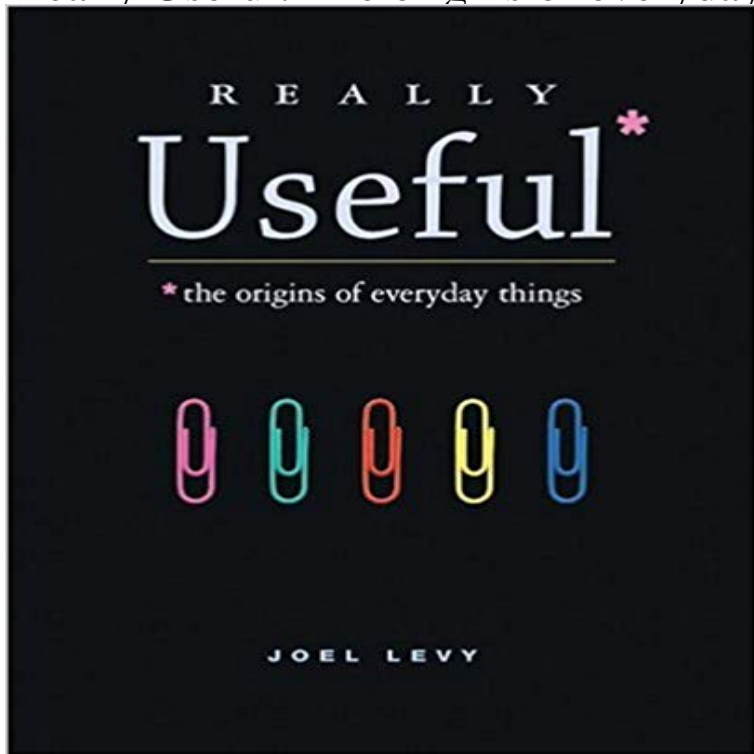


Really Useful: The origins of everyday things



You undoubtedly know what a paperclip is and how to use it, but did you know that during the Second World War the people of Norway adopted paperclips as a symbol of protest against the occupying Nazis? Really Useful tells these and other stories of how the things we use every day came into being. As much a sociological history as a compendium of entertaining stories, Really Useful takes you on a tour from the kitchen to the bathroom to the office and beyond. Along the way it tells us about the technology, design, social conditions and even intrigue that contributed to these remarkable innovations, which include: sliced bread, microwave oven, coffee, tea bags, corkscrew and Teflon razor blades, Band-Aids, the toothbrush, lipstick and tissues air conditioning, buttons, vacuum cleaners, stockings and neon lights Post-It notes, the floppy disk, smoke detectors, fireworks and the battery barcodes, traffic lights, parking meters, padlocks We sometimes curse these things as just so much clutter but in fact they form the fabric of our daily lives and wed be lost without them. The stories of their origins are as interesting and illuminating as these objects are truly useful.

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