

Kickstart your creativity

Enhancing your creativity and thinking skills can and should be a life-long journey. But what if you have just discovered this web site and want to get a **quick start**?

This page offers suggestions based on my experience over the last few years.

1. Journalling

Obtain an A4 (8 x 11 inch) notebook and use it for your journal. Each morning as soon as you get up, write three pages of **anything**. Typically you will write about what you did the day before, ideas, dreams, problems, and rambling thoughts. You may need to get up 30 minutes earlier to do the writing.

More information: Read Julia Cameron's **The Artists Way**, and Dorothea Brande's **Becoming a Writer**.

2. Regular Fresh Input

The mind needs stimulation. Your sensory input gets stored in memory. By giving your mind fresh inputs each day, your memories get triggered and combined with the new input. Sometimes you will get ideas or gain new perspectives.

How do you get new input? Do something new each day. Listen to different radio stations, read or borrow different magazines, take a stroll through a shopping centre. Keep your eyes and ears open, and taste, touch and smell things.

Don't forget to carry a notebook or dictaphone to record your ideas during the day.

3. Keep a Journal

In addition to the three pages you write in your morning journal, **always** carry a journal. I recommend the hardcover A5 size - either ruled pages or a Visual Diary (from an Art Supply Shop). Don't forget to carry a pen and/or pencil along with the journal. You may want to get one of those four colour in one biros made by Bic.

Use your journal to record your thoughts, ideas, and observations during the day. Write in a creative quotation, affirmation or a technique to use this week. Make the journal your constant companion.

4. Learn a new Creativity Technique each week

Write the technique on an index card or in your journal and carry it with you to practice wherever possible. Just like learning new words in a foreign language, you will need to practice the technique until it is second nature to you.

Where do you learn techniques? Some of them are described on this web site, but you should buy a book like Michael Michalko's **Thinkertoys**, Arthur VanGundy's **Brain Boosters for Business Advantage**, Robert Alan Black's **Broken Crayons** or James Higgins' **101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques**.

5. Relax!

Listen to music on headphones while lying on the floor. Sit outside in the sunshine and do nothing. Take a stroll, ride your bike or go for a swim. It's important to give yourself time to unwind and let your subconscious mind do its work. Getting ideas in the shower or while you are driving has almost become a cliché, but it is true.

6. Learn to Draw

Use Betty Edwards' book **Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain** to teach yourself to draw. It's a wonderful book and you will learn skills applicable to problem solving and enhancing your perception of the world. Other books to consider are Robert McKim's **Experiences in Visual Thinking** as well as the numerous books on cartooning, such as Robin Hall's **The Cartoonist's Workbook**.

7. Learn Mind Mapping

A written list is not the best tool for planning, note taking or idea generation. Use Mind Mapping instead. Buy some coloured pens, large sheets of paper and a copy of one of Tony Buzan's. Develop your own symbols, icons and visual vocabulary for your mind maps. Writing long hand is left brain, but mind maps use the right brain by employing colour and visual information. There are other books on the subject by Joyce Wycoff (USA) and Dilip Mukerjea (Singapore). Mind mapping works because of the next topic....

8. Associational Thinking

The mind stores information by association - a concept underlying the **Ideafisher** program, and the compilation of a **thesaurus**. Either can be used to generate ideas. Personal association can be a great start followed by a thesaurus. The inputs described in item number two (2) can trigger associations.

To demonstrate associational thinking, write the word **Happiness** in the middle of a sheet of paper, and draw lines radiating out from the word. Write down your thoughts on what the concept of "happiness" means to you. Ask other people to do the same exercise and compare.

9. Be challenged!

Take a new challenge each week. Work on a new problem each week, explore something new with the purpose of solving it, or generating ideas. Refer to Alan Black's "Broken Crayons" web site for his weekly challenge.

10. Adopt a genius

You can benefit by learning from the lives, ideas and actions of the great geniuses of history. Adopt a role model - maybe Leonardo da Vinci, Picasso, Einstein, T. S. Eliot, Thomas Edison, Hannibal (not Lecter!). Visit the Genius Gallery for more information.

