


Visible Constraints:Entering a Date

The more constraints, the less opportunity for error

- particularly important for managing user input





Visible Constraints Problems

Mapping

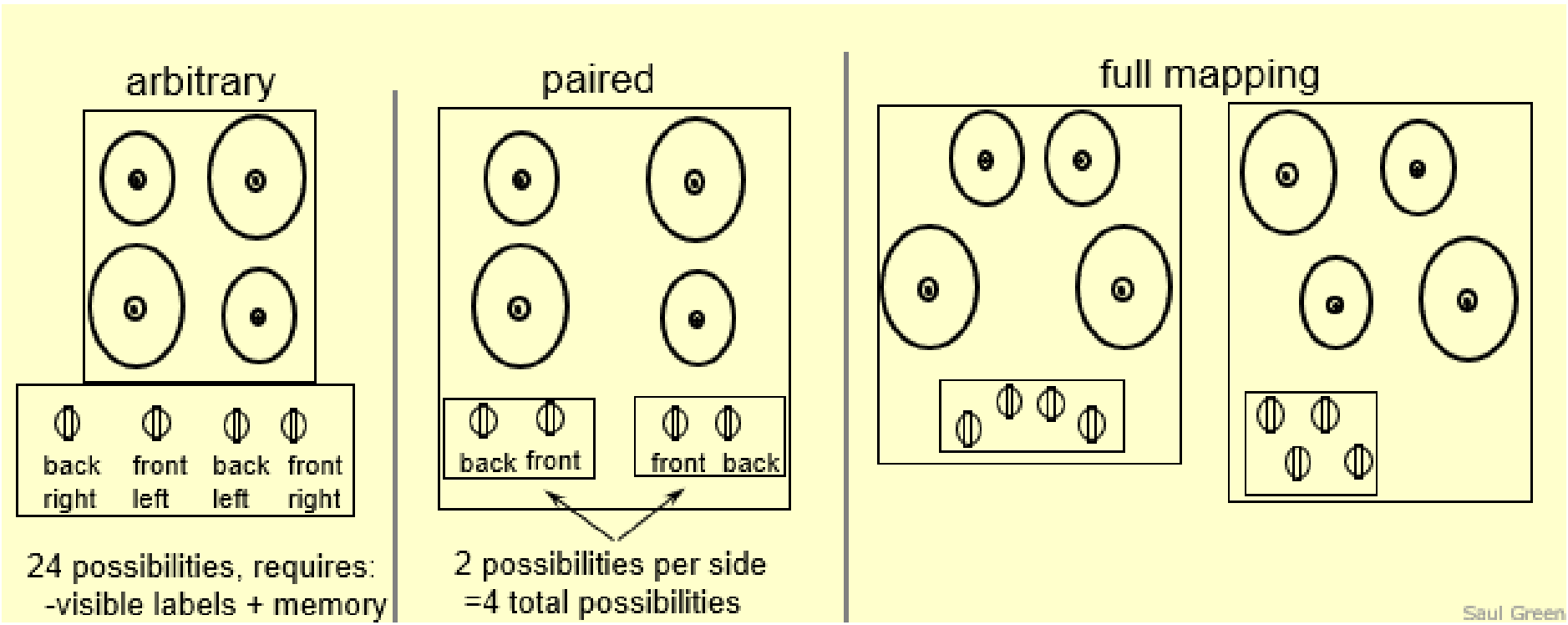

OFF
OFF
OFF
OFF
OFF
OFF
OFF
HI
LO
250
100
200
150
ON
200 230 260
400 450 500
OVEN
HOTPLATES
GRILL
Centenary

Mapping

The set of possible relations between objects

Control-display compatibility

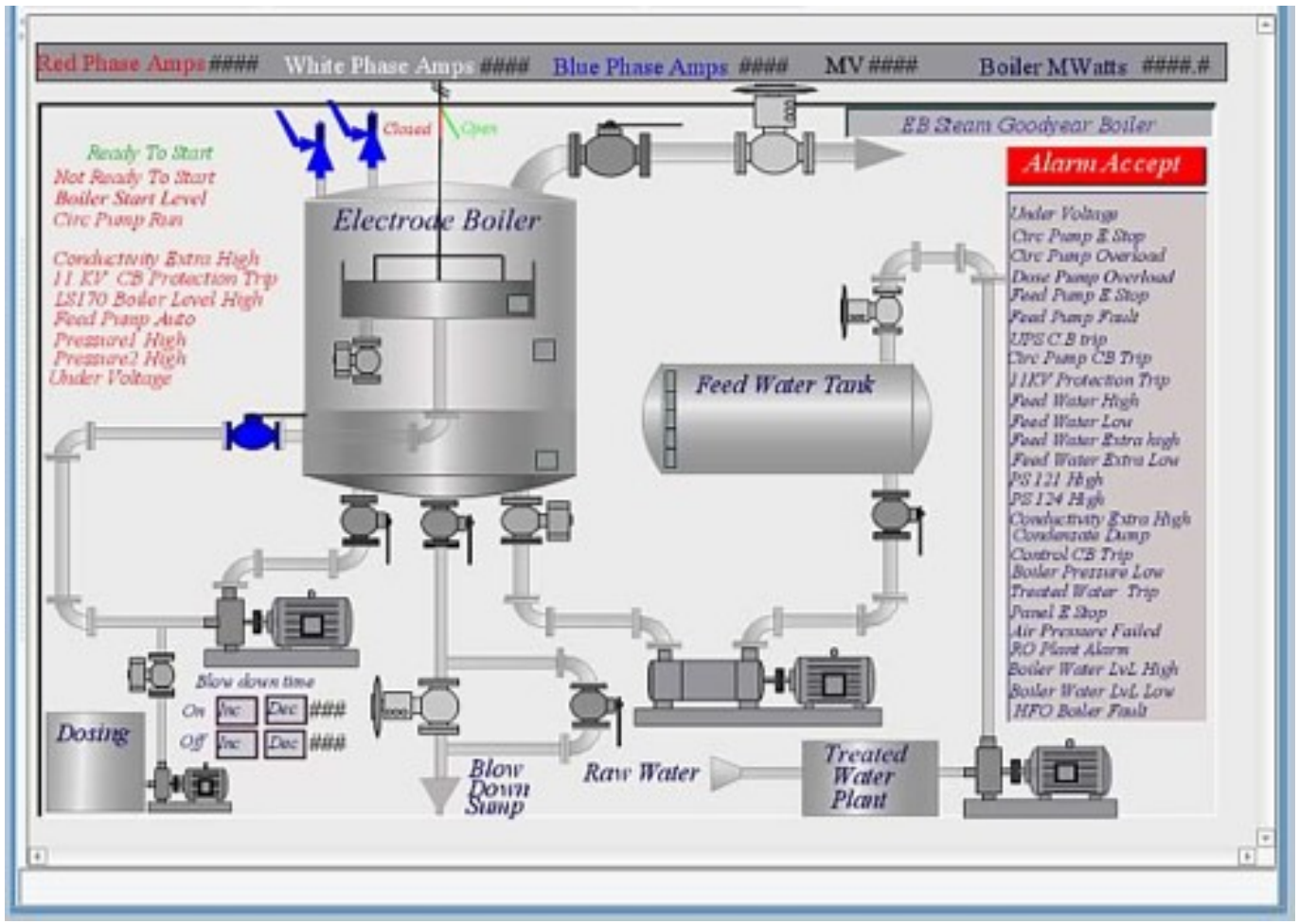
- the natural relationship between controls and displays
- e.g., visual mapping of stove controls to elements



