



Designing Products Ethically Means Thinking About Impact

KS3 Ages 11-14 🕒 3 min read

What Does Ethical Design Mean?

Ethical product design means creating things with **care and responsibility**. When designers and engineers make products—from phones to shoes to toys—they should think about how their decisions affect **people, animals, and the environment**. It's not just about making something that works; it's about making something that's right.

Think of it like cooking a meal for a friend. You don't just make something tasty—you also check for allergies, use fresh ingredients, and don't waste food. Designers do the same with products.

Think of it like... a teacher planning a lesson. They don't just pick any topic—they pick one that helps students learn, keeps everyone engaged, and doesn't make anyone feel left out.

Why Should Designers Think Ethically?

Products are used by **millions of people worldwide**. A **design choice** made in one country can affect someone's life on the other side of the planet. For example, if a company uses **cheap materials** that wear out quickly, people have to buy replacements constantly. That wastes money and creates rubbish.

Ethical designers ask questions like: Is this product **safe**? Can everyone afford it? Does making it harm **workers** or the **environment**?

Real-World Examples

Smartphone design is tricky. Mining for metals can hurt the environment. Workers in factories sometimes work long hours for low pay. Ethical designers try to use **recycled materials**, improve working conditions, and make phones last longer so fewer are thrown away.

Fashion brands now think about where clothes come from. Are workers treated fairly? Do dyes pollute rivers? Is the material **sustainable** (meaning it won't run out)?

How Can You Design Ethically?

Three key ideas help:

- 1. Think about people:** Will your product help them? Is it safe? Can people afford it?
- 2. Think about the planet:** Does it create pollution? Does it waste resources?
- 3. Think about fairness:** Are the workers who made it treated well? Is the design accessible to everyone?

Think of it like... being a captain of a team. You want your team to play great football, but you also make sure no one gets hurt and everyone gets a fair chance to play.

Ethical design takes **time, effort, and money**—but it makes the world better. Every product we buy is a choice, and choosing ethically-designed ones encourages more companies to do the right thing.