

# Circular Design Guide

A practical shortcut to Circular Design by INDEED

## WHAT IT IS

## Hand-curated Guide to Circular Design

The Circular Design Guide by **INDEED Innovation** is a curated collection of the most effective circular innovation methods and tools sourced from leading industry practices and academic research.

INDEED brings a hand-picked, human-curated selection, designed to help teams understand, choose, and apply circular strategies in real-world projects. Whether you are just getting started or deep into a project, this guide provides a clear and accessible pathway to implementing circular thinking in your everyday work.

This isn't an encyclopedia, or the answer to everything circular.

Just a really good place to start.

A practical shortcut to Circular Design

**Circular Design is an approach that creates lasting, resource-efficient products and systems designed for reuse, repair, and regeneration to eliminate waste and support a sustainable economy.**

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## WHY IT EXISTS

## Practical over theoretical

- Make complex ideas accessible and ready to act on
- Projects move from idea to impact smoothly
- Better design decisions, grounded in best practices
- Expand your knowledge of circular strategies and processes

## WHO NEEDS IT

## All innovators

- CEOs and board members
- R&D teams
- Designers and engineers tackling circular design challenges
- Anyone looking for a solid, simple starting point for circular innovation

## HOW WE SELECTED

## Tool criteria

- Easy to Start**  
Clear instructions, minimal setup, and low learning curve
- Action-Oriented**  
Designed to help structure, test, or accelerate circular strategies in real projects
- Right Level of Depth**  
Tools range from low to medium complexity
- Cross-Industry**  
Flexible and adaptable to address diverse industry interests
- Free-Access**  
No paywalls. No subscription required

## DEFINITION

**Circular Design is a design approach.**

**Circular Design** is a design approach that rethinks how we create and use products, services, and systems. This aligns with the principles of the circular economy, which emphasize eliminating waste and pollution, circulating products and materials at their highest value, and regenerating nature.

In short, Circular Design is more than a method. It is a mindset. It addresses the root causes of today's environmental and resource challenges and helps build a more sustainable, resilient economy.

Sources: Interaction Design, Philips, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Circular Design means making things with **fewer resources**, to **last longer** and to **be used again**.

## Worth knowing

- Circular Design builds on the principles of **Ecodesign** and **Sustainable Design**, which share similar goals. It goes further by ensuring that materials and energy are continually cycled throughout a product's life.
- Circular Design challenges the traditional, linear economic model—where resources are taken, used, and discarded—by prioritizing **closed-loop systems** and designing out negative environmental impacts from the very beginning.
- Systemic thinking** is essential. Circular Design looks at the bigger picture: materials, supply chains, business models, user behavior, and policy must all work in harmony. Real impact comes from aligning and integrating these elements.

## HOW TO START

## Your Path through Circular Design

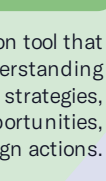
The guide is built around **9 blocks**, each focusing on a key part of the circular design journey. From building your understanding to making real-world impact, these steps offer a practical way to help move forward with clarity and confidence.

## Understand

Learn where you are in the circular design journey and why it matters.

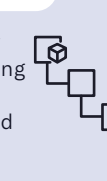
Provided by **Circular Design Tools**

A system to create a common understanding of the objectives of an organization and the circular maturity.



Provided by **BFH and ETH Zurich**

An online tool that helps companies self-assess their progress in the circular economy, compare with peers, and identify further opportunities.

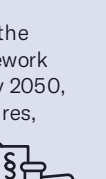


## Explore

Spot circular design opportunities in the broader business ecosystem.

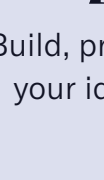
Provided by **Giliam Dokter**

A card-based tool that helps teams explore circular design strategies and generate innovative ideas for products, services, and systems within the circular economy.



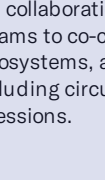
Provided by **DDC – Danish Design Center**

A tool to map circular opportunities and challenges across a product's entire lifecycle, using circular strategies as a framework for analysis and decision-making.



Provided by **CircuLaw**

An overview tool summarizing the European Union's policy framework to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, including key legislative measures, goals, and action areas.

