

10 Principles for Good Design

Design is normally thought of as applying to things - which it does. **But design also applies to systems, structures, and communication tools.** Dieter Rams, one of the most influential designers of the last 40 years, has developed [10 principles for good design](#). Though they are illustrated with objects here, the principles apply to what you as a leader "design" every day.



TP 1 radio/phono 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 emphasises 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 like 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.



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 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.



620 Chair Programme, 1962, by Dieter Rams for Vitsoe

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.



ET 66 calculator, 1987, 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 Vitsoe

Good design is environmentally-friendly

Design makes an important contribution to the preservation of the environment. It conserves resources and minimises physical and visual pollution 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.

Learn more about Dieter Rams [here](#).