

Tippy Table Blocks

A **speed bump** is an example of a technology that works because it's part of a bigger system. Many people are involved in the decision to install a speed bump, including families in the neighborhood, the police department, and the local planning board. To understand speed bumps, we need to think about them in the context of the people who install and drive over them, and the transportation system they're part of.

Who might want a speed bump near them?



A **delivery truck** is an example of a technology that works because it's part of a bigger system. For example, delivery trucks drive on roads, use fuel, and rely on dispatchers at home to help them decide on their routes. When you mail a package, or send a letter, you're taking advantage of a slew of different technologies working together as part of a larger system.

How does mail get to your house? How does it get into the truck?



A **solar panel** is an example of the ways that personal and societal values impact how current technologies are adopted. People with "green" values appreciate that solar energy offers an alternative to fossil fuels, but current solar panels are expensive. Some solar panels qualify for a federal tax credit, an example of a way that government and regulation can play a role in our decisions about adopting new technologies.

What happens when you put the solar panel far away from the house?



A **farm** is a reminder that there's an enormous system of production, distribution, and storage that brings us our food. To grow food and get it to our homes, we use many technologies, including irrigation systems, fertilizers, mechanical harvesters, refrigerated trucks, warehouses, and grocery stores. Farmers and consumers can make choices about how they want their food grown (for example, they can decide whether or not to use organic fertilizers).

Where do we grow our food? How does it get to the supermarket?



A **landfill** is an example of a technology that brings up questions of fairness. We need landfills because we need a place for our trash to go, but few people want a landfill in their backyard. We all benefit from the existence of landfills, but only some people are directly affected by their presence.

Would you like a landfill in your neighborhood?



The **space elevator** is an example of a possible future technology that reflects the way our values shape the way technologies are developed and adopted. Just the fact that nations and companies are investing resources in creating this technology is an indication of their interests and priorities. If a space elevator actually existed, our values would influence the way we used it.

If we had a space elevator, where would we put it?