Mapping

Control-display compatibility

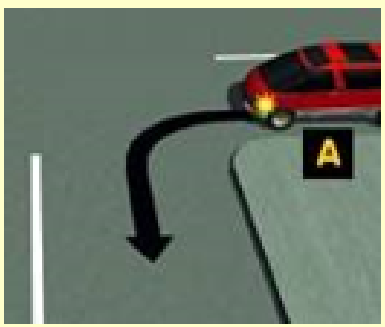
- mimic diagrams for feedback / control imitates physical layout



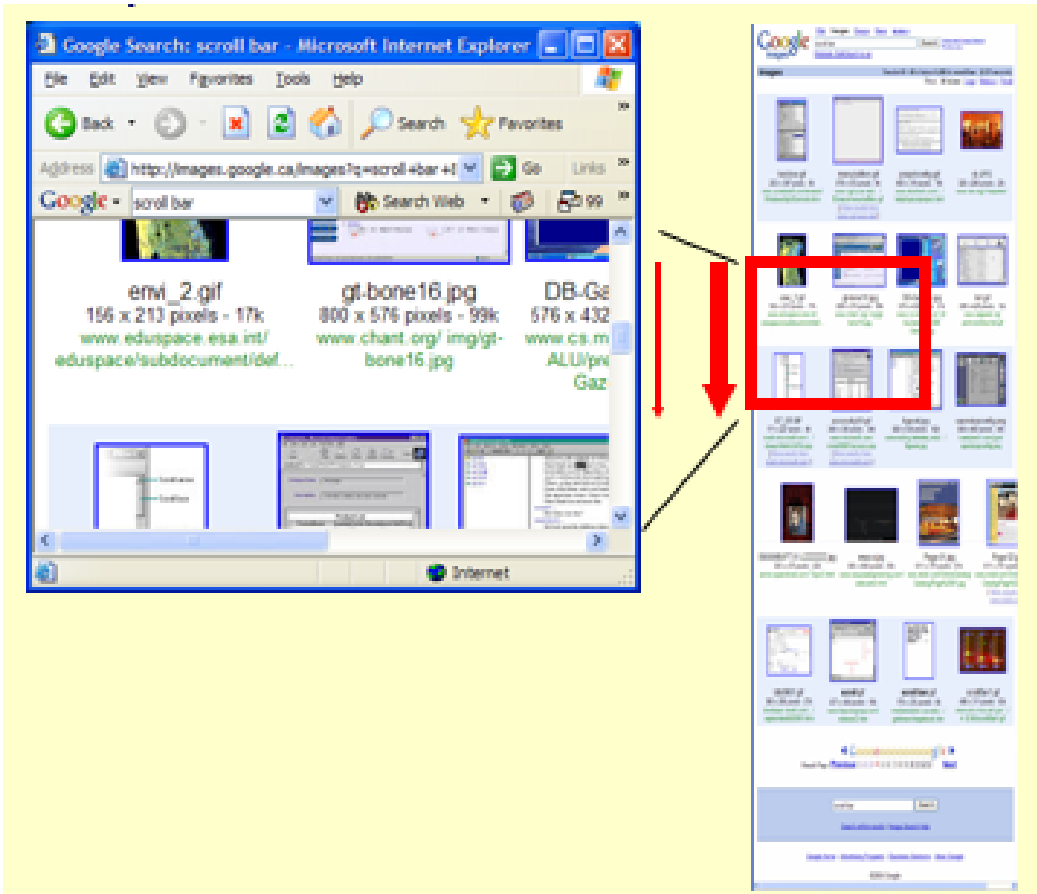
Mapping

Control-display compatibility

- cause and effect



steering wheel-turn left, car turns left



scroll bar – scroll down, viewport goes down

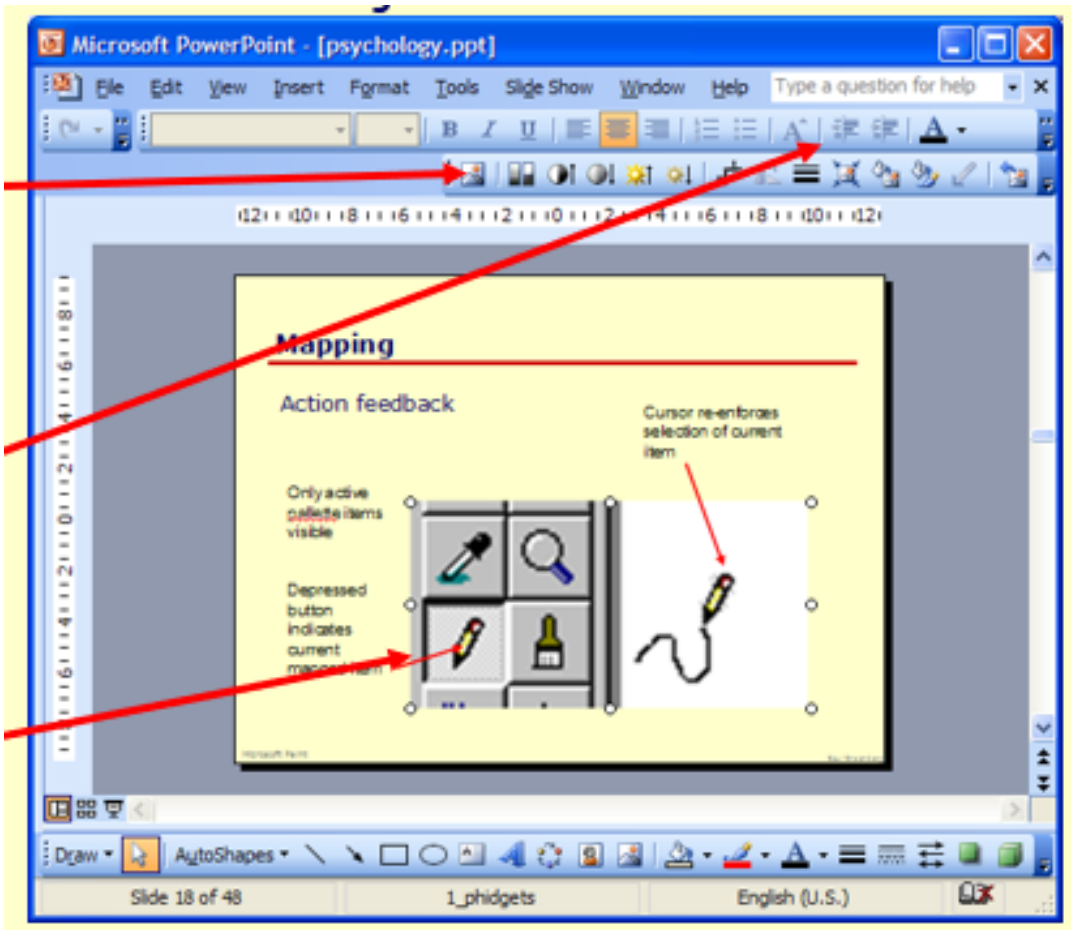
Mapping

