

LIS 697-10: Usability Leadership
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Norman, Chapters 3 & 4
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Natural Mappings



The front plate of this receiver has two push buttons which relate to two sets of speakers. The left one turns the first set on while the right one turns the second set on. On the back panel though the first set of speakers is on the right side. Does this layout reflect natural mapping?

It is easy to see the logic employed in designing this feature. If you turn the receiver around then the first set of speakers is on the left. But doing that is not practical since it involves unplugging of a number of cables. I initially did it by leaning over the receiver

and matching the speaker input with the button on the front panel.

Affordance

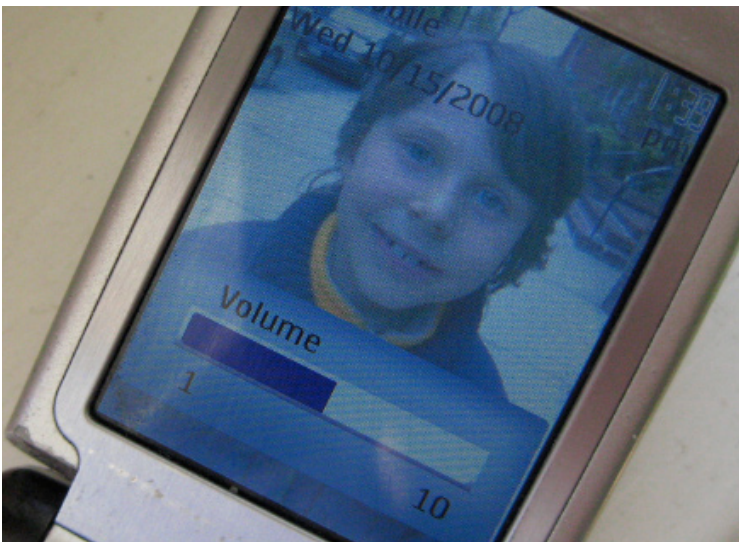


The movement of the handle that controls the tonearm on this turntable is constrained to up and down movement. There is a physical constraint that limits the range of options available for operating this object. The movement of the handle that corresponds to the movement of the tonearm is also an example of clear natural mapping. Newer turntable models often employ automatic control which, apart from being bad for records, is not as intuitive.

Visibility and Feedback



The volume control on this cell phone is placed on the side and its color blends with the casing. It's practically invisible and very easily unintentionally activated. It is actually just one button. If pressed closer to the top of the phone volume goes up and vice versa. In this respect it does reflect natural mapping, but it is almost impossible to know which side of the button is going to be pressed.



On the other hand, when the button is pressed the phone offers instant visual and audio feedback related to the action. The unfortunate placement and design of the button is to some extent compensated by effective feedback.