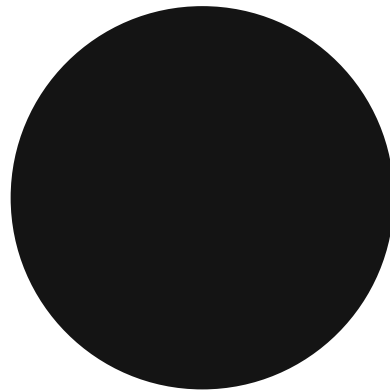


# Product Autopsy



A Product Autopsy is the analysis of an existing product, and all of its individual components, to understand the manufacturing and assembly processes used.

## Product Autopsy

The method involves careful and complete disassembly of the product to evaluate the design decisions made, learn from those decisions and to explore ways of making new versions of the design better.

### Where do you use it?

As part of an information gathering process used primarily in the formative stages of a product design process, product autopsy's also facilitate communication when the method is performed in teams.

### What do you need?

Product autopsy should be performed in a clean, workshop environment. Be aware that products are often very complex and may separate in very small parts, so care must be taken, not to damage or lose components during disassembly. You will need:

- Appropriate tools for disassembly such as screw drivers for tamper-proof screws.
- Small plastic containers to store and separate, fasteners and small components.
- Sketch pad, pens and pencils to draw parts and assembly details; and to record part names.
- Camera to photograph and/or video record the process.

### What are you trying to find out?

The detailed production and assembly approaches taken by companies and designers, and to also gain direct knowledge of the inner workings of products.

### Process

**01 /** Source products of a similar (and in some cases, dissimilar) format or type as the product you have been asked to re-design.

**02 /** Carefully disassemble the product. Do not smash the product open but methodically separate the parts without damaging them. Record using photography or video the process so that it can be put back together.

**03 /** Prepare drawings, diagrams and notes that describe key parts and assembly design features. Keep a record of these for reference throughout the process.

**04 /** Make notes on how the features identified may be adapted or may impact generally on your own design.

**05 /** Analyse, using the drawings, notes and photographs gathered, the nature of materials and manufacturing used in the product to gain an understanding of design decisions made and to generate ideas for making future iterations of the product better, in terms of performance, serviceability, sustainability, etc.

---

### References

Milton, A. & Rodgers, P. 2013, *Research Methods for Product Design: Portfolio Skills – Product Design*, Laurance King, London.