Palette controls and active objects

Only controls that can operate on a picture are fully visible

Others are grayed out

Selected picture



Action feedback

Cursor re-enforces selection of current item

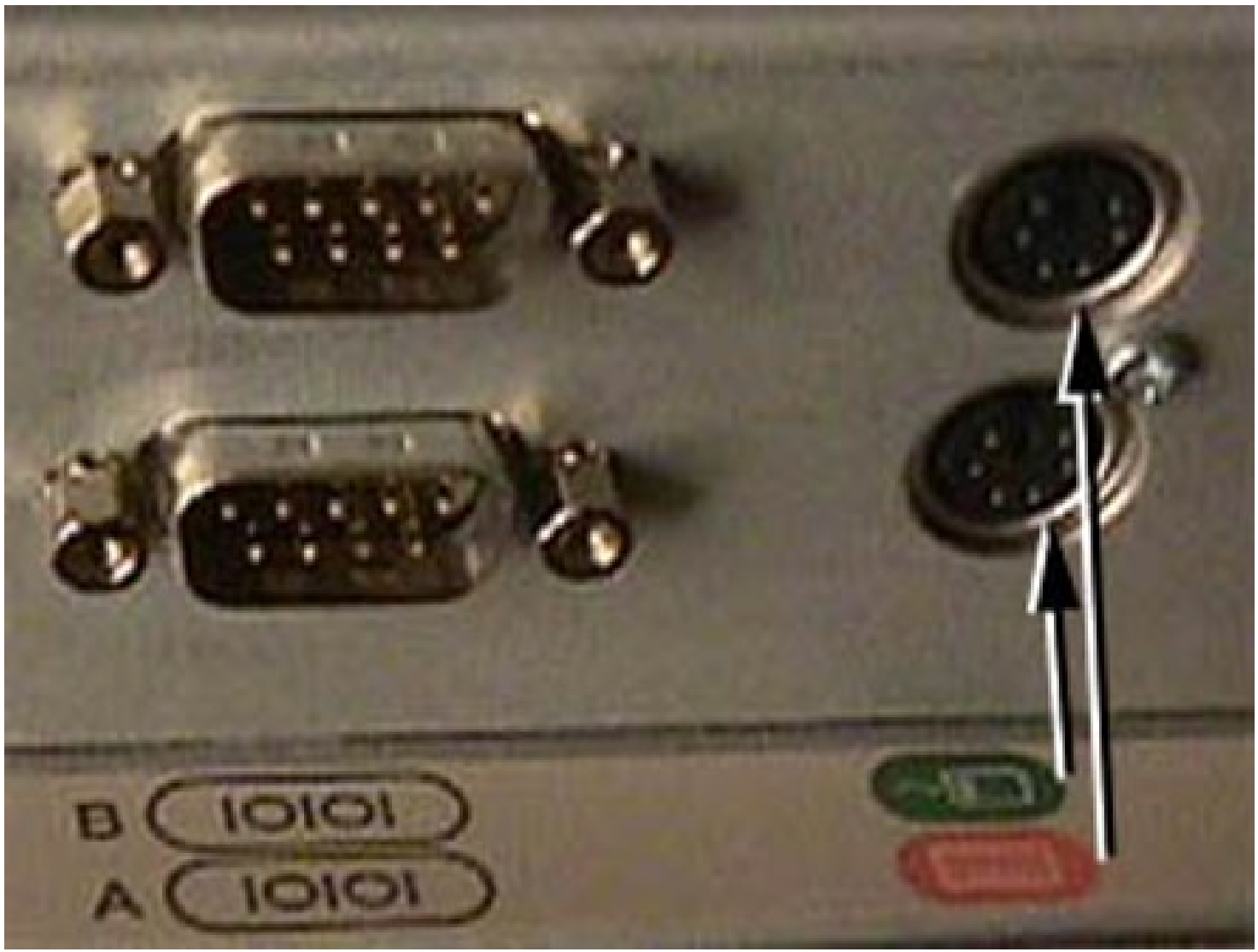
Depressed button indicates current mapped item

Mapping Problems

Quick, open the top drawer

Mapping Problems

Where do you plug in the mouse?



