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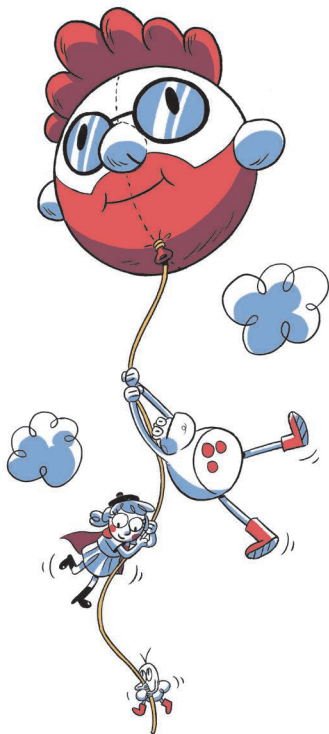
For more information, please write to:

Chxrles Ltd,
3 Torquay Grove,
Stockport, SK2 7BB

E-mail: support@pipdecks.com

Website: pipdecks.com | Twitter: [@pipdecks](https://twitter.com/pipdecks) | Instagram: [PipDecksHQ](https://www.instagram.com/PipDecksHQ)

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Idea Tactics®

Volume I

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How to use Idea Tactics

Idea Tactics helps you consistently find great ideas by moving through six creative phases (as listed on the *Idea Strategy System* card). The instructions are written for groups, but you can use many cards solo too. If you're not sure how to get started, visit the Pip Decks community for advice: pipdecks.com/community.

Two ways to get started:

1. Consult the *Idea Strategy System* card to determine where to begin, then pick any card from the recommended category. Read the front of the card first, then follow the instructions on the back.
2. Pick a  *Recipe* card that fits with your current focus.

Three things to remember:

- **Preparation pays off**

The  *Cheatsheet* cards will help you prepare magical sessions and facilitate them well.

- **Atmosphere is everything**

When you're ready to get creative, use a  *Prime* card to help set the right mood. These cards also work well as mid-session energisers.

- **Make up your own rules**

This toolkit is yours to remix. Follow the process when it suits you, but never be afraid to rearrange and adapt it as you see fit.

Idea Strategy System

Is your creative challenge
crystal clear?

No →



Frame

Yes



Have you thought-provoking
material ready to inspire you?

No →



Explore

Yes



Do you already have some ideas?

No →



Diverge

Yes



Do any of them excite or
surprise you?

No →



Stretch

Yes



Have you described your most
interesting ideas in detail?

No →



Refine

Yes



Do you know
what to prioritise?

No →



Review

Yes



*Make something real
and get feedback*



Prime

Ready your body and mind to make creative leaps.



Frame

Describe your challenge and draw the boundaries of your creative playground.



Explore

See existing insights with fresh, bright, wide-open eyes, and create artefacts to inspire ideas.



Diverge

Go wide – approach your challenge from different angles and generate lots of potential directions.



Stretch

Push your ideas further without losing sight of what matters.



Refine

Add detail and depth to your strongest ideas.



Review

Get meaningful feedback, identify the most compelling elements of your ideas, and decide which ideas to pursue.



Cheatsheet

Get more out of your creative process with mindful planning, preparation and facilitation.



Push It

Uncover ideas for improving something that already exists.

Innovation doesn't always mean doing something completely new – incremental improvements to existing content, products and services can have a big impact too. If you've already seen some positive interaction with v.1 of your idea, you can use this recipe to explore how to upgrade it.

First, clear your mind with  **Zen Spiral** and use  **Perform the Problem** to bring the current situation to life.

Push It

1. 🧠 Mind Map

Map the different elements of the thing you want to improve.



2. 🎲 Crazy Eights

Explore some options for how you might improve it.



3. 🌟 Invest Your PipCoins

Decide which ideas might offer a big reward at a level of risk you can stomach.



4. 🚀 Peak-End Rule

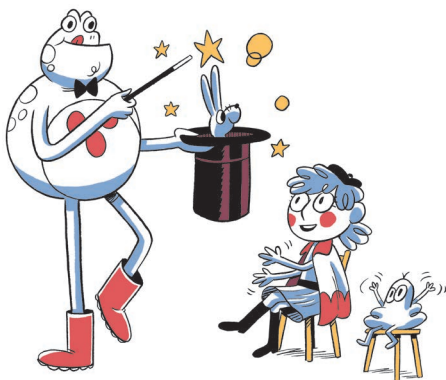
Identify and elevate key moments in your most exciting idea.



5. 🔁 Back and Forth

Get clear on all the key steps in your upgraded idea.





What Next?

Stock your collective brain-bank with compelling new ideas.

Many teams feel like their work is dictated from above. But with a well-stocked vault of near-term opportunities, you'll find it easier to take control. Regularly running this session will also help you build cognitive flexibility, making it easier to adapt to unforeseen events in future.

First, open your mind to new possibilities with  ***Invent an Animal*** and use  ***How Might We?*** to frame an opportunity.

What Next?

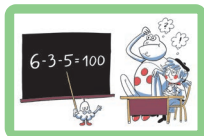
1. 🎭 Make a Meme

Communicate your opportunity in a way that feels stupidly simple yet profoundly true.



2. 🌱 6-3-5

Generate loads of possible creative directions in a flash. Rule nothing out.



3. 🌱 Crazy Eights

Explore a smaller set of ideas more thoughtfully, but continue reserving judgement.



4. 🌟 Yes, and...

Push your ideas further.



5. 🔗 T-Bar

Refine and communicate any ideas that feel practical enough to begin prototyping tomorrow.



6. 🌟 PrioriTree

Distil the essence of your strongest ideas and decide what to try first.





Fantasies of the Future

Explore ideas for long-term change and unknown futures.

The future is always uncertain, and that can freak us out. But by embracing novelty whilst remembering unchanging truths, you can begin manifesting a world worth getting excited about.

First, invite in some weirdness with  *Dream Sketch* and then anchor your thinking with  *Who, What, Where, Why*.

Fantasies of the Future

1. 🎲 **Combinaboard**

Visualise important problems worth solving or intriguing trends worth pondering.



2. 🌱 **Mash-Up**

Find novel connections to fuel fresh ideas.



3. 🌟 **Human Truths**

Reflect on what doesn't change to give your ideas a timeless quality.



4. 🔗 **T-Bar**

Capture ideas based on the most interesting things you noticed during steps 2 and 3.



5. 🔗 **Big Beats**

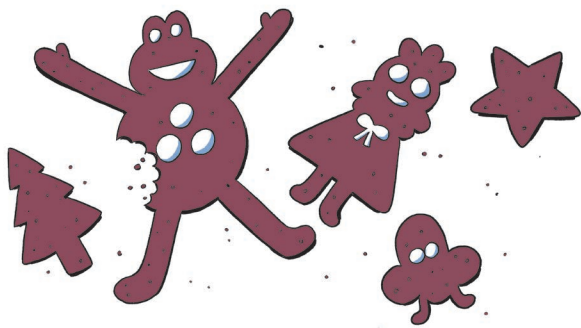
Tell a story that foregrounds your idea in a dynamic, desirable future world.



6. ★ **Like, Wish, Wonder**

Share your ideas with others and get them invested in the future you've imagined.





Get to Fully-Baked

Turn a half-cooked idea into something ready to test for real.

Do you have an idea that feels like it has potential, but needs more thought? Perhaps it feels too vague to share with others? This session will help you devise something more clear and considered.

First, describe the idea as it stands using  *T-Bar*, then warm-up with a  *Haiku*.

Get to Fully-Baked

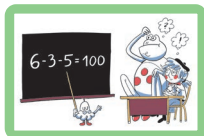
1. Fence the Playground

Set some deliberate constraints to make developing your idea easier.



2. 6-3-5

Use this method to come up with 100 possible names for your idea.



3. Storyboard

Sketch the key moments of your idea in 6 steps.



4. Yes, and...

Push the best elements further.



5. Concerns, Confusions, Conflicts

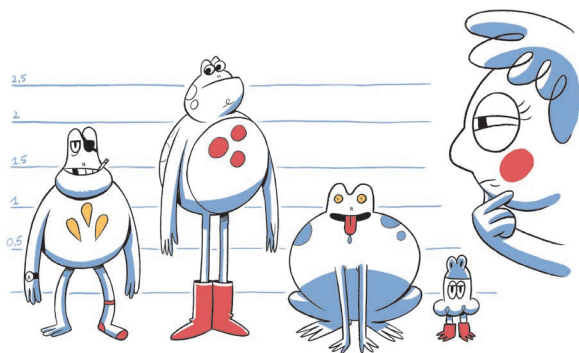
Stress-test your thinking and tighten up your idea.



6. T-Bar

Capture your idea in a format anyone can grasp.





Be Distinctive

Find distinctive, memorable ideas to help you stand out.

This session helps you identify obvious or conventional approaches, so you can leave them behind and come up with something extraordinary.

First, use  **Mind-Body Dissonance** to break habitual patterns, then use  **Normstorming** to identify orthodoxies you can challenge.

Be Distinctive

1. 🌱 Worst Idea Race

Aim for utterly ridiculous ideas.



2. 🌟 Yes, and...

Discover more possibilities by building on your ideas.



3. 🔗 T-Bar

Describe one or more promising ideas in detail.



4. 🌟 Analogous Inspiration

Look outside your bubble for a better chance of standing out.



