



Culture and Affordance

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Affordance

- Designing so that a product looks like what it does



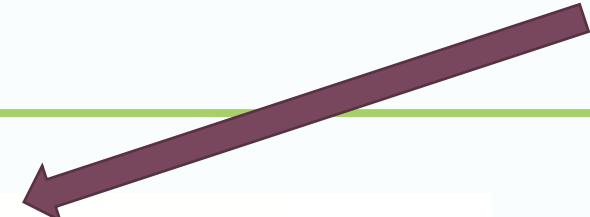
Affordance Buzzwords



- Affordance: physical characteristics that allow the user to know what a product does
- Perceived Affordance: a symbol or visual feedback that advertises affordance [1]
- Constraints: physical design limitations
- Conventions: use of cultural understandings in a way that encourages some behavior and discourages other [1]

Affordance Example

The cursor can't appear off screen, this is a constraint

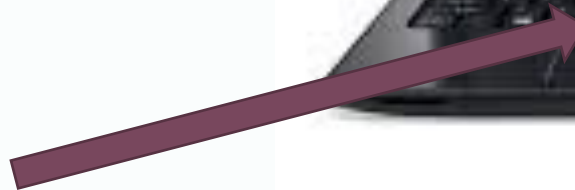


The on screen
"Buttons" have
Perceived Affordance



The buttons
encourage the user
click on the left of the
screen rather than the
right, this is a
convention

The Key Board's
Buttons Have Physical
Affordance



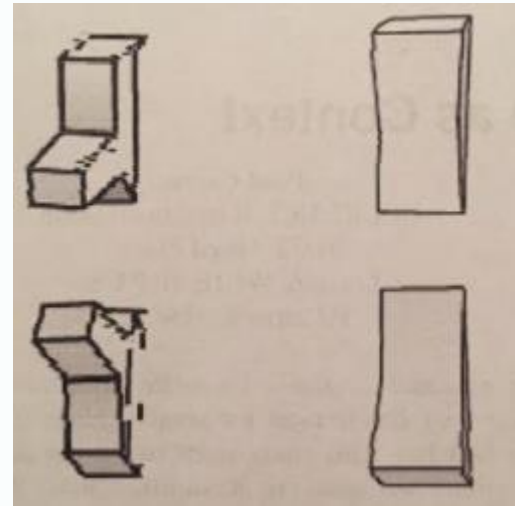
Culture and Design

- Culture: a system of shared meanings that form a framework for problem solving and behavior
- Problem Solving: Metric vs. Imperial System



Culture and Design

- Differences in preferences across cultures
- Even close western cultures have differences in affordances
- Light Switch Study [3]



Designing Outside Our Comfort Zone

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- Engineers typically consider math, science, budget
 - Affordance and culture are underused considerations
 - Monkey example





Bottom Line

- Understanding your user, their culture, and the affordances that come with that culture can save you time and money and allow you to design more well liked and sustainable products

References

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- 3. Oshlyansky, L., Thimbleby, H., & Cairns, P. (2004, October). Breaking affordance: culture as context. In Proceedings of the third Nordic conference on Human-computer interaction (pp. 81-84). ACM.
- 4. Pahl, K. (2006). Birds, frogs, blue skies and sheep: an investigation into the cultural notion of affordance in children's meaning making. *English in Education*, 40(1), 20-35.
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