Mapping ambiguous

Causality

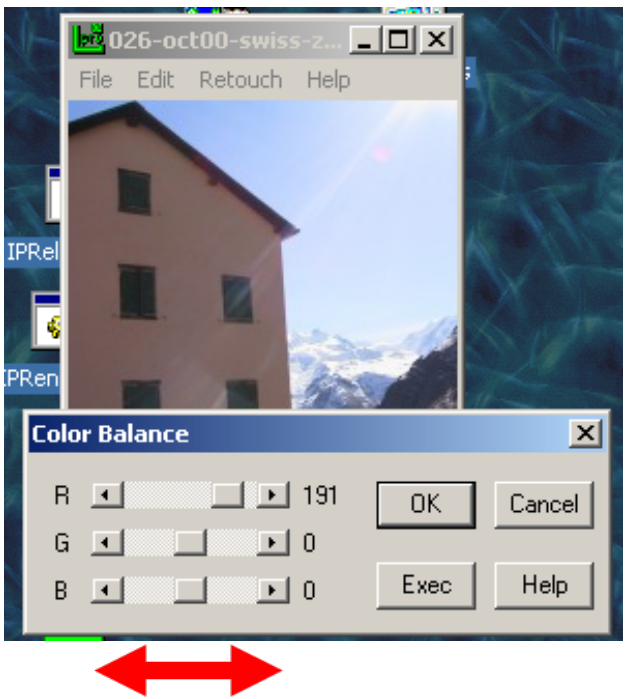
the thing that happens right after an action is assumed by people to be caused by that action

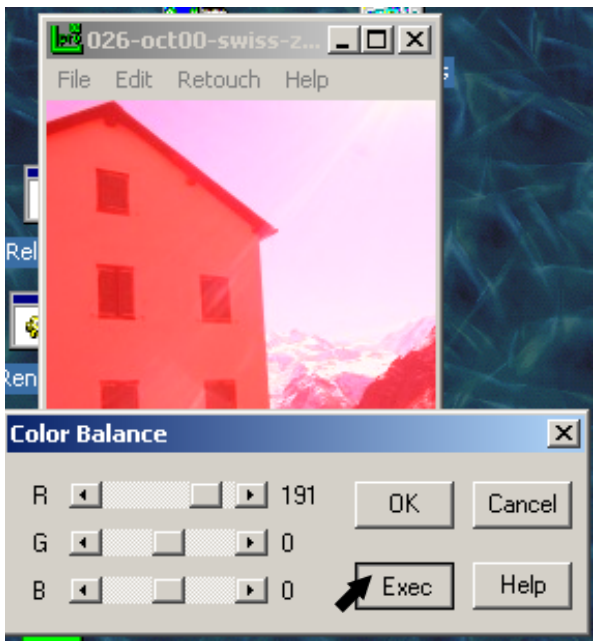
- interpretation of "feedback"
- false causality
  - incorrect effect
    - invoking unfamiliar function just as computer hangs
    - causes "superstitious" behaviours
  - invisible effect
    - command with no apparent result often re-entered repeatedly
    - e.g., mouse click to raise menu on unresponsive system

Causality Problems

Effects visible only after Exec button is pressed

- Ok does nothing!
- awkward to find appropriate color level

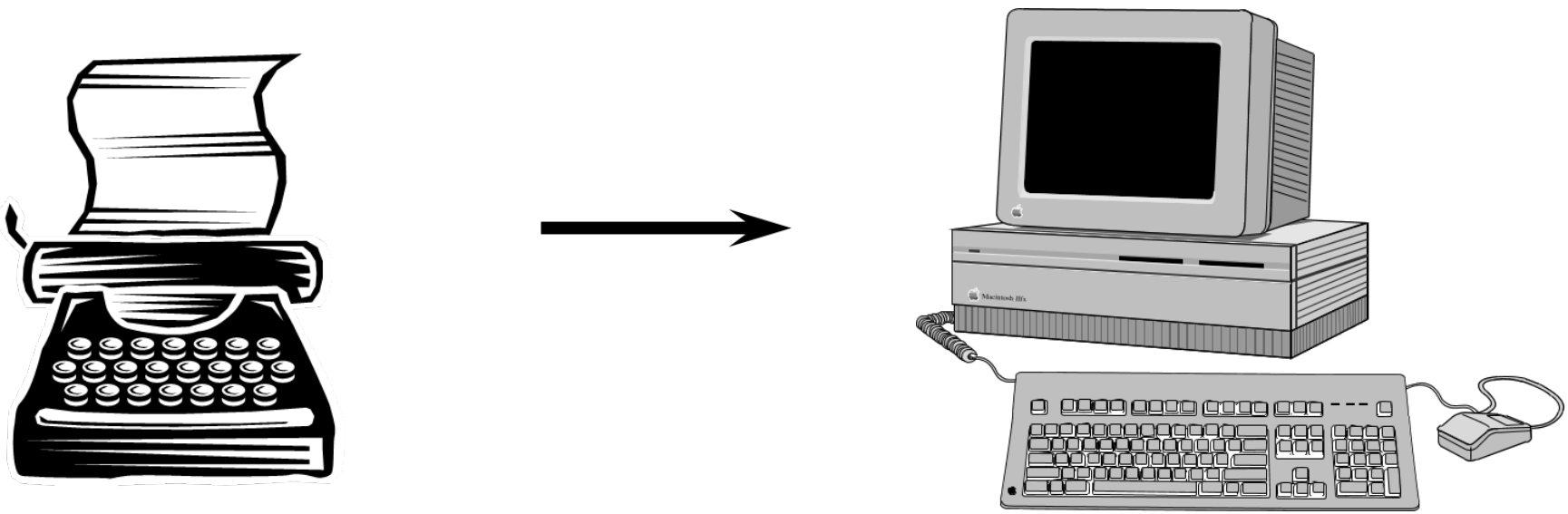




Transfer Effects

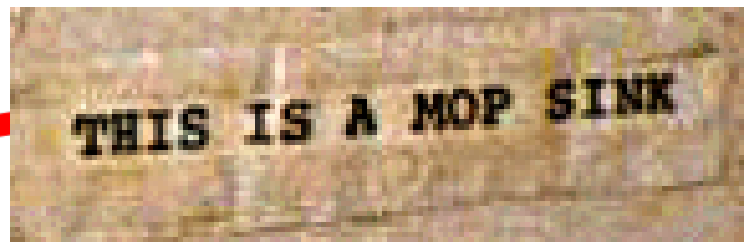
People transfer their learning/expectations of similar objects to the current objects