5. 🌱 Lotus Blossoms

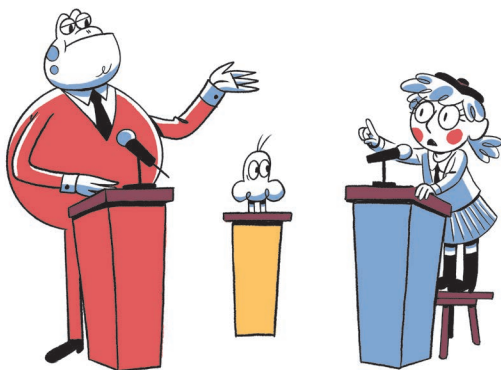
Explore fresh ideas based on new things you've observed.



6. 🌟 SICFAM

Rank ideas to find the gold.





Debate Club

Discover stronger ideas by challenging each other.

Vigorous, honest debate has its place in a healthy creative process. This recipe is for teams that already have a strong sense of shared purpose and trust.

First, frame your challenge with  *How Might We?* and use  *Thunks* to move beyond notions of a single “correct” solution.

Debate Club

1. 🏆 Fame vs Shame

Encourage subjective judgements and good-natured debate.



2. 🎲 Crazy Eights

Generate lots of ideas. Pick one to take forward using 🌟 *Invest Your PipCoins*.

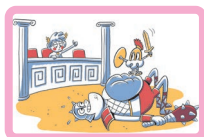


3. Whichtopia

Two groups; one focus on positives with 🌟 *Like, Wish, Wonder*, one look for problems with 🌟 *Concerns, Confusions, Conflicts*. Then debate your idea.

4. 🔄 Like/Not Like

Refine your idea through comparison.



5. 🌟 ProvocaPrompts

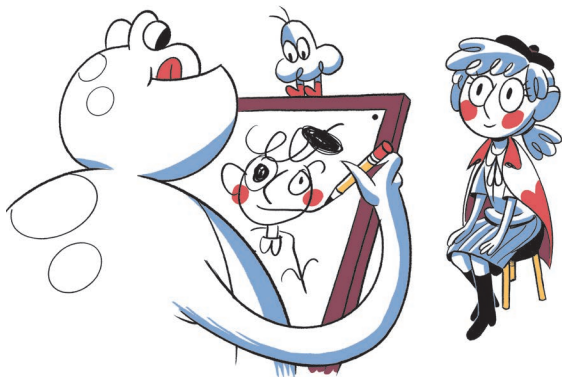
Confront questions like “why should anyone care?” before you get too comfortable.



6. 🌟 Angels and Demons

Have a vigorous dialogue about the forces that might cause failure or success.





Imperfect Portraits

Loosen people up by getting them to draw each other.

Using a time limit for this will force people to let go of perfectionism, and the slightly awkward intimacy will help forge closer bonds. It's weirder with people who haven't met each other before, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't do it anyway.

You can use this as a warm-up early in a session, or as an energiser after a break.

Imperfect Portraits

1. Make sure everyone has a pen and paper, then split your group into pairs.
2. Set a timer for 1 minute, and get each person to draw a quick portrait of their partner. Remind them not to take this too seriously.
3. When time's up, get everyone to reveal their portraits to their partner and the wider group.

Things to bear in mind:

- Some (if not all) of the portraits might not be flattering, but that's OK.
- What's important is that everyone's had a chance to connect, and to create something that gets an emotional response.
- How polished or grotesque the portraits turn out to be is really beside the point.
- If you run this activity online, people will need to be on camera.



Mood Check-In

Embrace emotions and practise listening to each other with attention and empathy.

Research has shown links between emotional awareness and creativity. The simple act of checking in can help people build this muscle.

Encourage people to express their moods using GIFs, memes, and other offbeat imagery.

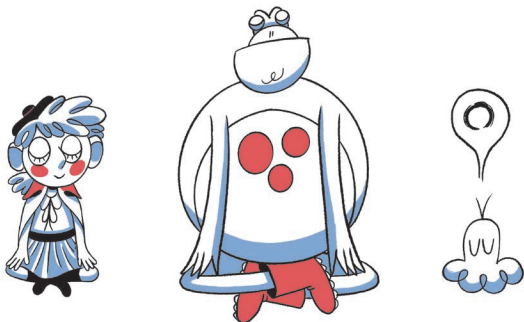
You can use this as a warm-up early in a session, as an energiser after a break, or as a check-out activity.

Mood Check-In

Tip: this is a group activity that works best online, but can also be done using digital devices in person.

1. Tell everyone to take a few slow breaths, and tune into how they're feeling right now – both in their heads, and in their bodies.
2. Invite everyone to spend 3 minutes finding a GIF, meme, or other image online that does a good job of expressing their current mood.
 - Make it clear that you don't expect anyone to fake positivity. It's OK to feel a bit low, or a bit stressed, or even a bit guilty about attending a creative workshop when you have other jobs to get done.
 - Even if someone's not feeling great, is there a playful way they can express their less than pleasant mood?
 - Remind people that both positive and negative feelings can be used as creative fuel.
3. Ask everyone to display their image and give each person up to 30 seconds to elaborate.

Tip: as facilitator, pay attention to what everyone shares. What people reveal in this exercise can help you run the rest of the session more sensitively, and more effectively.



Zen Spiral

Calm your mind and make sketching seem less scary.

Simple, soothing, and no screens needed. This is a great tactic to use when work's been a bit too hectic.

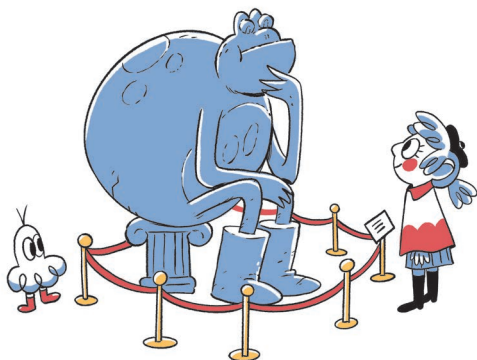
It's true that we often have our best ideas in the shower. When that's not an option, this is a great way to light up the brain's default mode network, which plays a key role in imagination and spontaneous thinking.

You can use this as a warm-up early in a session, or as an energiser after a break.

Zen Spiral

1. Make sure everyone has a pen and paper. Explain the task: starting in the middle of the page, draw a spiral without ever removing pen from paper.
2. Set a 2 minute timer – people should aim to continue drawing for the whole time.
3. Get everyone to display their spirals for the rest of the group.

Tip: encourage people to use their bodies in other novel and mindful ways during breaks; balancing, stretching or dancing, for example.



Thunks

Promote opinionated but flexible thinking using questions with more than one possible response – questions that make your brain go “ouch!”.

Thunks liberate us from the delusion that there’s always a right or wrong answer (or idea).

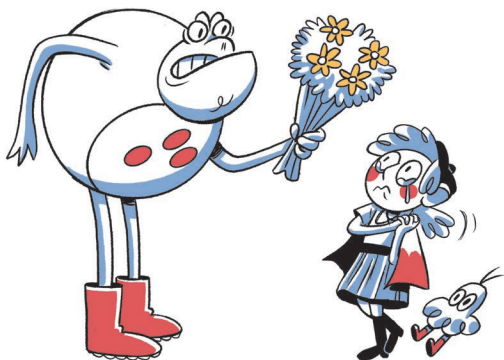
You can use this as a warm-up early in a session, or as an energiser after a break.

Thunks

1. Pick a Think to discuss with the group. Here are some examples:
 - If I compose a song but never play it, is it music?
 - Can you touch the wind?
 - Is it ever possible to define the meaning of “cool”?
 - Are you the same person you were 20 minutes ago?
 - Would life be better if you could never fail?
 - Is your shadow part of you?
 - Can you choose to like a piece of art?
 - Would life be better without mobile phones?
 - Is there more happiness or sadness in the world?
 - If you expect the unexpected, is the unexpected still a surprise?

Tip: you can easily find more Thunks online.

2. Find someone willing to argue the “yes” answer and someone willing to make the case for “no”, then chair a 5-minute debate.
3. Ask if anyone has any strong opinions to add – allow a minute or so for this.
4. Take a vote to see which position the group found more persuasive.
5. Remind everyone that there’s probably not one “correct” way to respond to our creative challenge, and that the task for this session is to unlock new ways of thinking.



Mind-Body Dissonance

Get everyone energised and ready to embrace uncommon ideas by playing with facial expressions.

This activity gets everyone focussed, present, and productively befuddled. As a bonus, it's also a good opportunity to learn more about each other.

You can use this as a warm-up early in a session, or as an energiser after a break.

Mind-Body Dissonance

1. Give everyone a choice: they can either share a happy memory whilst looking sad, angry, or disgusted, or share a negative memory whilst wearing their most blissful smile.
2. Give each person no more than 30 seconds to share.
3. If anyone begins smiling mid-way through their own happy anecdotes, or looking angry whilst talking about what annoys them, politely cut them off – they didn't manage to stick to the rules.
4. Once everyone has finished, ask what people think the point of that activity was. You may like to let them know it was based on serious psychological research conducted in 2010, which found that Mind-Body Dissonance helps us think more expansively.

When people's expressions contradict their mental states, that incoherence snaps us out of habitual thought patterns.

