Robots to help us make our own furniture

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Robots are taking over more and more aspects of our lives, and jobs. The latest occupation to perhaps feel threatened by the march of technology is carpentry. For thousands of years, skilled carpenters have lovingly created furniture from wood. However, the next generation of master craftsmen and women may be robots, not humans. Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have created a robot that can create custom-made wooden furniture. They say the robots will not replace humans, but instead will improve safety. The researchers said the goal of their project was to let robots do the more dangerous tasks of sawing and assembling, so carpenters can focus on design.

The MIT team used currently available technology to create what they call the AutoSaw. It differs from conventional robots that are currently used to manufacture the mass-produced, flat-pack furniture many of us buy from giant home-furnishing stores. People will be able to design their own furniture and AutoSaw will cut up the wood with great precision and reduced risk of us losing a finger. Researcher Adriana Schulz said: "Our aim is to democratize furniture-customization. We're trying to open up a realm of opportunities so users aren't bound to what they've bought at Ikea. Instead, they can make what best fits their needs." She believes it will empower people to create better-designed furniture.

Sources: bbc.com / *theverge.com* / *cnet.com*

Writing

We don't need robots to help us make furniture. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

robots / occupation / threatened / technology / craftsmen / humans / safety / design / currently / conventional / mass-produced / furniture / precision / opportunities / needs

True / False

a) The article said robots have made carpenters no longer needed. T / F

b) The next generation of master carpenters will be robots. T / F

c) The carpentry robot in the article will improve safety. T / F

d) The carpentry robot will take on more design tasks. T / F

e) AutoSaw is the same as robots used to mass-produce furniture. T / F

f) AutoSaw will allow people to make furniture without losing fingers. T / F

g) AutoSaw's designer wants to make furniture design more democratic. T / F

h) AutoSaw could free people from relying on IKEA for furniture. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**aspects**	a.	accuracy
2.	**occupation**	b.	concentrate
3.	**skilled**	c.	profession
4.	**generation**	d.	equip
5.	**focus**	e.	chance
6.	**conventional**	f.	crop
7.	**precision**	g.	world
8.	**risk**	h.	features
9.	**realm**	i.	established
10.	**empower**	j.	expert

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) What do you think of the AutoSaw robot?

c) What do you think of assemble-yourself furniture from IKEA?

d) What are the benefits of designing your own furniture?

e) What does "to democratize furniture-customization" mean?

f) What kind of furniture best fits your needs?

g) How well designed is your furniture?

h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

1.	taking over more and more	a.	created furniture
2.	feel threatened by the march	b.	finger
3.	skilled carpenters have lovingly	c.	sawing
4.	next generation of master	d.	pack furniture
5.	robots do the more dangerous tasks of	e.	of technology
6.	mass-produced, flat-	f.	furnishing stores
7.	giant home-	g.	aspects of our lives
8.	cut up the wood with great	h.	of opportunities
9.	reduced risk of us losing a	i.	craftsmen and women
10.	open up a realm	j.	precision

Discussion – Student B

a) How interested are you in furniture?

b) Would you like to make your own furniture?

c) What do you think of the carpentry trade?

d) How much of a threat are robots to carpenters?

e) How important are carpenters?

f) To what degree will robots replace humans?

g) What furniture have you made?

h) What is your favourite piece of furniture, and why?

Spelling

1. more stecspa of our lives

2. The latest uiconctapo

3. skilled rapecnesrt

4. the next teeraiongn

5. master cnesamftr

6. sawing and nebmsgsila

7. used currently alavbaeli technology

8. onennvtoilca robots

9. with great preinsico

10. cdtrezmaeoi furniture-customization

11. open up a realm of ittperonupsoi

12. She believes it will mweoerp people

Role Play

Role A – Sofa
You think a sofa is the best item of furniture. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their items. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): dining table, desk or bookcase.

Role B – Dining Table
You think a dining table is the best item of furniture. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their items. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why):: sofa, desk or bookcase.

Role C – Desk
You think a desk is the best item of furniture. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their items. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why):: dining table, sofa or bookcase.

Role D – Bookcase
You think a bookcase is the best item of furniture. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their items. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why):: dining table, desk or sofa.

Speaking – Furniture

Rank these with your partner. Put the best furniture at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- sofa
- bed
- dining table
- desk
- bean bag
- bookcase
- armchair
- clothes closet

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. c	3. j	4. f	5. b
6. i	7. a	8. e	9. g	10. d

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.