- positive transfer: previous learnings also apply to new situation
- negative transfer: previous learnings conflict with the new situation



Transfer Effect Problems

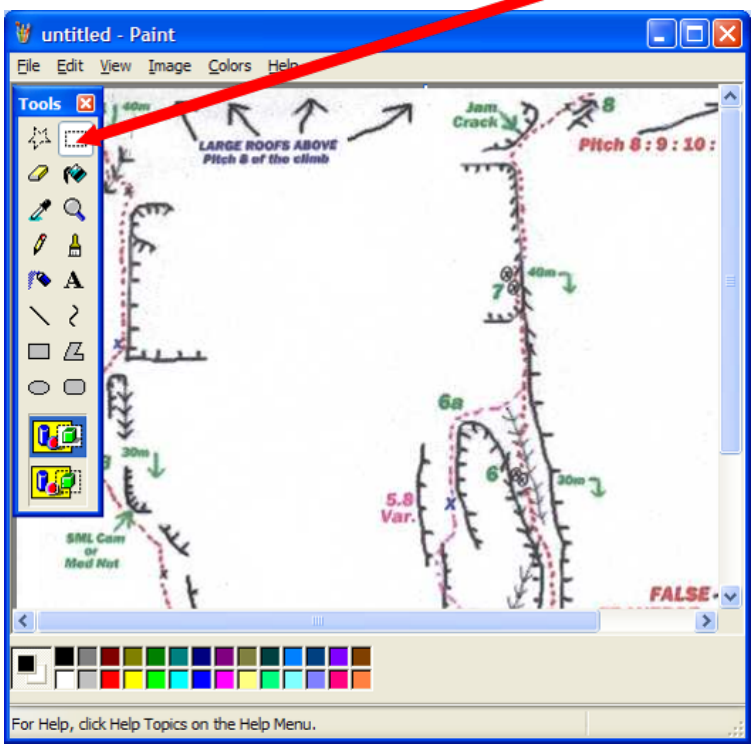
A Restaurant in Santa Barbara

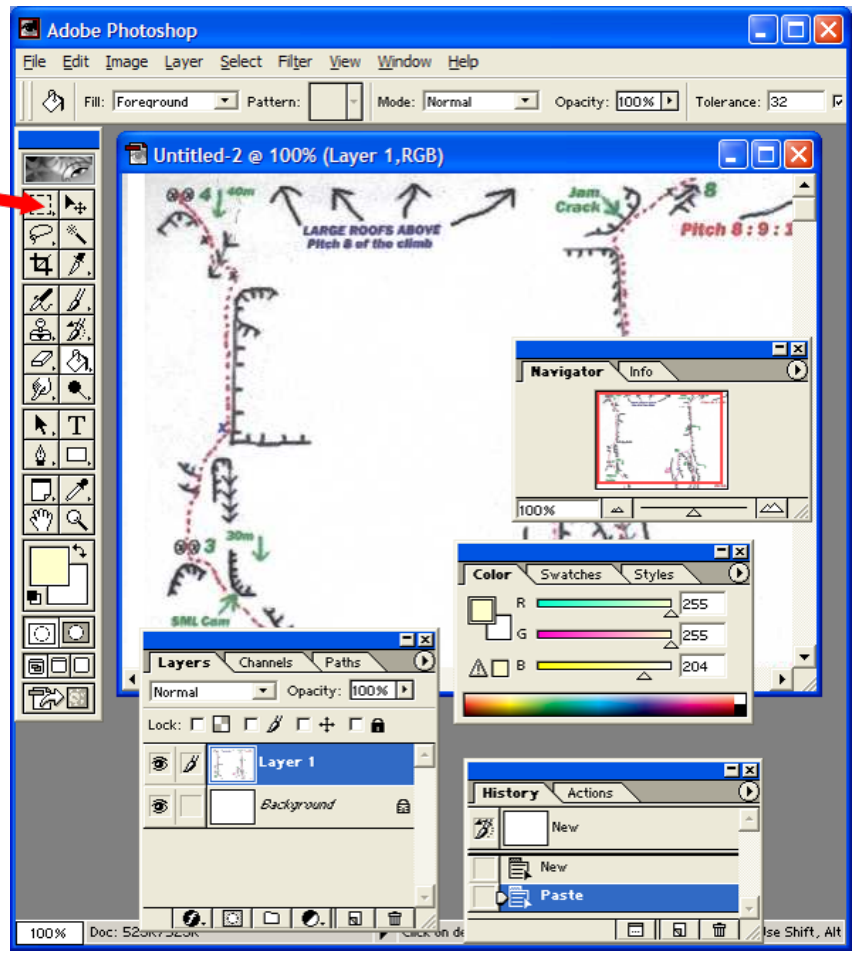


Transfer Effect Problems

How does knowing MSPaint help you in Photoshop?

- e.g. rectangular control ...





Idioms and Population Stereotypes

Interface idioms:

- 'standard' interface features we learnt, use and remember

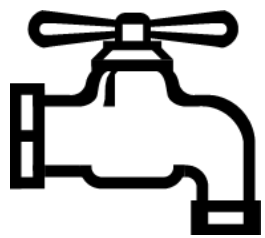
Idioms may define arbitrary behaviours

- red means danger
- green means safe

Population stereotypes: Idioms vary in different cultures

- Light switches
  - America: down is off
  - Britain: down is on

- Faucets
  - America: anti-clockwise on
  - Britain: anti-clockwise off



Idioms and Population Stereotypes

Ignoring/changing idioms?

- home handyman
  - light switches installed upside down
- calculators vs. phone number pads
  - which did computer keypads follow and why?

Difficulty of changing stereotypes

- Qwerty keyboard: designed to prevent jamming of keyboard
- Dvorak keyboard ('30s): provably faster to use

Cultural Associations

Because a trash can in Thailand may look like this:

a Thai user is likely to be confused by this image popular in Apple interfaces:

Sun found their email icon problematic for some American urban dwellers who are unfamiliar with rural mail boxes.