5. Encourage everyone to be open to any surprising ideas that emerge during the rest of the session.

Twist: for a simple twist on this activity, you can set a “no smiling” rule during a regular round of introductions – this will go against (most) people's instincts and achieve a similar effect.



Haiku

**The room is ready
But our minds feel kinda dull
We sharpen with words**

Use Haikus to encourage calmness, focus, and creativity. A Haiku is a type of short poem, originally from Japan. The number of syllables on each line is all you need to remember: 5-7-5.

Haikus work beautifully as a warm-up or energiser – they give everyone a chance to pause, become present, and engage their creative mind in a safe, simple, structured way.

Haiku

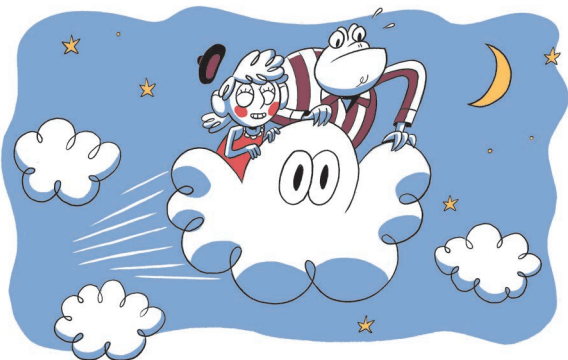
1. Share an example Haiku with the group – either find one you like, write one yourself, or use ‘The Old Pond’ by 17th century master Matsuo Bashō:

An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond
Splash! Silence again

Make sure everyone understands the basic Haiku structure before you continue:

First line: 5 syllables
Second line: 7 syllables
Third line: 5 syllables

2. Give everyone 3 minutes to write their own Haiku.
There are a few ways you can frame this, such as:
 - Write a Haiku about expectations for this session
 - Write a Haiku about what creativity means to you
 - Write a Haiku about the problem/customer/ experience
3. Ask everyone to display their Haikus and let people read them in silence.
4. Explain that we’ve just seen the power of creative constraints in action, and consider following up with  ***Fence the Playground.***



Dream Sketch

Go from zero to weird by drawing dreams.

When we reveal something hidden about ourselves, our connections with others become stronger. When we connect with our subconscious, our creative powers multiply. This exercise magically accomplishes both of these things at once.

“Nobody ever arrives at a very big idea through a conscious, rational thought process. It comes from your unconscious.” – David Ogilvy

Dream Sketch

1. Ask people to recall a recent image or sequence from one of their dreams, then give them 3 minutes to sketch this with as much or as little finesse as their drawing ability allows.

Not everyone remembers their dreams, so give people the option of taking a real memory, and changing or adding something to make it more surreal.

2. Give each person 1 minute to explain what they've drawn. Remind everyone that you're not here to interpret whatever oddness you encounter (but people are welcome to form theories for themselves).
3. Thank everyone for letting you briefly crawl inside their brains, and encourage them not to censor any unusual ideas that bubble up as the session continues.



Draw Your Job

Get people to sketch a picture that describes their job, or their role on a particular project.

Build understanding and trust essential for creative collaboration:

- Give people a chance to practise sketching
- Help team members empathise with each other
- Encourage them to reflect on their role and why they're involved in this process

Use this exercise as a creative warm-up, or instead of a more conventional round of introductions. It's especially valuable for people that don't normally work together.

Draw Your Job

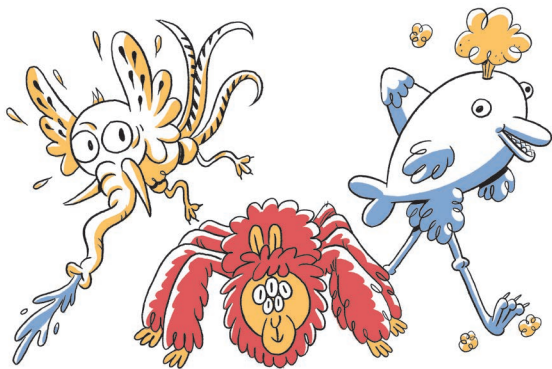
1. Make sure everyone has a pen and paper, then give them 3 minutes to each draw a picture that encapsulates how they see their job.
2. Get everyone to display their pictures so the rest of the group can see them, then give each person 1 minute to explain what they've drawn.

Things to bear in mind:

Pay attention to which details people choose to emphasise. It might all be rosy, but maybe they've highlighted skills they don't usually get to use as much as they'd like? Are there any elements of their role that seem to be stressing them out?

You're not here to fix those things, but it might be the first time they've been recognised or vocalised, so take care as the facilitator to acknowledge what you hear with an attitude of warmth and acceptance. This will help people feel at ease, and set the right tone for the rest of the workshop. As a follow-up, consider asking the group if they learned anything new about each other (or, indeed, about themselves).

It's often said that the best workshops feel like therapy, and this activity is no exception. On the other hand, you could have a very literal-minded group whose pictures reveal nothing much about their unspoken ambitions or inner conflicts, and that's perfectly fine too.



Invent an Animal

Connect with your imagination – create a new animal and give it a name.

The possibilities for strange new creature concepts are endless. This is an opportunity for wordplay, weirdness, and unlikely combinations. Let your inner child run wild.

Use this method when your end goal is to create something distinctive and original.

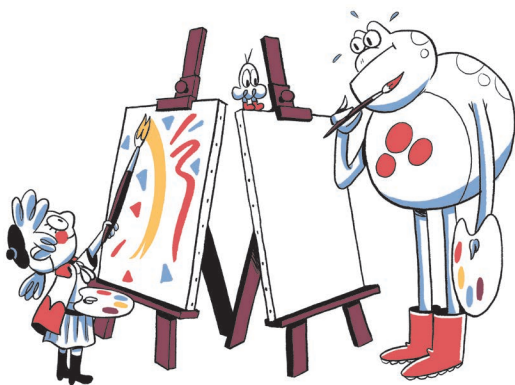
Invent an Animal

1. Make sure everyone has a pen and paper, then give them 5 minutes to each invent their own animal (ask for a simple sketch, and a name for their strange new creation).
2. Get everyone to display their pictures so the rest of the group can see them, then give the group a minute to take it all in.

Expect a mix of laughter and “what the...?”

Tip: combining or modifying existing animals from the real world is the natural approach to this task for most people.

Occasionally someone will invent a truly new creature that feels like an act of pure imagination. Savour those moments, and find more chances to collaborate with those people.



Fence the Playground

Foster freedom by setting some rules.

Creativity is all about exploring new possibilities, but a blank canvas can paralyse you. Deliberately introducing some rules actually gives you more freedom, liberating you to push your thinking further without getting lost in the woods.

Along with constraints, you need a clear creative challenge.  **How Might We?** is the simplest and most versatile method for framing it.

Fence the Playground

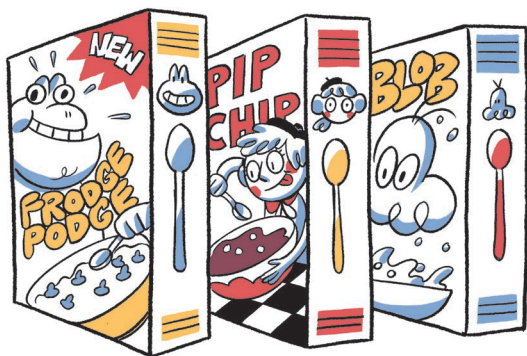
1. Briefly explain the concept of constraints:

- **Content constraint:** *“we won’t use facts or data to persuade people”.*
- **Audience constraint:** *“this idea is exclusively for [cosiness connoisseurs]”.*
- **Format constraint:** *“you’re making a quiz”.*

These are just example categories. A constraint is simply any rule you decide to follow when developing and launching your idea.

2. Ask participants to list as many helpful constraints as they can think of in 5 minutes.
3. Use  ***Invest Your PipCoins*** to identify the constraint that’s most likely to keep ideas on-track.
4. Check that everyone understands the prioritised constraint, and remind them that this will guide ideas for the rest of the session.

If you can make the constraint even clearer (by polishing the language or making it even more specific), that’s always helpful.



Normstorming

Pinpoint stale clichés so you can avoid doing the same thing as everyone else.

Every product, audience, and market has its own set of norms. Some of these are useful (they might help customers know what to expect), but often they become unquestioned orthodoxies.

“Orthodoxy is not thinking, not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.” – George Orwell

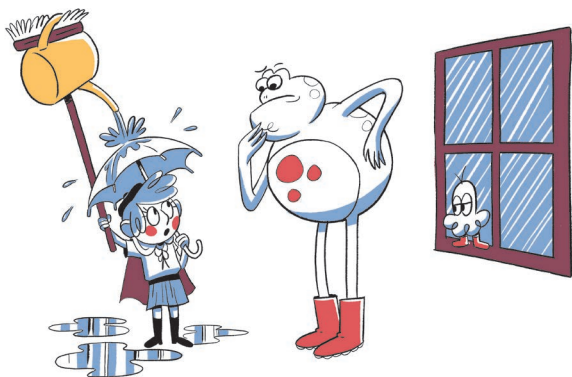
This is a great way to begin reflecting on the norms in your space, and to introduce the concept of unconscious orthodoxies to your team.

Normstorming

1. Before your group session, gather 5–10 examples of content, products or services that address the same (functional or emotional) need as your own. Share these with everyone, and ask them to list as many commonalities as they can.