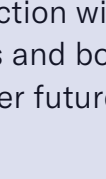


## Discover

Uncover user needs, business challenges, and environmental impacts.

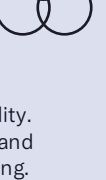
Provided by **Jan Konietzko**

A learning and facilitation tool that helps teams build an understanding of circular economy strategies, identify gaps and opportunities, generate ideas, and align actions.



Provided by **Circular Electronics Partnership**

This tool guides a shared framework for the transition to circular electronics. It defines circular products and outlines the system-level changes needed, serving as a North Star for members and the wider industry.

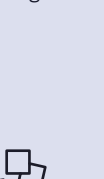


## Map

Visualize how things connect - flows, relationships, and system dynamics.

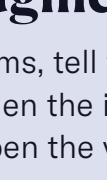
Provided by **Ellen MacArthur Foundation**

A tool to map a product's journey across its entire life cycle, including multiple use-cycles, in order to identify circular opportunities and interventions.



Provided by **Board of Innovation**

A tool for mapping ecosystems and partnerships, helping organizations identify key stakeholders, roles, and collaborations needed to enable circular business models.

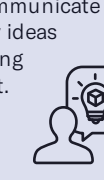


## Envision

Set your direction with circular goals and bold ideas for better futures.

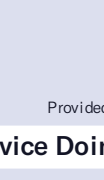
Provided by **IBM**

A collection of design thinking activities and tools to support teams in problem-solving, customer-centric innovation, and collaborative design processes.



Provided by **Laura Duarte**

A template tool to generate project, business ideas and scanning high-level strategies.



## Develop

Build, prototype, and realize your ideas for real-world application.

Provided by **H&M Group**

This tool guides circular product development, balancing material choices, durability, and recyclability. It helps assess circular potential and supports objective decision-making.



Provided by **Miro**

A digital whiteboard and collaboration platform that enables teams to co-create, map processes, build ecosystems, and facilitate workshops, including circular design and innovation sessions.



Provided by **Grace M Kane**

This tool focuses on improving product reparability to reduce material waste. It guides users through observing issues, deciding actions, and taking steps toward better repair outcomes.

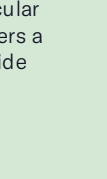


## Augment

Align teams, tell the story, strengthen the idea and sharpen the value.

Provided by **Ellen MacArthur Foundation**

A guide to help effectively communicate and present circular economy ideas within an organization, enabling internal buy-in and alignment.



Provided by **This is Service Doing**

A facilitation tool offering simple voting techniques to quickly prioritize ideas, select options, and support group decision-making processes during workshops and meetings.



## Implement

Launch your solution, embed it into the system and put it into action.

Provided by **DDC – Danish Design Center**

A practical framework for organizations to integrate behavioral design into circular economy solutions, helping teams understand and influence user behaviors that support circular practices.



Provided by **Circulab**

A visual tool for designing circular business models, helping teams map value creation, resource flows, and stakeholder relationships in a circular economy context.



## Measure

Evaluate and track progress over time to improve impact.

Provided by **Footprintcalc.org**

An online tool to calculate a product's carbon footprint or life cycle assessment (LCA), supporting environmental impact evaluation of materials and products.



Provided by **Ganbatte**

A tool to support circularity and sustainability assessments, helping companies evaluate their circular maturity and readiness for circular business models.



## NEXT STEPS

## Ready to start?

**Dive in**  
Now it's your turn to try it for your own project. Tell us what you think and share your feedback. [Get in touch.](#)

## Want to go further?

Let's take it up a notch and explore deeper tools and strategies. [Visit our resources.](#)

## Not sure where to begin?

Chat with our experts and explore what fits best for your organization.

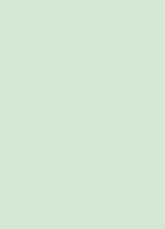
[BOOK YOUR 30-MIN STRATEGY CALL](#)

## WHO WE ARE

**INDEED Innovation is the global design & innovation firm for a circular economy.**

As a certified B Corporation, INDEED designs and delivers products, experiences and business models that help eliminate waste, regenerate natural resources, keep materials and products in loops.

Certified



Corporation

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