Conceptual Model

People have "mental models" of how things work, built from

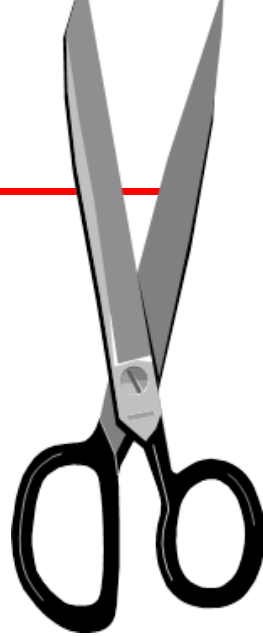
- affordances
- causality
- constraints
- mapping
- positive transfer
- population stereotypes/cultural associations
- instructions
- interactions

Models allow people to mentally simulate operation of device

Models may be wrong

- particularly if above attributes are misleading

Conceptual Model - Good example: Scissors



affordances

- holes for something to be inserted

constraints

- big hole for several fingers, small hole for thumb

mapping

- between holes and fingers suggested and constrained by appearance

positive transfer and cultural idioms

- learnt when young
- constant mechanism

conceptual model

- implications clear of how the operating parts work

Conceptual Model - Bad example: Digital watch

affordances

- three push buttons to push, but not clear what they will do

constraints and mapping unknown

- no visible relation between buttons, possible actions and end result

transfer of training

- little relation to analog watches

cultural idiom

- somewhat standardized core controls and functions
- but still highly variable

conceptual model

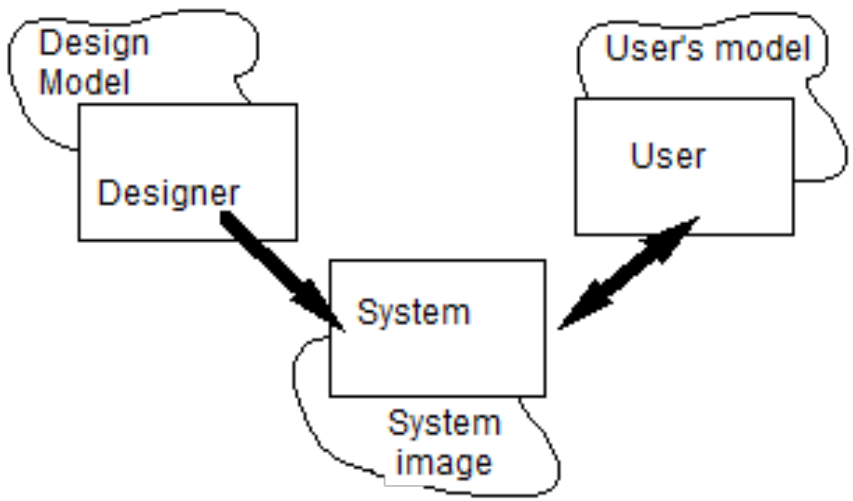
- must be learnt

Designing a Good Conceptual Model

communicate model through visual image

- visible affordances, mappings, and constraints
- visible causality of interactions
- cultural idioms, transfer
- instructions augments visuals

all work together to remind a person of what can be done and how to do it



Who Do You Design For?

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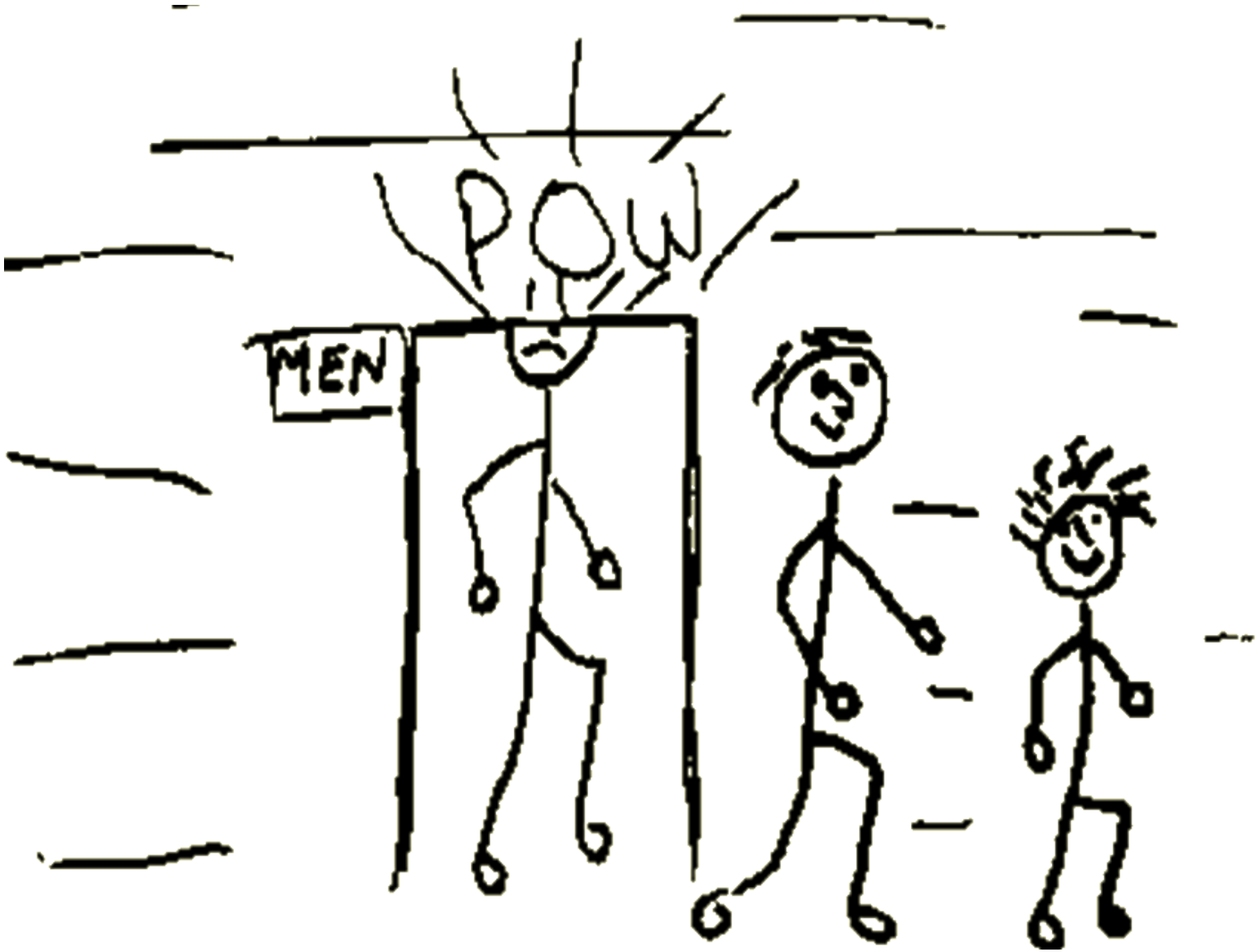


Who Do You Design For?