Tip: websites or apps are a good starting point, but analysing advertising and other communications will give you a more complete picture of what's going on. Norms observed could be anything from language used, visual styling, or where people advertise, for example.

2. When you come back together, ask each person to talk for 5 minutes about what they discovered. The other members of the group should note down anything that surprises them.
3. Spend 10 minutes listing and discussing the observations as a group, under these headings:
 - Did any norms feel like they shouldn't be challenged? Why?
 - Were any competitors already breaking conventions? How?
 - What do we now know about our own space that we hadn't articulated before?
4. Ask everyone to individually produce a  **T-Bar** that summarises a single orthodoxy that you could let go of (or rebel against) in order to unlock new creative options.



Perform the Problem

Act out a problem to help people understand it and make it feel real.

It's amazing when you find just the right words to describe a problem, or successfully sketch something that makes it easier to understand. But sometimes human interaction is the best way to make it real (and memorable). Both performers and observers will get a deeper sense of what's going on.

Try  **Mind-Body Dissonance** first to get warmed up.

Perform the Problem

Tip: this activity works best in person, and with participants who know and trust each other.

1. Divide your group into teams of three. Hand each team a piece of paper and ask them to write down the most important problem they're trying to solve, and 1–3 questions they need to answer to get the solution right.
2. Give each team 10 minutes to plan a short (1–2 minute) scene that demonstrates the problem, making use of any available props.
3. Have each team perform their scene to the rest of the group. After each performance, ask the audience what problem they think they've just observed, before sticking up the performers' problem/questions sheet and comparing.
4. With a new perspective on one or more problems, use 🍄 *Crazy Eights* or 🍄 *Lotus Blossoms* to explore what activities you might do to answer the questions that have surfaced.

Optional: do a quick checkout to see how people found this activity – ask them to pick one word that sums up how it felt, and rate how eager they are to try it again on a scale of 1–10 (1 = that was excruciating, no thanks; 10 = that was enlightening, yes please).



Who, What, Where, Why

Summarise existing knowledge before you start coming up with ideas.

This method is also useful for highlighting any gaps in your understanding of the problem space, giving you clear questions to answer or assumptions to test.

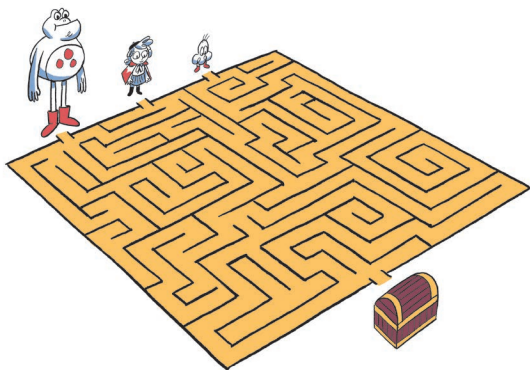
You'll find this exercise easier if you've already spent time learning about your audience, but even without research to draw on it will help your team understand what's important for them to consider.

Who, What, Where, Why

1. Before starting this exercise, define your problem or creative challenge using  *Perform the Problem* or  *How Might We?*
2. Present the problem/challenge to your group and explain that we'll be exploring it along four dimensions. Give everyone 10 minutes to list what they know (or assumptions to test) under the following headings:
 - Who is affected by the problem?
 - What is the underlying user need?
 - Where does this problem happen?
 - Why does this problem happen? Why is it worth solving?
3. Look for themes or overlaps across people's responses, and cluster them accordingly.
4. Ask each participant to explain their answers, and what (if any) evidence they're based on.

If any themes seem important, but lack evidence, it may be worth spending some more time on research before you dive into ideas. Alternatively, make a prototype to learn whether your assumptions hold up.

Optional: if there are conflicting interpretations of the problem, or competing priorities that emerge, use  *Invest Your PipCoins* to decide where to focus your creative efforts.



How Might We?

Craft a question that gives you the freedom to explore many solutions.

Inputs could include:

- Existing research
- Lessons you learned from testing other ideas
- An opportunity you feel passionate about

You can follow-up this tactic with  ***Fence the Playground*** to create extra focus.

How Might We?

1. Make sure you've gathered any research or important information that will help people come up with relevant How Might We? (HMW) questions.

Tip: think about the best way to share that information with the wider group. Will someone talk them through it? Maybe they'll be given time to silently read? Could you turn your insights into a quiz?

2. Quickly explain the concept of HMW. Show people one or two examples. For Idea Tactics, early HMWs could have been "How might we help people overcome creative block?" or "How might we banish bad brainstorm?"

Tip: they should be open ended, but also narrow enough to be of practical use. So "How might we do something creative?" wouldn't cut it.

3. Ask people to individually write down as many HMW questions as they can on sticky notes – either during the presentation of information, or after having a chance to digest.
4. Invite people to quickly talk through their HMWs, and group them into any obvious themes that emerge.
5. Use 🌟 **Invest Your PipCoins** to decide which question feels like the most interesting or high-value creative opportunity.



Mind Map

Visualise your idea-space and draw connections between different pieces.

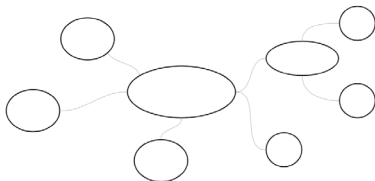
Mind Maps are one of our most powerful and flexible tools for thinking. They became popular in the 1970s, but they're actually much older than that – a chap called Porphyry of Tyros was busy visualising the concept categories of Aristotle using this technique way back in the 3rd century.

 **Human Truths** is a great companion to this card if you're feeling stuck.

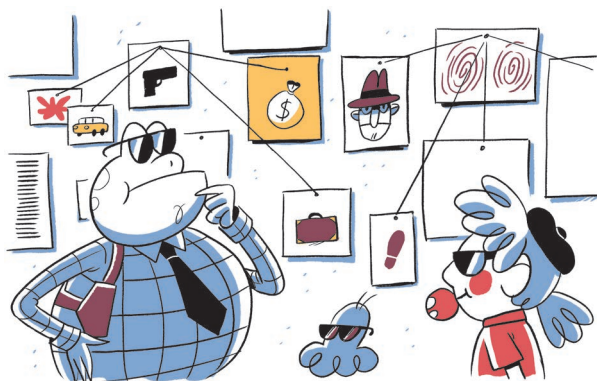
Mind Map

Use Mind Maps to organise your ideas, or stimulate new ones; to create a shared model for group discussion, or make sense of information on your own. As a general process, follow the steps below:

1. Make any relevant research or inputs (such as those gathered in  **Normstorming** or  **Who, What, Where, Why**) visible for your team, and briefly talk through anything that needs further explanation.
2. Give participants 5 minutes to re-examine and absorb the information.
3. Give people a starter word or phrase. Ask them to write it in the middle of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
4. Spend 5 minutes adding more words/phrases to the map, using lines to connect them:



Tip: make sure everyone knows there are no right or wrong ways to do this. The thinking they do is more important than the artefact they produce.



Combinaboard

Collect inspiration in rough-and-ready moodboard format to help you make novel connections later on.

This is a tool for gathering thought-provoking prompts and juxtaposing them in unusual ways to make creative thinking easier. You can either prepare a Combinaboard yourself as a stimulus for a group workshop, or you can get people to create their own to explore any landscape.

Frame your challenge first with  **How Might We?** Afterwards, try a  **Diverge** tactic like  **What Would X Do?**

Combinaboards

1. Explain this is a visual activity – the aim is to make a moodboard (a digital or paper collage) to inspire new ideas. This can be as neat or as scrappy as you like.
2. Give everyone 45 minutes to do some online exploration, using image search, social media, and any other tools they choose.

The goal is to gather references that relate to your challenge in oblique ways – for example, if you're looking to redesign the onboarding experience in your app, you might search for images of other “entry” or “welcome” experiences (like the queue at a Berlin nightclub, or an email offering someone a job). You can mix these with thought-provoking references that have no real connection to your challenge at all – go on, live a little!

3. Give everyone 15 minutes to arrange what they've found into a rough moodboard.
4. Take 5 minutes to digest and review everything as a group, using a tactic like  *Like, Wish, Wonder* to zero in on whatever seems most inspiring.

You now have some rich and unexpected creative stimulus for the  *Diverge* phase of your ideation.



Make a Meme

Customise or invent a meme to make your context easier to grasp.

Memes are often ugly, absurd, and at times incomprehensible. But they're also an efficient way to simplify and share complex ideas. You can use memes to spread understanding of something fast, and as a springboard for ideas.

Frame your challenge first with  **How Might We?** Afterwards, try a  **Diverge** tactic like  **What Would X Do?**

Make a Meme

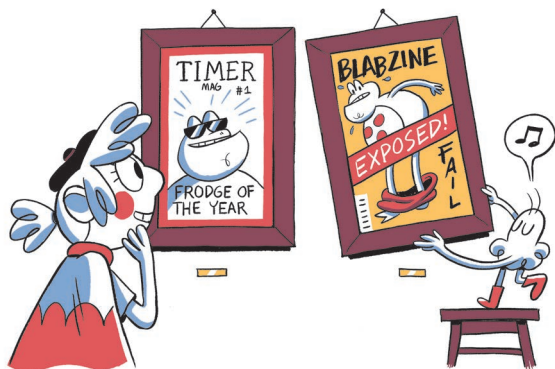
1. Find a tool you like first by searching “meme generator” online.
2. Give everyone 10 minutes to explore memes online (either current, or nostalgic).
4. Explain that the aim is to capture the essence of your challenge or idea in the simplest/most shareable way. This could be done from the user’s perspective, or from the team’s point of view.

