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Dieter Rams: ten principles for good design

Back in the early 1980s Dieter Rams was becoming increasingly concerned by the state of the world around him - "an impenetrable confusion of forms, colors, and noises." Aware that he was a significant contributor to that world, he asked himself an important question, "Is my design good design?"

As good design cannot be measured in a finite way, he set about expressing the ten most important principles for what he considered was good design. Sometimes they are referred to as the "Ten Commandments of Good Design".

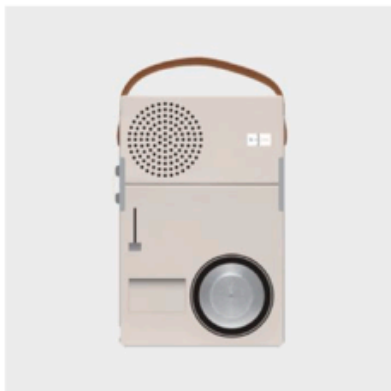
Here they are:

Vitsoe's
designer,
Dieter Rams.
Photograph by
Abisag
Tülmann



<https://www.vitsoe.com/gb/about/good-design>

<https://www.vitsoe.com/gb/about/dieter-rams>



TP 1
radio/phone
combination,
1959, by
Dieter Rams
for Braun

Good design is innovative

The possibilities for innovation are not by any means exhausted. Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology, and can never be an end in itself.



MPZ 21
multipress
citrus juicer,
1972, by
Dieter Rams
and Jürgen
Greubel for
Braun

Good design makes a product useful

A product is bought to be used. It has to satisfy certain criteria, not only functional, but also psychological and aesthetic. Good design emphasizes the usefulness of a product whilst disregarding anything that could possibly detract from it.



RT 20
tischsuper
radio, 1961,
by Dieter
Rams for
Braun

Good design is aesthetic

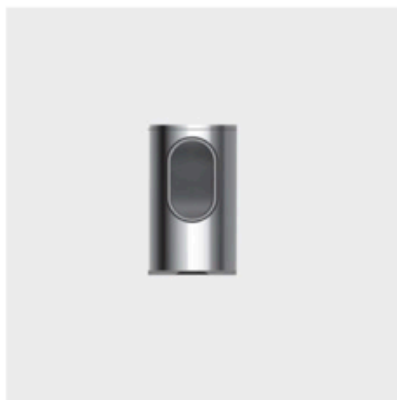
The aesthetic quality of a product is integral to its usefulness because products we use every day affect our person and our well-being. But only well-executed objects can be beautiful.



T 1000 world receiver, 1963, by Dieter Rams for Braun

Good design makes a product understandable

It clarifies the product's structure. Better still, it can make the product talk. At best, it is self-explanatory.



Cylindric T 2 lighter, 1968, by Dieter Rams for Braun

Good design is unobtrusive

Products fulfilling a purpose are tools. They are neither decorative objects nor works of art. Their design should therefore be both neutral and restrained, to leave room for the user's self-expression.

Good design is honest

It does not make a product more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is. It does not attempt to manipulate the consumer with promises that cannot be kept.



L 450 flat loudspeaker, TG 60 reel-to-reel tape recorder and TS 45 control unit, 1962-64, by Dieter Rams for Braun

Good design is long-lasting

It avoids being fashionable and therefore never appears antiquated. Unlike fashionable design, it lasts many years - even in today's throwaway society.



620 Chair Programme, 1962, by Dieter Rams for Vitsoe



ET 66
calculator,
1967, by
Dietrich Lubs
for Braun

Good design is thorough down to the last detail

Nothing must be arbitrary or left to chance. Care and accuracy in the design process show respect towards the user.



606 Universal
Shelving
System, 1960,
by Dieter
Rams for
Vitsœ

Good design is environmentally- friendly

Design makes an important contribution to the preservation of the environment. It conserves resources and minimizes physical and visual pollution product throughout the lifecycle of the product.



L 2 speaker,
1958, by
Dieter Rams
for Braun

Good design is as little design as possible

Less, but better - because it concentrates on the essential aspects, and the products are not burdened with non-essentials.

Back to purity, back to simplicity.

DIETER RAMS TEN PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD DESIGN

1. GOOD DESIGN IS INNOVATIVE
2. GOOD DESIGN MAKES A PRODUCT USEFUL
3. GOOD DESIGN IS AESTHETIC
4. GOOD DESIGN MAKES A PRODUCT UNDERSTANDABLE
5. GOOD DESIGN IS UNOBTRUSIVE
6. GOOD DESIGN IS HONEST
7. GOOD DESIGN IS LONG LASTING
8. GOOD DESIGN IS THOROUGH DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL
9. GOOD DESIGN IS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
10. GOOD DESIGN IS AS LITTLE DESIGN AS POSSIBLE