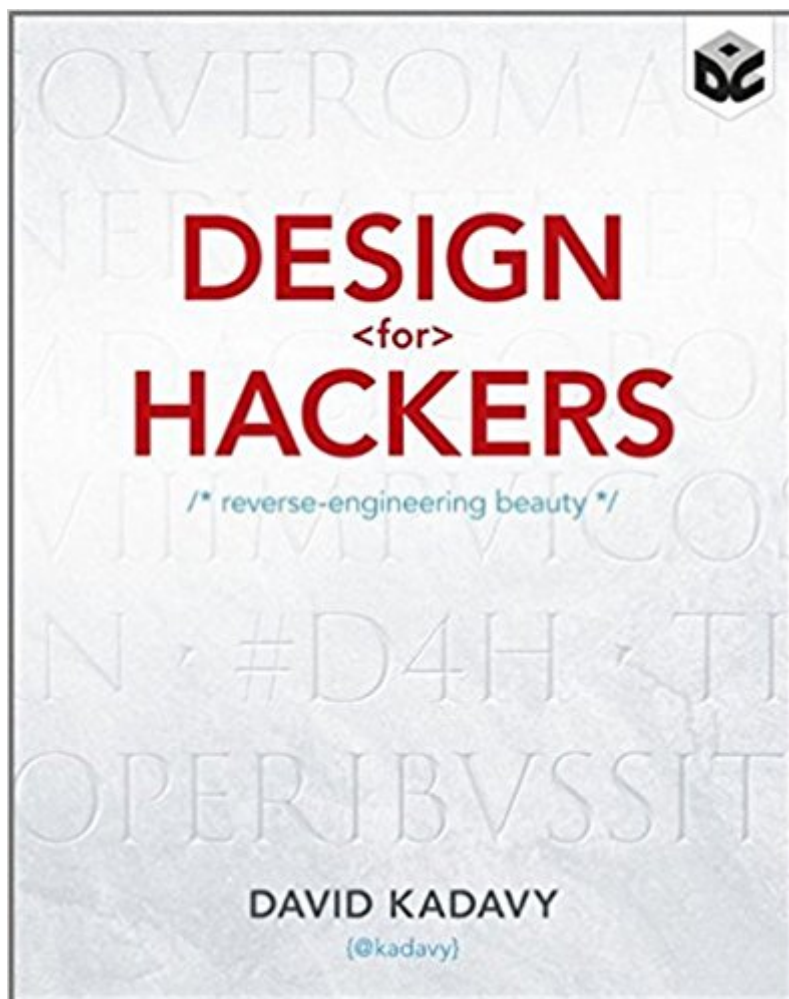




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Design For Hackers: Reverse Engineering Beauty



Synopsis

The smash hit introductory design book that debuted at #18 on Hackers are able to accomplish so much in so little time because they come from a community that's built upon sharing knowledge. When it comes to programming, they can learn whatever they need to learn by reading manuals, or simply typing in a Google search. But learning design isn't so simple. Many design books try to teach design through lists of "do's" and "don'ts." But hackers know you need a deeper understanding of something to really do it well. Design for Hackers takes apart design by "reverse-engineering" Impressionist painting, Renaissance sculpture, the Mac OS X Aqua interface, Twitter's web interface, and much more. You'll learn about color theory, typography, proportions, and design principles. This theoretical advice is mixed with concrete, actionable advice such as suggestions for color scheme tools, and a chart of "all of the fonts you'll ever need" (available along with the free design course at designforhackers.com). By the end of the book, you'll be seeing design through new eyes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was extremely excited for this book. I know a lot of programmers who feel like they can futz around with Photoshop or HTML or what not, but don't really know why they're doing what they're doing or how to approach design problems. They always bemoan the lack of background knowledge of design concepts. So, when I saw this book was being released, I rushed out to my local B&N and grabbed it (was backordered for weeks, which spoke to how good I thought this would be!).I

thought I'd get a really good introduction to design concepts, accompanied by really solid, cohesive examples of either how to use this in a design or examples of the concept in action and why it's a good use of it. What I got instead was a scattershot of sort of interesting concepts, a few examples, and a bunch of other random stuff. Maybe I'm more persnickety about books than the other reviewers, but if we're reading the same book, we must have totally different definitions of a good teaching book. Most of the information in there just struck me as weird and disjointed. I won't cover all the my issues with the book (some of them are just simply pedantic...), but I'll share a few examples. There's a (by page count) huge amount of space spent on Roman/Greek typography (something the author spent a lot of time researching in school as we're told in his back cover bio, inside bio, introduction, first chapter, and a few other times), but a tiny bit of information on selecting fonts for designs, type proportion, and so on. There's also a long rant on why Comic Sans is a bad font (even going so far as presenting a number of really technical arguments as to why it sucks), but completely neglects the most important point about font choice which is context.

Kadavy does a fantastic job taking the complete design beginner through the important parts of design. From a hacker's point of view, this book is brilliant, and exactly what I needed. Having designed several web sites and applications before without any form of design training or knowledge, I always felt like my designs were grossly lacking in a lot of ways. Designs seemed to always be based off of my gut feeling, and the opinions of other non-designers. While a gut check was good, my designs still sorely lacked. After reading this book, I feel as though Kadavy makes it clear how I can approach my designs with a different perspective. His chapters on typography, proportion and color are fantastic examples of this. I no longer feel like I will be stabbing in the dark to find that perfect color, but now have some tools in my arsenal to get good jobs done quickly. When I need the heady parts of design done and refined, I will still probably need to hire a designer, BUT with this book, as a hacker, it has set me off in the right direction to either leave my knowledge as is, and put out really good designs, or pursue a greater understanding of design but with a solid foundation. As a hacker, my time is money, and every day fiddling around with something is another day lost in terms of making great applications. This book will reduce my time fiddling with design, and increase my time focusing on my apps' functionality. That said, it isn't a perfect text (though still gets 5 stars in my opinion). There is a very fine line between a lot of information and too much information. Kadavy walks this line VERY well in this book, but at some points I felt as though it was a little too much info that was not giving me any more practical information.

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