Give people another 5 minutes to create a meme using your chosen meme generator tool.

4. Ask everyone to display their memes where the whole group can see them.
5. Pay attention to any that generate lots of laughter – there’s probably a deep truth distilled there.

You’re now ready to move into the 🌱 *Diverge* phase with a firmer grip on your creative challenge.

Twist: don’t use a pre-made meme tool. Instead, invent brand new meme templates from scratch.



Fame vs Shame

Gather innovation examples and analyse what makes them strong or weak.

It's always nice to be inspired by brilliant design and creativity happening elsewhere, but sometimes exploring how other people have messed up is even more valuable.

Frame your challenge first with  **How Might We?** Afterwards, try a  **Diverge** tactic like  **What Would X Do?**

Fame vs Shame

1. In preparation for this session, ask everyone to find one example of “good” innovation that solves a similar problem to the one you’re focussing on, and one example of “bad” innovation in your space.

These could be content, products or services that launched a while ago (so their success or failure might be obvious), or new ideas that have only just entered the market (so you’ll need to speculate about how they’ll perform).

2. When you get together, display these examples on a wall of fame/shame.



Spend 10 minutes discussing the examples on each side of the wall (20 minutes in total). For references on the fame side, you can prompt people to suggest what might make the idea even stronger. For references on the shame side, you can prompt people to find hidden potential: “We know its flaws, but what may be good or promising about this idea?” Keep asking “what else?” if responses dry up.



Observe/Infer

Engage more deeply with research by separating observation and interpretation.

Help teams recognise their own biases and premature conclusions, whilst also helping you reflect on what's going on beneath the surface of your research.

Frame your challenge first with  **How Might We?** Afterwards, try a  **Diverge** tactic like  **What Would X Do?**

Observe/Infer

Start here if your team hasn't done this before:

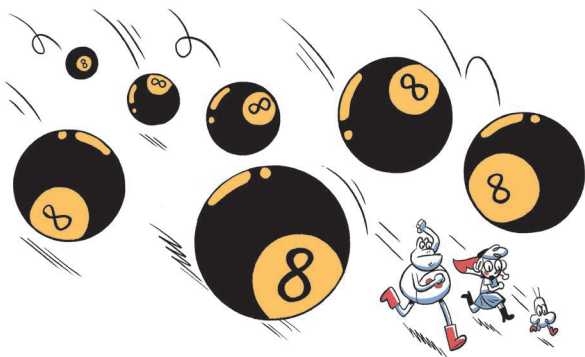
1. Have participants take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On the left hand side of the line, ask participants to title it “what I see” then on the right hand side, “what I think this means”.
2. Pick someone from the group to be your performer. Give them these instructions, either via DM or whispered if you're doing this in person:

“Go back to the group, sit in a chair, place your arms at 90 degrees, and round the hands slightly and move your fingers up and down irregularly.”
3. Have your volunteer perform as instructed for 10 seconds or so, either on-camera or at the front of the room. Ask everyone else to write what they see on the left of their paper, and what they think it means on the right.
4. Applaud your volunteer, then ask participants to first share only what they saw.

If people say things like “piano playing” or “typing”, ask if that’s actually what they saw. If these answers haven’t come up, you can then ask “what did you think it meant?” Everyone should now be clear on the difference between observation and inference.

Start here if your team's familiar with this tactic:

5. Ask everyone to react to an existing piece of research using the same headings as above. Encourage weird explanations under the second heading.



Crazy Eights

Quickly capture eight ideas or options in response to any question.

This tactic isn't only for when you're in playful invention mode; you can also use it when you need to answer practical questions like, "what problem do we need to solve?" or "what should our next steps be?"

Make sure you  *Frame* your challenge first. For best results,  *Prime* and  *Explore* before you try this tactic.

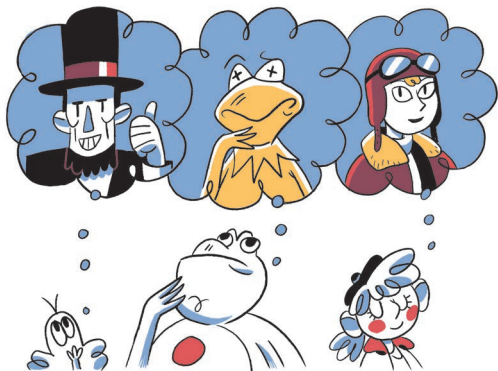
Crazy Eights

1. Get everyone to fold a piece of paper in half three times, then open it out again so there are eight rectangles to sketch in.
2. Explain that you're not expecting "correct" ideas. They don't even have to be all that "crazy". The aim of the game is simply to fill in all eight boxes with eight different ideas.

For people that aren't comfortable sketching, a tactic like 🌟 **Dream Sketch** will help. But you're not looking for pretty drawings – rough and messy is fine.

3. Set a timer for 15 minutes (that gives people a little under 2 minutes per idea).
4. When half the time has passed, let people know they should be getting to their final four ideas. Remind them not to worry too much about tiny details, and offer some encouragement if anyone seems to be struggling ("hey, last time I did this I only managed six ideas – just do your best!").
5. When time's up, give everyone 1–2 minutes to share their ideas with the group.

As a follow-up, do another round of 🌱 **Crazy Eights** to allow people to combine and remix each other's ideas, or you can vote on ideas to refine using a tactic like 🌟 **Invest Your PipCoins**.



What Would X Do?

Imagine how famous figures, fictional characters, or iconic brands might respond to your creative challenge.

By asking questions like “what would Banksy do?”, “what would Lisa Simpson do?” or “what would Rolex do?”, you can uncover new creative paths.

Make sure you  *Frame* your challenge first. For best results,

 *Prime* and  *Explore* before you try this tactic.

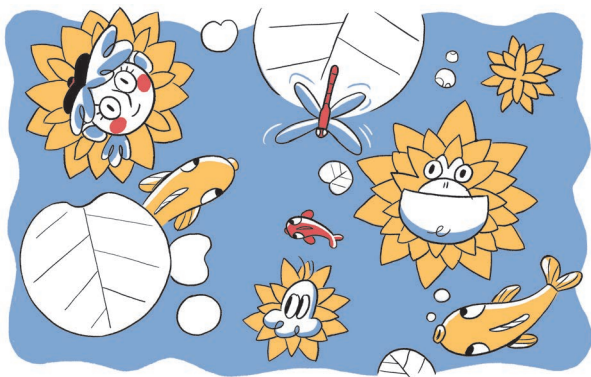
What Would X Do?

1. Assign each participant a person, character, or brand to embody. Pick figures or archetypes that are extreme in some way. If you prefer, you can divide your group into small teams of two or three for this task.
2. Set a timer for 3 minutes and get each individual or team to explore what they know about X using 🧠 *Mind Maps*. These don't need to be shared or discussed.
3. Now they've reflected on what makes their persona tick, it's time to imagine how they'd approach the challenge at hand.

Set a timer for 5 minutes and get each individual/team to write down as many ideas as they can on sticky notes – what would X do if we gave them this brief?

Remind everyone that you're looking for quantity here rather than ready-to-use ideas.

4. Have each individual/team spend 1 minute talking through their ideas.
5. Invite everyone to draw a star on any ideas that hint at a real opportunity (max three stars per person).
6. Use a tactic like 🚀 *Crazy Eights* to explore potential executions or adaptations of the starred ideas before you move into the 🔄 *Refine* phase.



Lotus Blossoms

Rapidly generate and evolve ideas over 3 rounds.

Fun fact: the Japanese variety of the lotus plant called Ohmi Myoren (“strange lotus”) can have between 2,000 and 5,000 petals. You won’t have 5,000 ideas by the end of this exercise, but you might be surprised where it takes you.

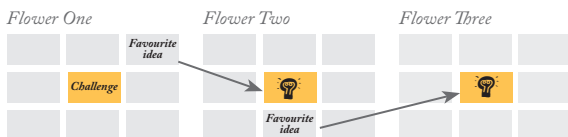
Make sure you  *Frame* your challenge first. For best results,  *Prime* and  *Explore* before you try this tactic.

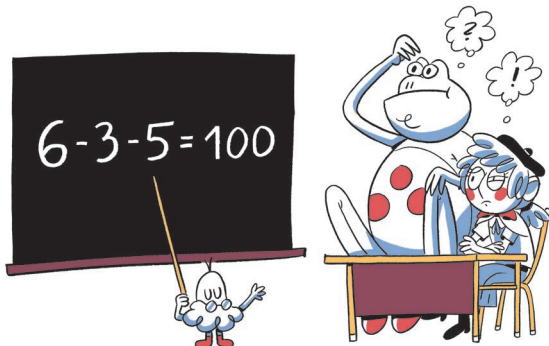
Lotus Blossoms

1. Each person will need three “blossom” blocks, each containing nine squares. This can be done by folding three sheets of paper, or using sticky notes.
2. Ask everyone to write the agreed creative challenge in the centre of the first flower, then give them 5 minutes to fill the eight empty squares with ideas – just short phrases or headlines for now.
3. Invite everyone to pick their favourite idea from round 1 and place it in the centre of their second flower. Then take 5 minutes to add builds or twists on that idea in all eight empty squares.