People are different

It is rarely possible to accommodate all people perfectly

- design often a compromise
  - ceiling height: 8'
  - but tallest man: 8' 11"!

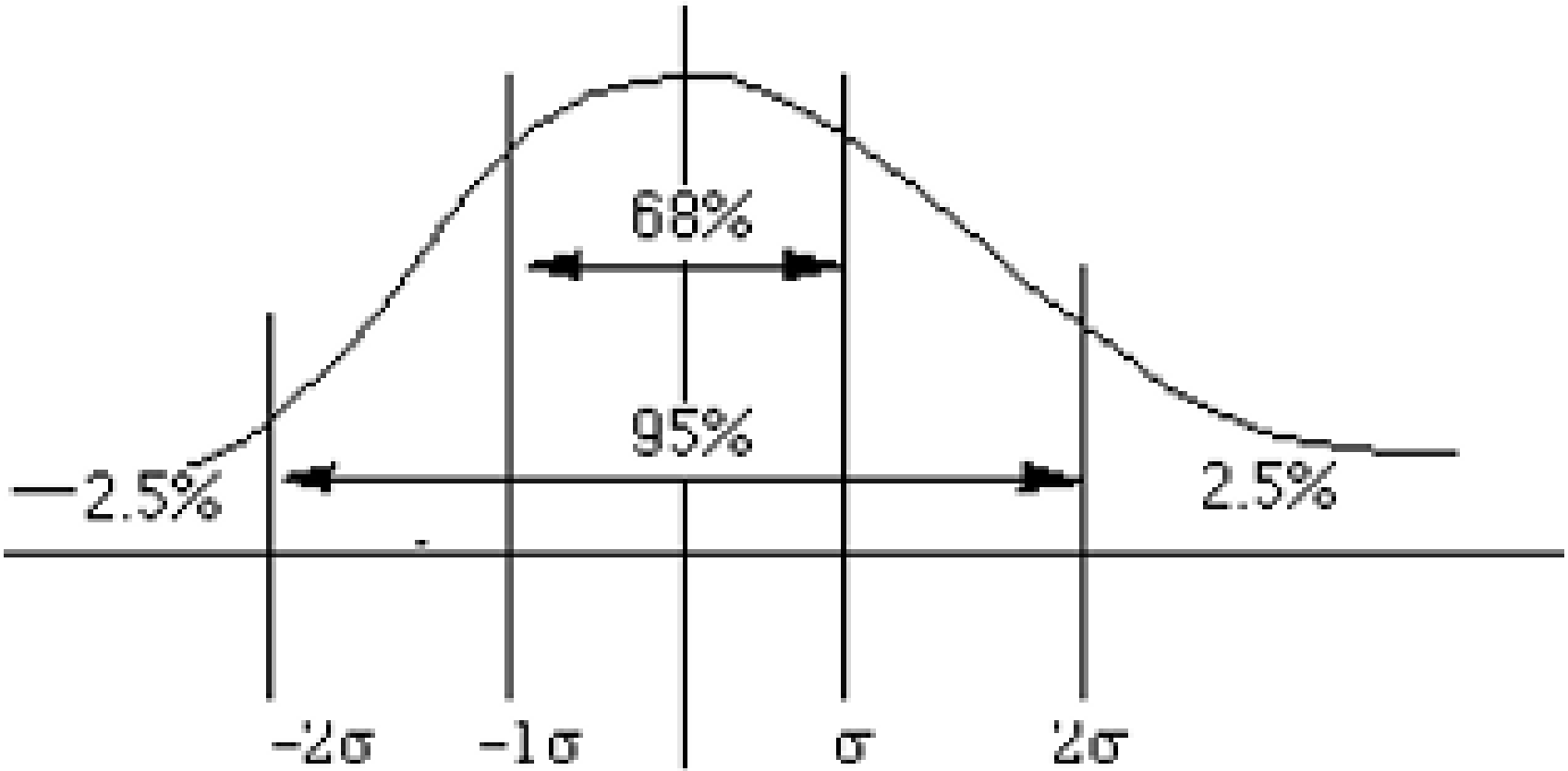
Rule of thumb:

- cater to 95% of audience (5th or 95th percentile)
  - but means 5% of population may be (seriously!) compromised
- designing for the average a mistake
  - may exclude half the audience

Examples:

- cars and height: headroom, seat size
- computers and visibility:
  - font size, line thickness, color for color-blind people?

Who Do You Design For?



Mean and
50th percentile

Who Do You Design For?

Proverbs on individual differences:

You do **not** necessarily represent a good average user of equipment or systems you design

Do not expect others to think and behave as you do, or as you might like them to

People vary in thought and behaviour just as they do physically

Who Do You Design For?

- novices
  - *walk up and use systems*
  - *interface affords restricted set of tasks*
  - *introductory tutorials to more complex uses*

- casual
  - *standard idioms*
  - *recognition (visual affordances) over recall*
  - *reference guides*
  - *interface affords basic task structure*

- intermediate
  - *advanced idioms*
  - *complex controls*
  - *reminders and tips*
  - *interface affords advanced tasks*

- expert
  - *shortcuts for power use*
  - *interface affords full task + task customization*

most kiosk + internet systems

most shrink-wrapped systems

custom software

Why Design is Hard?

