Why Products Stop Working and Go Out of Fashion

KS4 DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY Ages 11-14 ⏰ 4 min read

Why Things Break and Become Old-Fashioned

Have you ever wondered why your phone stops working after a few years, or why your parents say their old clothes look "dated"? There are actually several reasons why **products stop working or go out of fashion**. Understanding this helps us think about the things we buy and how we use them.

Products Stop Working: Built-In Obsolescence

Sometimes products are designed to stop working after a certain time. This is called **planned obsolescence**. Manufacturers might use cheaper materials that wear out quickly, or design products so that fixing them is nearly impossible. This encourages people to buy new ones instead.

Think of it like a toy that's made with weaker plastic than it could be—it breaks in a year instead of lasting five years, so you need a new one.

Another reason is that **technology improves rapidly**. When new features come out, old products can't match them. A smartphone from **10 years ago** seems incredibly slow today because software has advanced so much.

Fashion and Trends Change

Products also go out of fashion because **styles and tastes change**. What looks cool one year might seem uncool the next. Companies create new designs and colours to make old products seem less desirable, even if they still work perfectly.

Think of it like how your school uniform might seem embarrassing compared to what your older siblings wore—the uniform still works, but it looks old.

The Money Behind It

Businesses make money by selling new products. If things lasted forever, they'd sell fewer items. So there's an **economic incentive** to make products that don't last long

or that fall out of style quickly. **Companies spend money on advertising** to make us want the newest version, even when our old one works fine.

What Can We Do?

Choosing **quality products that last longer** and resisting pressure to buy the newest thing can help. Some people buy **second-hand items**, repair broken things instead of replacing them, or support companies that design products to last. Understanding why products fail helps us make smarter choices about what we buy.

Free for educational use