Before the final round, consider using  *Yes, and...* to maximise cross-pollination across your group.

4. Allow 5 more minutes for round three. Again, the strongest idea from the previous round moves to the centre, and this is adapted or used as inspiration for more possibilities.
5. Follow up with a  *Refine* activity like  *T-Bar*.





6-3-5

Get to over 100 ideas in 30 minutes.

When you want lots of ideas, this is the most ruthlessly efficient tool there is. Also known as “brainwriting”, this method provides a structure for rapidly capturing ideas, and gets people iterating on each other’s ideas without letting louder individuals dominate.

Make sure you  *Frame* your challenge first. For best results,

 *Prime* and  *Explore* before you try this tactic.

6-3-5

- 6 people
- 3 ideas each per round
- 5 minutes per round

1. Give each person a sheet with three columns and six rows.

	<i>Idea 1</i>	<i>Idea 2</i>	<i>Idea 3</i>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

2. Give everyone 5 minutes to fill in only their first row, with three distinct ideas.
3. When 5 minutes is up, each person must pass their sheet to the person to their right (you can do this alphabetically online).

Then set another 5 minute timer and invite everyone to fill in the next row on the sheet they've been given, using the ideas in front of them as inspiration.

4. Repeat this cycle until all 6 rows have been filled

*Remix: try using  **Fence the Playground** or  **Human Truths** to provide guided headings for each column.*



Mash-Up

Make novel connections to spark fresh ideas.

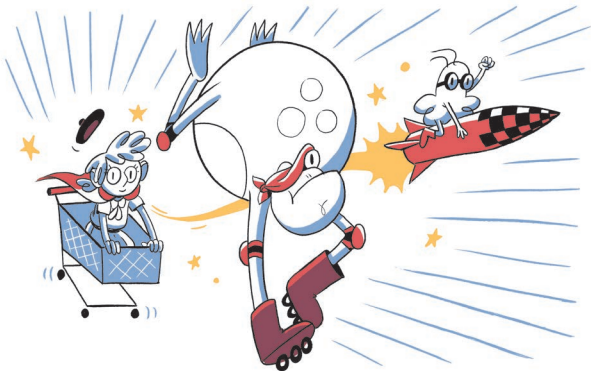
“The role of the imagination is to create new meanings and to discover connections that, even if obvious, seem to escape detection.” – Paul Rand, 1996

“Mash up da place.” – Ganja Kru, 1994

Make sure you  *Frame* your challenge first. For best results,  *Prime* and  *Explore* before you try this tactic.

Mash-Up

1. Pick an experience unrelated to your challenge. For example, if you're coming up with ideas for updating your restaurant's menu, unrelated experiences could be visiting an aquarium, attending a wedding, or buying shoes.
2. Ask everyone to list as many elements of both your experience and the chosen unrelated experience as they can think of in 5 minutes – the obvious as well as the strange. You can do this using regular sticky notes, or using a 🍂 **Mind Map**. If any clear themes emerge, you can group people's responses to make the next bit easier.
3. Using 🌱 **Crazy Eights**, give everyone 15 minutes to come up with ideas for your challenge that combine elements from both experiences.
Example idea (shoes x restaurants): "Offer people different plate/portion sizes for the same meal, based on appetite."
4. Give each person 2 minutes to share their strongest idea with the rest of the group.
5. Take the strongest ideas from this activity into another 🌱 **Diverge** exercise if you want to explore more options, or step straight into 🔗 **Refine** mode if you have any ideas that already feel like they answer your challenge.



Worst Idea Race

Get weak ideas out of the way so the good ones are easier to find.

This activity will help you let go of perfectionism and enter creative flow. If you've done a "Reverse Brainstorm" before, this tactic is the same thing but with a fast-paced competitive twist.

After running this exercise, "real" idea generation tactics like  **Lotus Blossoms** and other  **Diverge** activities will feel less intimidating.

Worst Idea Race

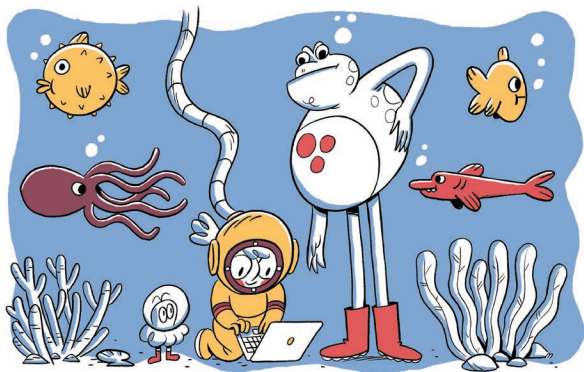
1. Create a row of 15 empty sticky notes for each participant, and put their name next to it.

2. Explain that this is a game – the winner is the first person to fill their row with 15 bad ideas.

Tell them you want the worst possible responses to the creative challenge. What would make the problem even worse? What would make customers point and laugh? What would get us all sacked?

Set a 5 minute timer – the winner is either the first person to complete their row, or the person with the most bad ideas after 5 minutes.

Optional: consider adding a couple of minutes onto this task where people can identify any bad ideas that could be flipped or tweaked to make them good. You could use 🌟 *Like, Wish, Wonder* for this, or simply ask people to draw stars next to any ideas that feel flippable, and then explain any potential value they've spotted.



Analogous Inspiration

Get away from your desk and find fresh perspective to unlock breakthrough ideas.

It may feel weird to visit a hospital, or pause for a trip to the supermarket, when you're working on, say, a music app, but that might be exactly what it takes to spark a transformative creative leap.

This tactic is all about curiosity and observation skills. You can practise the art of noticing in the rest of your life too (identifying trees on a walk, for instance).

Analogous Inspiration

This activity involves getting out of the building and exploring different environments. It helps you isolate elements of an experience, interaction, or product, and then apply them to the challenge you're working on.

1. Before you go anywhere, ask your team to spend 10 minutes thinking about the activities, behaviours and emotions connected to your challenge. Have them write these down on sticky notes. As an example, "taking out the trash" might be the activity, and related emotions could include "disgust".
2. Next to each scenario, ask the team to spend 5 minutes listing other settings or situations where the same behaviours or emotions occur. In the example above, an analogous situation might be "dog-walking", because there's also some potential ickiness involved.
3. Discuss the relevance of each situation as a group, along with the feasibility of visiting that setting.
4. Plan a visit to somewhere that will allow you to observe the activities/behaviours/emotions you're interested in. Take pens and notepads.
5. During the visit, encourage everyone to pay close attention to the things you want to understand, but also remain open to any other unexpected inspiration.
6. Arrange a follow-up session where people can share what they discovered and discuss how that might change your creative approach.



ProvocaPrompts

Strengthen your ideas with a set of provocative questions.

High-performing creative teams are great at playfully provoking and challenging each other. They don't get trapped in groupthink. This tactic helps you explore new possibilities, whilst also encouraging ruthless reflection.

Once you're familiar with the 12 suggested prompts overleaf, you can start inventing your own, and begin making this a habit (rather than an activity you need to plan).

ProvocaPrompts

Tip: you can run this activity either with a single “sparring partner”, or with a bigger group.

1. Pick a single idea that got a positive reaction during the  *Diverge* or  *Refine* phase, then explain that you're going to prod and push the idea to make it stronger.
2. Pick any 3 questions from the following list and set a timer for 15 minutes, either inviting everyone to add their thoughts on sticky notes under all 3 questions, or dividing the group into smaller teams, each considering a single prompt.

<i>What can we remove?</i>	<i>How might this confuse people?</i>	<i>What would make this idea last longer?</i>
<i>Who is this idea NOT for?</i>	<i>How could we make this more inclusive?</i>	<i>What if we had 10x less (or 10x more) budget?</i>
<i>What would make this impossible to copy?</i>	<i>What would make this idea more emotional?</i>	<i>Why should anyone care?</i>
<i>How could we make the experience more sensory?</i>	<i>How could we give this a sense of momentum, or story?</i>	<i>How might this go wrong?</i>

These questions aren't supposed to be easy, so you'll get a better outcome if you try this tactic when you're all feeling reasonably energised.

3. Spend 15 minutes discussing what has surfaced, then plan a  *Refine* activity using these insights.



Yes, and...

Build on each other's ideas using a mindset borrowed from improv theatre.

This tactic is all about going with the flow, building on whatever material you're given (no matter how unusual), then adding your own twist.

Use this tactic during the  *Diverge* phase (to extend and multiply ideas) or during the  *Refine* phase (to find the unexplored edges and hidden potential of a more defined idea).

Yes, and...

These instructions give participants time to think and write things down. But if you want, you can also run this activity out loud – it's a little scarier, but truer to the spirit of improv.

