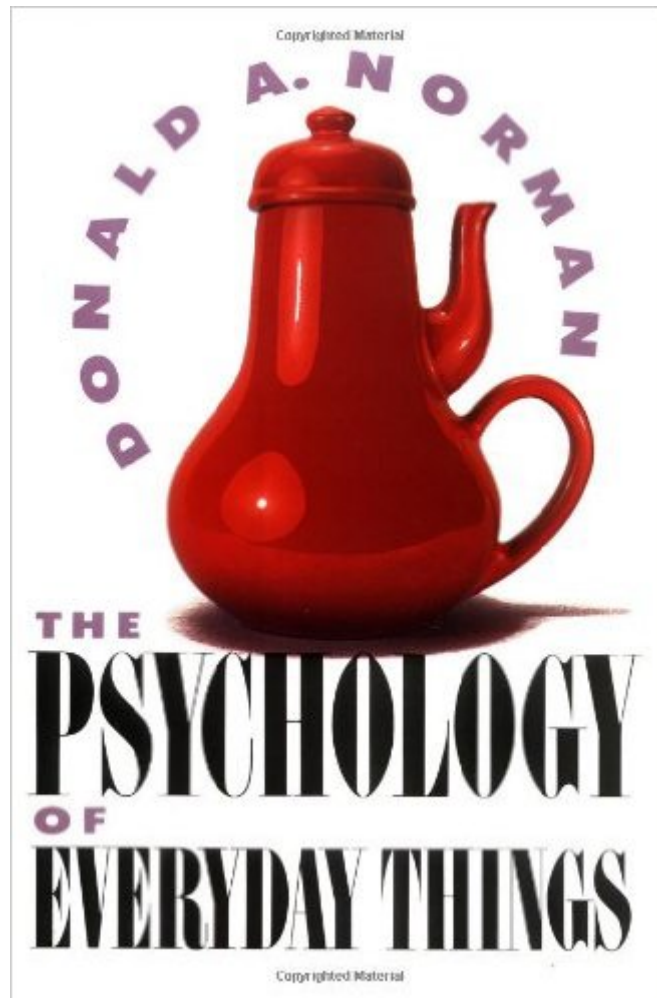


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# The Psychology Of Everyday Things



## Synopsis

Even the smartest among us can feel inept as we fail to figure out which light switch or oven burner to turn on, or whether to push, pull, or slide a door. The fault, argues this fascinating, ingenious&#151;even liberating&#151;book, lies not in ourselves, but in product design that ignores the needs of users and the principles of cognitive psychology. The problems range from ambiguous and hidden controls to arbitrary relationships between controls and functions, coupled with a lack of feedback or other assistance and unreasonable demands on memorization. The book presents examples aplenty&#151;among them, the VCR, computer, and office telephone, all models of how not to design for people. But good, usable design is possible. The rules are simple: make things visible, exploit natural relationships that couple function and control, and make intelligent use of constraints. The goal: guide the user effortlessly to the right action on the right control at the right time. But the designer must care. The author is a world-famous psychologist and pioneer in the application of cognitive science. His aim is to raise the consciousness of both consumers and designers to the delights of products that are easy to use and understand.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Psychology of Everyday Things by Donald A. Norman is a book that gives an interesting treatment of usability and design of everything from doors to computers. Over seven chapters and 217 pages (of core content), Norman lays out a very logical and technical treatment of the subject. I

am a software development professional, and I choose this book to look for higher level principles that I could apply in my line of work. This has been done very successfully in the realm of design patterns in software that have their conceptual root in architectural patterns. Norman gives a number of illustrations based on who people have difficulties using doors of varying styles. Who has not had a mishap of trying to pull a "push" door or push a "pull" door? While giving the reader something that they can relate to, Norman outlines the factors that distinguish good designs from poor ones. He talks about the visible queues that objectives give users as to the proper use in addition to feedback that the user has accomplished their goal in using objects. Some examples are a bit dated (given that the book was published 20 years ago) such as the difficulties of slide projectors and VCRs. However the principles that he relates transcend time and apply as much today as they did 20, 40, and 100 years ago. It is also interesting that he calls for things yet invented that are now in existence such as the PDA/smartphone and CDs that contain the artist and song information for display on your radio. At the end, I got a bit of a laugh from his trepidation about the issues that would come from being able to search the world's collection of hypertext documents. However, the early days of the internet did prove his fears correct. We take Google's work for granted.

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