



Career Guide ▾

Search articles

[Career development](#) > 18 Creativity Exercises To Improve Creative Thinking at Work

18 Creativity Exercises To Improve Creative Thinking at Work

By Indeed Editorial Team

Updated June 10, 2022

Published April 17, 2020



People usually associate creativity at work with artistic jobs like illustration, graphic design and the performing arts. However, most people can benefit from including creativity in their work processes. Creativity exercises are a great way to discover new ideas and improve overall creativity, so it's important to learn about the different activities you can use to expand your skills.

In this article, we explain what a creativity exercise is, describe the benefits of these exercises and offer a list of 18 you can try individually or with a team.

[Upload your resume on Indeed](#)

Let employers find you when you create an Indeed Resume

What is a creativity exercise?

A creativity exercise is an inventive endeavor focused on building creative skills, like problem-solving, communication and innovation, rather than improving a specific creative ability, like painting or dancing. Creativity exercises can be multi-modal, using paper and pen, building materials, found objects or any other items to devise new ideas and expand creative thinking.

These exercises are beneficial for teams to use to improve group cohesion and creativity or for individuals interested in [improving their creativity](#) on their own. Practicing idea formulation, connecting unrelated concepts and adapting objects for unique purposes are all useful activities that employees in a variety of industries can use to improve problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Related: [Creativity Skills: Definition, Tips and Examples](#)

Benefits of creativity exercises

Creativity exercises offer many benefits for individuals, groups or companies who use them, including the following:

- **Improved flexible thinking:** Creativity exercises improve your mental flexibility. You may see the possibility of small shifts or changes to a project that you didn't notice before.
- **Discovery of multi-dimensional ideas:** If you or your team have been working in the same field for a long time, you might use the same ideas repeatedly. Creativity exercises help you discover entirely new solutions to repetitive problems.
- **Embracing work challenges:** With enough practice, [work challenges](#) become something to look forward to as an opportunity to show and improve your mental creativity rather than a test delaying your progress.
- **Seeing new concepts:** Some creativity exercises help develop your creative vision, allowing you to see objects, ideas and problems in a new way. This is highly beneficial when looking for a novel solution to a business challenge.
- **Improved teamwork:** Creativity exercises help individuals and groups improve [teamwork skills](#) like communication, problem-solving and unity.

Related: [10 Ways To Improve Your Creative Problem-Solving Skills](#)

Top job searches near you

Part time jobs >

Full time jobs >

Work from home jobs >

Hiring immediately jobs >

[View more jobs on Indeed](#) →

18 creativity exercises to try at work

Creativity exercises improve your cognition, innovation and idea generation. Use these creative exercises at work to boost your creativity on your own or with your colleagues:

1. Incomplete figure test
2. 30 circles
3. Paper clip test
4. Musical ideas
5. Re-purposed product
6. Dictionary story
7. Compound collaboration
8. Building blocks
9. Write poetry
10. Draw it again
11. Field trip
12. Read
13. Free write
14. Storyboard
15. SCAMPER
16. Six thinking hats
17. Question assumptions
18. New out of two

1. Incomplete figure test

The incomplete figure test is a drawing exercise. You use a small, simple scribble, like a half-circle or loop, to create a full drawing. To do this in a group, several people use the same scribble to work from, and then they compare the drawings. Seeing how others interpret the same small design can expand your creative thinking and give you new ideas.

2. 30 circles

30 circles is a creativity exercise where the goal is quantity over quality. You're given a sheet of paper with 30 identical circles on it. You have a short amount of time, usually 10 minutes at most, to draw something in as many of the 30 circles as possible. When done as a team, the group members compare the completed circles to see if there are any unifying principles or designs.

Related: [Non-Cognitive Skills: What They Are and Why They're Important](#) [↗](#)

3. Paper clip test

The paper clip test is a thinking exercise that is usually done with multiple people at a time. In this activity, groups receive a box of paper clips and find as many uses for them as possible, apart from holding papers. Groups then share their ideas with the rest of their coworkers. This innovation can lead

to an increased number of original ideas on work projects.

4. Musical ideas

Sometimes a change of background, like listening intentionally to music, can inspire new ideas. Go to a concert or play music in your office, and write down any ideas or thoughts that come to mind. Assess those ideas to see if you can apply any to your work challenges.

Related: [Creativity in the Workplace: Characteristics and Examples](#) 

5. Repurposed product

Use the objects on your desk, like staplers, folders, tape, pictures and paper, to create a new product. This activity is also great for groups. After each individual or team has finished repurposing a product, they can compare their creations for uniqueness, ingenuity and practicality. This exercise is especially helpful for developing brainstorming skills.

6. Dictionary story

Select a word at random from the dictionary. Use the word you chose, the word above it and the word below it to create a short story. Finding a way to create an interesting, cohesive story from seemingly random elements can improve your ability to make connections and combine ideas that don't necessarily relate.