If you're still in *Diverge* mode:

1. Pick an idea, then ask everyone to write as many “Yes, and...” builds on that idea as they can think of in 3 minutes.

Example idea: *“Idea generation activity cards”*

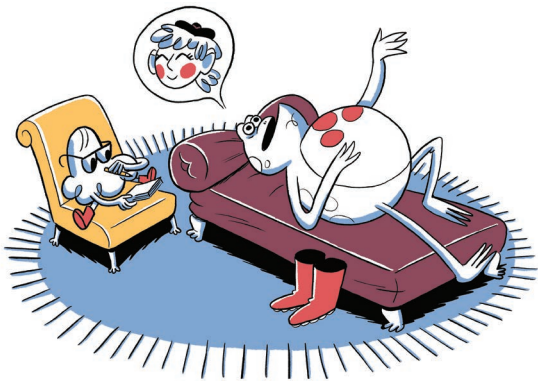
Example build: *“Yes, and they have fun illustrations on them”*

When the time's up, review everyone's builds. Repeat this process for as many ideas as you like. You can go even further and add an extra round, where each person picks a “Yes, and...” statement from the last round, and adds their own “Yes, and...” to that. In theory, you could keep going forever, but you've probably got other stuff to do.

2. Take any statements that stand out and use them to shape idea(s) you want to take forward using a  *Refine* tactic.

If you're already in *Refine* mode:

1. Briefly introduce the core idea you want to explore to the rest of the group, reserving any judgement about its potential.
2. Pick someone to privately write as many “Yes, and...” statements as they can in 3 minutes. When the time's up, ask them to pick one statement to privately share with anyone they choose, and repeat this process until everyone's contributed.
3. Put everything on display to inform what you decide to do next.



Human Truths

Enrich your ideas by contemplating your audience's deepest and most unchanging needs.

It's easy to become lost in the tiniest nuances of a specific user need, or the unique details of a target mindset you've identified. Anchor your thinking back to more universal human motivations, so you can engage people at a more fundamental level.

Don't assume any of these are the most important thing for your audience – use them to inspire directions to test, or territory to explore during future research.

Human Truths

Use these prompts as inspiration to improve your ideas:

- **People are distractable.** What would people rather be doing than interacting with your idea?
- **People want autonomy.** How can you give your audience more freedom? How can you make sure they don't feel manipulated?
- **People value beauty.** Beauty makes “the soul grow wings” (nicely put, Plato). Why shouldn't your idea do that?
- **People want to feel like they belong to a group.** Can your idea help people identify with their tribe?
- **People like recognition.** Everything from a friendly hello to making someone feel smart.
- **People want to feel safe.** Does your idea help people become more secure in some way? Can it help them protect others?
- **People want to make progress.** How does your idea help someone become the person they want to be?
- **People like to express themselves.** How can your idea help someone project their personality?
- **People feel love.** What loves are driving your audience? What truths do you love about them?
- **People play.** Can you make your idea more playful? (It's best to do this when the stakes are low).
- **People are full of contradictions.** The magic lives in the tensions – seek them out.



Peak-End Rule

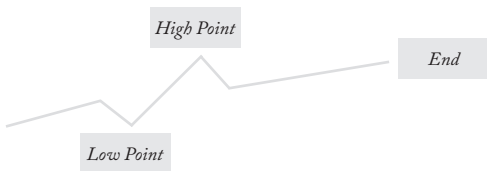
Elevate key moments within your idea, spot potential pain points, and give a satisfying ending.

Our memories are dominated by snapshots; by highs and lows, and by whatever happens last. Think about the last trip you went on, and maybe you'll be able to trace this pattern. Is your memory an average of everything that happened? More likely you remember an amazing meal, or that day you got a blister from too much walking.

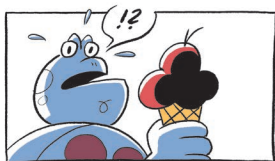
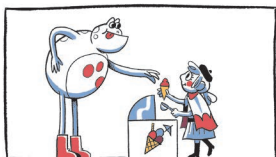
This tactic is best-used when you've already got a fairly clear and developed idea. If you're not yet at that stage, try a  *Refine* tactic before using this card.

Peak-End Rule

1. Draw the following pattern on your wall/whiteboard:



2. Start with the low point. Using sticky notes, give participants 5 minutes to list anything frustrating, confusing, or off-putting about the idea, or about the scenario your idea fits into. When the time's up, give everyone another 5 minutes to add corresponding sticky notes (in a contrasting colour) with thoughts on how we might remove these issues, or at least make them less painful.
3. Repeat this process for the high point. First, what's likely to be the most exciting or rewarding moment when someone experiences the idea? Then, how might we make that moment feel even more special or satisfying?
4. When you're ready to explore the ending, set another 5 minute timer and offer participants the following prompts:
 - a) What happens next for our audience?
 - b) Based on that, what mood should we evoke at the end? Do we need to reassure, or celebrate, or build excitement about the future? Something else?



Storyboard

Sketch the key stages in a person's experience of your idea.

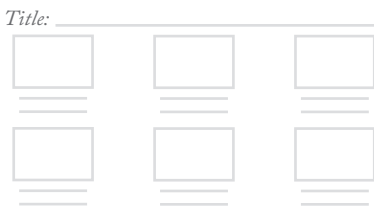
Here are a few ways you can use a Storyboard:

- To sketch out multiple steps in a single user flow
- To visualise how your idea fits into someone's life
- To contextualise your idea over time (e.g. showing how people find it, what they do next, or why they come back)

Make sure you've explored several options using a  *Diverge* activity first. After this, you can  *Stretch* or  *Review* your idea.

Storyboard

1. Share any ideas you want to develop visually (plus interesting inputs from your 🗨️ *Explore* phase), and give everyone a chance to digest and reflect.



2. Divide sheets of paper into six blocks, with space for commentary under each and space for a title at the top (A3 if possible, but you can also do this digitally).
3. Set a timer for 30 minutes and invite everyone to sketch six scenes that show how their idea might work. Scenes should be sequential, each showing a moment in time. A moment could be on a screen, out in the world or a combination.
4. Under each scene, ask people to briefly describe what's happening.
5. Give the storyboard a title – something short, clear, and ideally a bit unusual.
6. Give each person 2 minutes to talk through their storyboard.



T-Bar

Capture ideas in a format that anyone can quickly understand.

Using this simple template, you can describe pretty much any idea before you decide whether to develop it further. It will help you think through the details, compare against other ideas, and gather feedback.

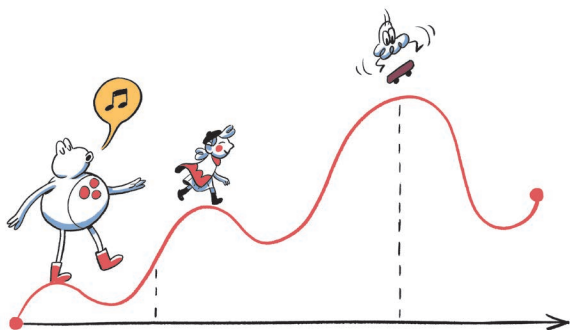
Make sure you've explored several options using a  *Diverge* activity first. After this, you can  *Stretch* or  *Review* your idea.

T-Bar

1. Ask each person to draw a 'T' covering the height and width of a piece of paper.

<i>Title</i>	
<i>Sketch</i>	<i>A brief description</i>

2. Explain how to fill it in:
 - **Sketch the idea** in the space on the left. What's the clearest way you can show the essence or most important element of the idea?
 - **Describe the idea** in bullet points on the right. Clarify its purpose. Explain why it's useful or interesting. You can also describe how people will find it, or what they'd do next.
 - **Add a snappy title** at the top. If you can't think of a memorable name, imagine what the headline would be if someone else wrote about it.
3. Allow 10 minutes for people to complete their T-Bar.
4. Invite everyone to display their T-Bar and spend 10 minutes discussing any commonalities, or ways to combine elements from different ideas.



Big Beats

Describe why your idea matters using a simple but powerful story structure.

Get a pointed set of prompts to help you explore the problem your idea solves, and the reason it's worth solving.

You may need to run another  *Refine* activity first if your idea is still a bit fuzzy. After this, you can  *Stretch* or  *Review* your idea.

Big Beats

1. Spend up to 10 minutes exploring each of the following themes, creating a 🍁 *Mind Map* for each.

Tension

- What conflict or difficulty exists today that your idea might help defuse?
- What gap exists between a user's ideal future, and their present state?
- What choices might they be torn between, that your idea helps them make sense of?
- What might be stopping them accepting your idea?

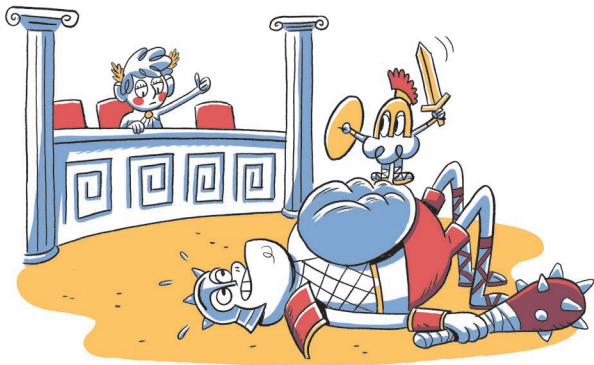
Action

- What actually happens when someone interacts with your idea?
- What are the inputs?
- How does it respond to them?
- What are the key moments?
- How does it feel?

Resolution

- How is the world different because of your idea?
- Why would someone feel good after interacting with it?
- If a problem has been solved, what new possibilities does that open up?

2. Pick out whatever feels intuitively true from your notes, and then either write out a version of your story or visualise it with a 🍁 *Storyboard*.



Like/Not Like

Explore what properties your idea shares with other things, and what makes your idea stand apart, to make your thinking clearer.

