



The Engineering Design Process

STUDENT HANDOUT

The engineering design process (EDP¹) is the key process engineers follow when they solve problem and design solutions.

1. Identify and define the problem

Engineers start by asking lots of questions. What problem must be solved? Who has the problem? What do we want to accomplish? What are the project requirements? What are the limitations? What is the goal? Through this process, engineers start to identify the **criteria** (the conditions the solution must satisfy to be considered successful) and the **constraints** (the limitations they need to design within).

2. Gather information

Engineers dig deep into the problem by collecting **information and data** about the problem and any existing solutions that might be adaptable. They talk to people from many different backgrounds and specialties to assist with this research.

3. Generate possible solutions

Now the fun really starts! Engineers start to **brainstorm** ideas and develop as many solutions as possible, sometimes even crazy ones. This is the time for wild ideas and deferred judgment. It is important to build on the ideas of others while staying focused on the core problem and keeping the criteria and constraints in mind. For example, if there is a budget, can the potential solution be developed within that budget?

4. Create a prototype

Engineers choose one or more of the most promising solutions to **prototype**. A prototype is a working model to be tested.

5. Test and evaluate the prototype

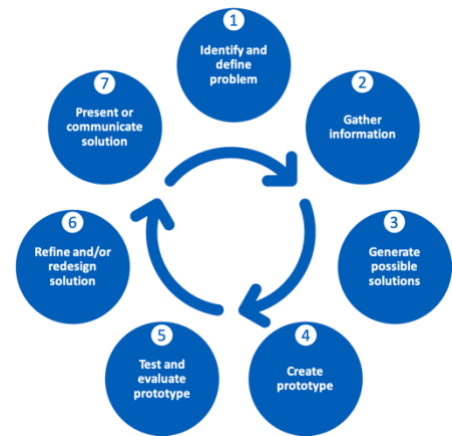
Most prototypes **fail**, but that is good. It tells engineers which ideas they should focus on. Engineers also need to decide if the design really does solve the original problem.

6. Refine and/or redesign the solution

After learning through testing, engineers **redesign and retest** until they have the best solution possible – one that balances the criteria and constraints.

7. Present or communicate the solution

Finally, engineers reach a point where they are satisfied with their solution. It does not need to be perfect, but it should '**satisfice**' - meet the criteria within the constraints. Engineers now communicate their solution to others.



¹ Adapted from <https://www.teachengineering.org/design/designprocess>