Related: [How To Increase Creativity in the Workplace \(With Tips\)](#) 

7. Compound collaborative

Take a compound word and substitute one word for another. For example, the compound word sunflower could become moonflower. Use your new compound word to create a story or make a drawing. Finding connections between unrelated items can help you improve your critical thinking and process evaluation on the job.

8. Building blocks

Use building blocks to create models of houses, businesses or products. If you do this as a group, see who can make the most intricate, detailed or unique objects. Spatial awareness, which you develop during this activity, can improve your ability to come up with thoughtful designs for work projects of all types.

Related: [Creativity in the Workplace: 10 Attributes of Innovative Employees](#) 

9. Write poetry

Write a poem about your day in the style of your favorite poet or following the structure of a classic poem, like a sonnet or haiku. Writing with a clear structure in mind forces you to find the ideal word or phrase to fit the constraints, which can improve your overall writing ability.

10. Draw it again

Draw the same object, like a coffee mug, every day for a week or more. See what new details or nuances you notice as you examine the object every day. Extreme focus like this should improve your attention to detail and help you notice new elements in your work.

Related: [7 Creativity and Innovation Examples](#) 

11. Field trip

Go on a team field trip out of the office. Explore a local garden or walk around downtown to see what new ideas or concepts the group discovers through a change of scenery. Even the act of having a meeting in a new place can spark original ideas.

12. Read

Go to a bookstore or library and explore a section completely unrelated to your job or the books you normally read. Choose a book and read it to see what new knowledge you can glean. Learning about disciplines that are different from your own can introduce you to new ways of managing your work.

Related: [23 Project Ideas To Stimulate Your Creativity](#) 

13. Freewrite

Schedule a few minutes every morning to write in a stream of consciousness. This type of freewriting, where you write whatever comes to mind consistently without stopping, is a great way to discover some of your subconscious ideas, which could lead to innovative solutions to work challenges.

14. Storyboard

Storyboarding can be a particularly useful creative exercise for establishing new procedures or improving existing processes. Rather than writing out the steps of the procedure, draw each step in a series of small, rectangular boxes, like a comic strip. You might discover a useful new step in the process that you hadn't considered.

Related: [12 Easy Ways To Be More Creative Every Day](#) 

15. SCAMPER


SCAMPER is a great strategy to use when assessing an idea or new product. It's an acronym that stands for the following:

- **Substitute:** What can you trade from this idea for something else?
- **Combine:** What elements of this idea can you combine for efficiency?
- **Adapt:** How can you adapt this idea for a different market?
- **Modify:** What can you modify to improve functionality?
- **Put to another use:** What's another use for this idea?
- **Eliminate:** What is unnecessary?
- **Reverse:** What can you adjust to make this project better?

Use these steps to see how you could improve your idea or project, particularly if you're looking for ways to develop it further.

Related: [10 Ideation Techniques for Problem-Solving](#) 

16. Six thinking hats

[Six thinking hats](#)  is another strategy used to evaluate the optimization of a product or idea. In a group, an individual or small team "wears" one of the hats. When reviewing the idea in question, each "hat" maintains its assigned perspective:

- **Logic:** The logic hat represents the facts related to the product or idea.
- **Optimism:** The optimism hat represents the possibilities for the product or idea with no barriers.
- **Judgment:** The judgment hat addresses the challenges or problems with the product or idea by considering the opposite point of view.
- **Emotion:** The emotion hat represents the feelings or perceptions associated with the project or idea.
- **Creativity:** The creativity hat introduces new ideas or possibilities for the idea or product.
- **Management:** The management hat oversees the discussion and makes sure the team represents all perspectives.

17. Question assumptions

In a group, create a list of assumptions about the product or idea in question, both good and bad. Work through the list and consider how to alleviate any negative assumptions and capitalize on positive assumptions.

Related: [The Importance of Creativity in Business](#) 

18. New out of two

Take two separate products and find a way to combine them. For example, you could use two common office tools, like a stapler and a tape dispenser, to create an interesting new product. Design a marketing strategy and target market for the new product you have created.

Is this article helpful?

 Yes

 No

Explore your next job opportunity on Indeed

[Find jobs](#)

Explore more articles

[Top Job Casts of 2020](#)

[Program Management vs. Project Management: What's the Difference?](#)

[Defining the PMP Certification and How to Achieve It](#)

[A Guide To the Secure Software Development Life Cycle](#)

[How to Stay Positive at Work](#)

[FAQ: How To Calculate Turnover](#)

[How To Perform an LTV SaaS Calculation \(With Steps and Tips\)](#)

[Q&A: How To Be More Confident at Work](#)

[Leadership and Management: Understanding the Differences](#)

[Developing a Use Case: How to and Why It Is Important](#)

[What Is White Label Marketing and How Does It Work?](#)

[Data Cleaning: Definition, Importance and How To Do It](#)

© 2022 Indeed

6433 Champion Grandview Way Building 1, Austin, TX 78750

[Cookies](#)

—

[Privacy](#)

—

[Security](#)

—

[Terms](#)

—

[Accessibility at Indeed](#)

—

[Privacy Center](#)

—

[Contact us](#)

—

[Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)