

Robots to help us make our own furniture

April 2

Harder

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

cnet.com

theverge.com





1. The next generation of master carpenters will be robots. **T / F**
2. The carpentry robot in the article will improve safety. **T / F**
3. AutoSaw is the same as robots used to mass-produce furniture. **T / F**
4. AutoSaw's designer wants to make furniture design more democratic. **T / F**
5. AutoSaw could free people from relying on IKEA for furniture. **T / F**



1. Would you like to make your own furniture?
2. How much of a threat are robots to carpenters?
3. To what degree will robots replace humans?
4. What is your favourite piece of furniture, and why?
5. What do you think of assemble-yourself furniture from IKEA?