

Alexander Dillahunt wasn't the world's worst typist, he was close. But that was okay. Fixing mistakes on a computer was a snap—especially if you caught them right away. That was the beauty of the Undo, Alexander thought: a tiny backwards arrow at the top of the screen that performed magic, allowing the user to go back to a more perfect, mistake-free moment in time. That's how Alexander Dillahunt got it into his head to create the Universal Undo. The Universal Undo would do nothing short of "taking back" the last thing a person did. Making a working model was simple. All Alexander needed to do was figure out how to take something in 2-D and make it 4-D (skipping over 3-D completely) and then get the whole thing to fit inside his smartphone. Finally, after a few weeks of trial and error, the Universal Undo was ready for a test run. Alexander went into the kitchen and stood in front of the refrigerator. From there he walked to the cupboard. He waited a few seconds, then hit Universal Undo on his smartphone. Presto! Alexander was back at the refrigerator. He walked to the stove. He waited, hit Universal Undo—and there he was, back at the refrigerator again. Action undone! Alexander took his new invention outside. By the traffic lights, he ran into Mrs. Bieberman, who was carrying a bag of groceries and holding the hand of her 3-year-old son Tommy. "Hello Mrs. Bieberman! Hi Tommy!" Alexander called out. He smiled. "That's a really silly hat you're wearing, Mrs. Bieberman!" Then he tapped his smartphone. If everything worked, his last comment would be Undone. "Hello yourself, Alexander!" exclaimed Mrs. Bieberman. Good! thought Alexander. She hadn't heard it! Flushed with excitement, he continued. "You know, your little boy looks like a toad." He paused, waiting for a response. "I do not not look like a toe!" Tommy wailed and, still blubbering, started to play his video game. Had Alexander tapped Undo—or just imagined it? He couldn't remember. "He can't go long without his game," Mrs. Bieberman said, sighing. "And only three years old." Alexander hadn't started playing video games until he was nine. "I want a cookie!" said Tommy suddenly, tugging at the hem of his mother's skirt. Mrs. Bieberman reached into a bag of cookies and pulled one out. "I'll give you just one, Tommy." Tommy grabbed it and stuffed it in his mouth. "How's your mother?" asked Mrs. Bieberman. "I should call her." Alexander was aware of a tap tapping sound. Mrs. Bieberman reached into a bag of cookies and pulled one out. "I'll give you just one, Tommy." Alexander froze. How could he have missed it? He'd read all about multiple discovery—the idea that most inventions are made by a number of different people in different places at the same time. How could he have thought he was the only one? "Bye Mrs. Bieberman, Tommy" said Alexander in a shaky voice. Tommy, his mouth crammed with cookie, looked into Alexander's eyes and hit a button on his video game. Tap, tap-tap. Mrs. Bieberman reached into a bag of cookies and pulled one out. "I'll give you just one, Tommy." ¶