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Question 1.3

Consider a mobile device (such as smartphone or tablet). What difficulties might people encounter in using the device for the first time? What difficulties might people have in understanding how to use it and what to do with it? How might they go about learning to use it?

They might not have a frame of reference for the interface if it’s really unique, so they need experience with it. Hopefully the device’s apps have a general design theme or style so they can adjust quickly. Tips are a great tool for that as well, treating their first experience with each app or settings screen as a tutorial. If the design is familiar it will be much easier, for example having a button on the upper right to close a window is fairly standard across platforms. Google will tell them anything they have trouble figuring out.

Question 1.4

Consider an airplane crash like Kegworth, the Asiana in San Francisco, or another one where you can obtain some of the details. Classify the problems that led to the disaster with respect to the four levels introduced in this chapter. Summarize what level was the most important and could have stopped the disaster.

In the Kegworth air disaster, the pilots thought the smoke was coming from the opposite side it was actually coming from, because the plane was a new model that had ventilation on the other side from what they were used to. They increased thrust to the damaged engine and shut off the good one as a result, due to perception biased by current context, and habituation mainly. You could also say perceptual priming played a role, because they had certain expectations of the equipment. I would say the easiest way to stop that crash would be eliminating the perceptual bias in context by informing the pilots of every small difference between the new plane and the old ones, even down to the vents.

Questions 1.5

Select something you use every day (not your smartphone) that you think is well designed. This item does not have to be electronics. Think about why this is well designed. You may wish to consider esthetics, mappings of actions to responses, how you learned to use it, and what kinds of mistakes or errors you still make.

I really like my spice grinder. I think it’s the last one I’ll ever buy. Most grinders will almost powder what you put into them, but this one has larger holes and the teeth are half hollow ground on the edges, so they shreds spices easily and rarely need to be cleaned. There are some things that won’t go through it, which I’ve learned by trial and error. As far as the aesthetics, it’s shiny but dimpled all over from knocking against things since I’ve had it for years and years.