According to a document from **February 7, 2026**, here's what Design Thinking was telling you (minus the fluff).

What "Design Thinking" actually means

- It's a **loop**, not a checklist: **Empathize → Define → Ideate → Prototype → Test**, repeated until it works.

Phase 1: Empathize (get out of your bubble)

- **You are NOT the user.** Your assumptions are garbage until proven otherwise.

- Don't ask "Would you use this?" Ask: **"Tell me about the last time you struggled with this."** Then **watch** what they do.

- Ask **"Why?" five times** to get past surface answers.

- The "iceberg" idea: real insights come from **observed actions, unspoken emotions, context/constraints, core motivations** (not just what people say).

- Tools: **user interviews, contextual observation, journey mapping**.

Phase 2: Define (turn chaos into clarity)

- Turn research into a clear mission using **"How might we…"** questions that focus on **real pain + emotions**, not your solution pitch.

Phase 3: Ideate (quantity beats quality)

- **Your first idea is usually the worst.** Breakthrough is idea #50.

- Use **"Yes, and…"**—build on ideas instead of shutting them down.

- Sprint method: fast sketching, lots of options, celebrate the weird ones.

Phase 4: Prototype (fail fast, fail cheap)

- **Rough prototypes win.** Polish later. Early prototypes are for learning, not looking pretty.

- Fixing mistakes costs **1x in design, 10x in development, 100x after launch**—so prototype early.

Phase 5: Test (ego goes to die)

- Testing is **education, not validation**.

- "Watch, don't tell": give users the prototype and **shut up**. Confusion is your gold.

- When confused, ask: **"What were you expecting?"** That expectation becomes your new requirement.

- **Iterate immediately** (retest within 24 hours). Speed beats perfection.

First-time user experience rules (FTUX)

- **Reduce friction** (every extra tap increases quitting).

- **Learn by doing** (one simple task, no tutorials).

- **Celebrate wins** (micro-rewards).

- Measure **"Time to Value"**: time from opening → "ohhhh I get it."

- Example: **Duolingo "Try Before You Buy"**—do something valuable first, create account later.

What NOT to do (pitfalls + horror stories)

- Don't fall in love with your first idea; don't skip testing; don't design for yourself; don't ignore negative feedback; don't over-polish early.

- Juicero case: they built "cool tech" without observing real behavior → got clowned and died.

- Why apps fail: building features nobody asked for, assuming you know what users want, skipping the messy research phase.

Translate this to EcoPlate (what you should do)

- Your FTUX "Time to Value" must be: **Scan QR → Reserve → Get pickup code** in ~10 seconds (no account first). That's straight from the FTUX + Duolingo pattern.

- Test with **5–8 real target users**, watch where they hesitate, then fix and retest fast.

- Prototype ugly in Figma/web first; do not waste time polishing or shipping app-store fantasy land.