Over the last century

- the number of things to control has increased dramatically
  - car radio: AM, FM1, FM2, 5 pre-sets, station selection, balance, fader, bass, treble, distance, mono/stereo, dolby, tape eject, fast forward and reverse, etc. (while driving at night!)
- display is increasingly artificial
  - red lights in car indicate problems vs flames for fire
- feedback more complex, subtle, and less natural
  - is your digital watch alarm on and set correctly?
- errors increasing serious and/or costly
  - airplane crashes, losing days of work...

Why Design is Hard?

Marketplace pressures

- adding functionality (complexity) now easy and cheap
  - computers
- adding controls/feedback expensive
  - physical buttons on calculator, microwave oven
  - widgets consume screen real estate
- design usually requires several iterations before success
  - product pulled if not immediately successful

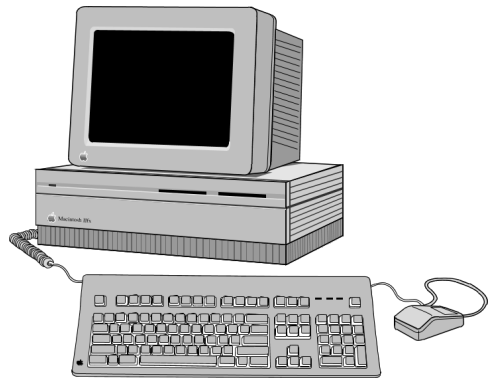
Why Design is Hard?

People consider cost and appearance over design

- bad design not always visible
- people tend to blame themselves when errors occur
  - "I was never very good with machines!"
  - "I knew I should have read the manual!"
  - "Look at what I did! Do I feel stupid!"
- e.g. the new wave of cheap telephones:
  - accidentally hangs up when button hit with chin
  - bad audio feedback
  - cheap pushbuttons—mis-dials common
  - trendy designs that are uncomfortable to hold
  - hangs up when dropped
  - functionality that can't be accessed (redial, mute, hold)

Why Design is Hard?

What does this do?



- computers far more complex to control than everyday devices
- general purpose computer contains no natural conceptual model
- completely up to the designer to craft a conceptual model

What Do You Know

Many human errors are actually errors in design

- don't blame the user!

Designers help by providing a good conceptual model

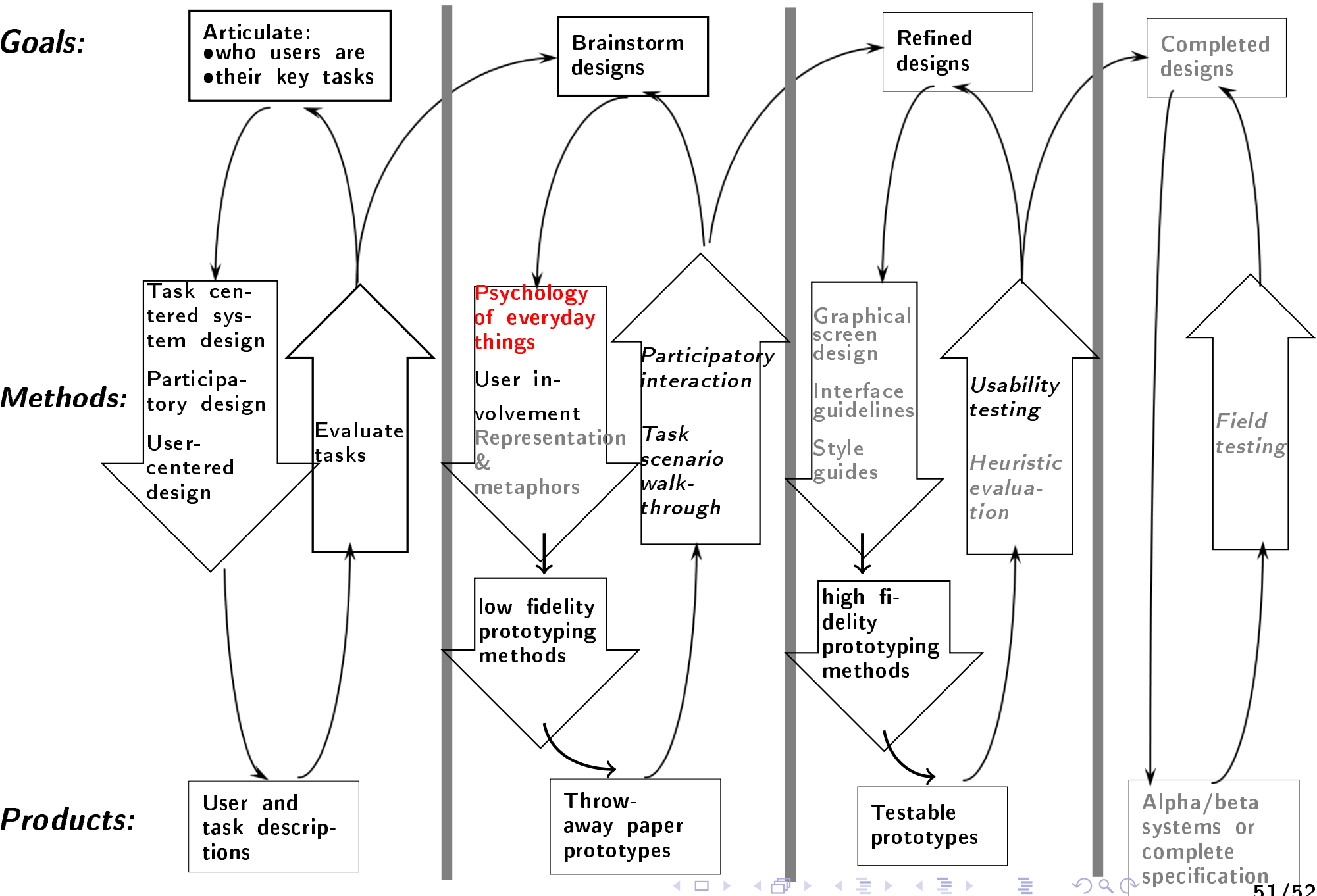
- affordances
- causality
- constraints
- mapping
- positive transfer
- population stereotypes and idioms

Design to accommodate individual differences

- decide on the range of users

Design is difficult for reasons that go beyond design

Interface Design and Usability Engineering



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