We make sense of the world by making connections and comparisons; Tim Berners-Lee said that “*in an extreme view the world can be seen only as connections, nothing else*”. This card can’t guarantee you a deeper appreciation of the fabric of existence, but it will help you describe your idea in a way that’s easier for others to understand.

You may need to run another  **Refine** activity first if your idea is still a bit fuzzy. After this, you can  **Stretch** or  **Review** your idea.

Like/Not Like

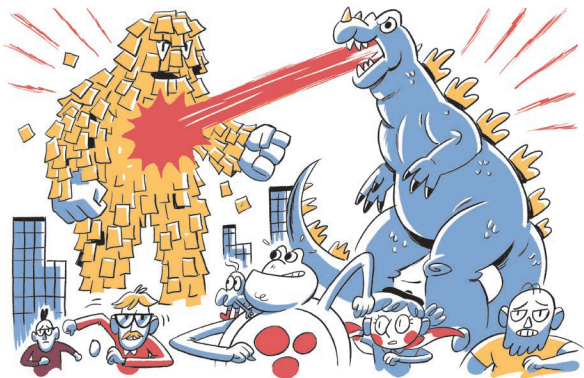
Tip: this works best as a group activity, ideally with enough participants to divide into smaller sub-teams.

1. Select an idea to explore, then put “Like” / “Not Like” headings on your wall:

<i>Like</i>	<i>Not Like</i>

2. Split your group into small teams of 2 or 3, then give each team 20 minutes to come up with a few things the idea is “Like” (these could be products, services, brands, films, songs, or anything your imaginations can connect). This may spark some debate within the group – “*do we really want to be like [x]?*”.
3. Give teams another 20 minutes to add some “Not Like” references. Once again, debate should be expected and welcomed; any examples that don’t reach consensus should go in the middle.
4. Bring everyone back together and invite each team to spend 5 minutes sharing what they came up with, briefly explaining why they put each thing under whichever heading.

Optional: use ★ *Invest Your PipCoins* to democratically decide which references to use as inspiration, and which things to differentiate against.



Mega Memo

Write an internal press release for your idea that centres the user and helps you get buy-in.

Following the template is one thing. But doing it without any “geek speak” is the key, according to former Amazon and Airbnb exec Ian McAllister. This tactic is adapted from a method described as “Amazon’s secret weapon”.

You may need to run another  *Refine* activity first if your idea is still a bit fuzzy. After this, you can  *Stretch* or  *Review* your idea.

Mega Memo

Your Mega Memo should include the following:

- **Heading:** give your idea a name (something your target audience would understand and remember).
- **Subheading:** describe, in one sentence, who the audience is for your idea, and what value they get from it. Be specific.
- **Summary:** summarise the idea and the audience benefit in a little more detail. Assume people won't read past this point, so make it good.
- **Problem/opportunity:** describe the problem your idea solves, or the valuable opportunity it unlocks, in no more than three sentences.
- **Solution:** briefly describe how your idea does this.
- **Team quote:** add a short quote from you or someone on your team that explains where the idea came from or why you're excited about it.
- **How to get started:** describe the easiest way for your organisation to begin making this idea real.
- **5* review:** add a quote from an imagined person who's had a perfect experience with your idea.
- **Wrap-up:** repeat your most compelling three points in even punchier terms.
- **Call to action:** tell your reader what you'd like them to do next.



Back and Forth

Think through an idea as if it's a conversation to better understand how it should flow.

Whatever artefact or system you want to create (or change), imagining someone's encounter with it as a dialogue helps you identify key moments and design friendlier interactions.

Make sure there's a sketch or summary of your idea visible before you start (you can use  **T-Bar**). After this, you can  *Stretch* or  *Review* your idea.

Back and Forth

Tip: use this activity as a role-play between two people in real-time, or do it asynchronously online with a bigger group.

1. Each spend 5 minutes capturing all the “What should I do?” or “How do I...?” type questions a user might have when encountering your idea. You can use a 🍷 *Mind Map* for this.
2. Decide who will play the user, and who will be the voice of your idea, then try your first conversation out loud, without taking notes.

The “user” should begin asking questions, starting wherever they expect the experience to begin. And the product/content/system should reply with whatever feels like the most helpful answer.

3. Spend 2 minutes discussing anything that stood out from the conversation. Was the order confusing? Were there any questions that didn’t have a readily available answer? Were there any obvious opportunities to be upbeat or playful? Any moments that felt especially sensitive?
4. Work through the conversation again, this time capturing each question and response on sticky notes.
5. Spend 5 minutes improving the flow however you can. What elements can you re-order? Is there anything you can remove? Anything you can make clearer?
6. If any gaps in your knowledge have been highlighted, make a plan to gather the information you need.



PrioriTree

Break down the various elements of an idea and decide where to begin when prototyping it.

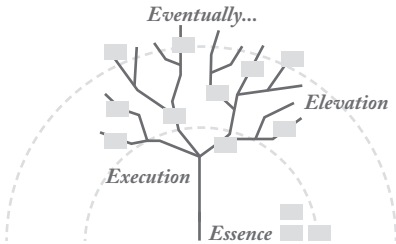
This nature-inspired technique helps you:

- Visualise connections and dependencies between elements of your idea
- Rank elements by importance/urgency
- Consider long-term potential

Make sure you have a well-articulated idea that excites or surprises you before you run this activity. If you have something that needs pushing further, try a  *Stretch* tactic first.

PrioriTree

1. Introduce the PrioriTree and explain its four layers:



- **Essence:** what's the core of the idea in 4 words or less?
- **Execution:** what's the imagined format of the idea?
How will it look and where will it live?
- **Elevation:** what elements might not be essential for now, but make the idea more compelling?
- **Eventually:** what elements reflect a longer-term vision for the idea?

2. Pick a promising idea that you'd like to test, then spend 10 minutes individually picking out the component parts of the idea on sticky notes. These elements can relate to the content or interface, or to the intended quality of a user's experience. But they should always be fairly specific.

Good example: "playful add-to-basket button"

Bad example: "surprise and delight"

3. Plot your ideas on the tree, welcoming discussion and debate about where each element belongs.



Invest Your PipCoins

Rank multiple ideas by thinking in bets.

Even an imaginary cartoon currency can help bring risk and reward into focus. With your ideas clearly ranked, it will be much easier to decide what to prototype.

Use this during the 🌱 *Diverge* or 🔗 *Refine* phase. When you're more comfortable with this activity, you can add your own definitions of risk and reward. You can invent your own currency too.

Invest Your PipCoins

1. Explain that each person has been given 100 PipCoins to invest in promising ideas. Invite people to think about the potential pay-offs if they execute each idea, as well as any risks.
2. Ask everyone to privately note down which ideas they want to invest in, and how much. It's up to each individual to invest as they see fit – putting all 100 PipCoins on a single idea is a valid option, but they can be spread around in units of 5 or 10 as participants please.
3. As facilitator, it's your job to collect everyone's investment plans, add up the PipCoin totals for each idea, and then rank them in order to share and discuss with the wider group.

If there's no clear winner, consider minting some more imaginary PipCoins and inviting more people to join the game. Even better if they haven't been involved in this creative process so far.

Optional: once you've identified your leading idea, you can stress-test it with 🌟 *Concerns, Confusions, Conflicts* or push it further with 🌟 *Like, Wish, Wonder*.



Like, Wish, Wonder

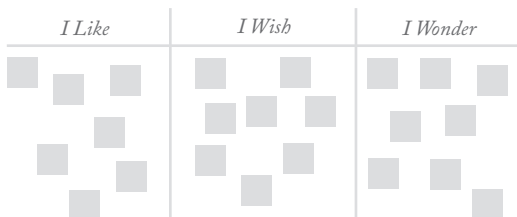
Get feedback that focusses on positives and possibilities to unlock bigger and better ideas.

After getting constructive input, strengthen your ideas further before subjecting them to more scrutiny.

You can use this tactic during the 🌱 *Diverge* or 🔗 *Refine* phase to elicit feedback on ideas.

Like, Wish, Wonder

1. Briefly summarise the idea you want to review, then write the following headings on your whiteboard/wall.



Alternatively, if you have a detailed visual or design to show, you can have people add colour-coded sticky notes directly to that. That way, you can easily see which element each piece of feedback relates to.

2. Set a timer for 5 minutes and ask everyone to write as many likes as they want.

For example: *"I like that this helps an under-served audience"*

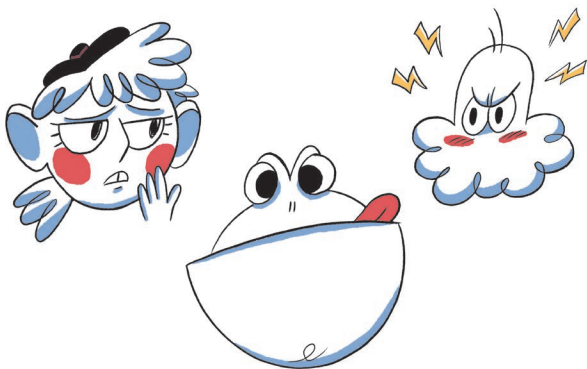
3. Give everyone another 5 minutes for wishes.

For example: *"I wish there was a way to make the onboarding process more welcoming"*

4. Give everyone 5 more minutes for wonders.

For example: *"I wonder if we could prototype this with [cool free tool]"*

5. Group the feedback into any obvious themes.



Concerns, Confusions, Conflicts

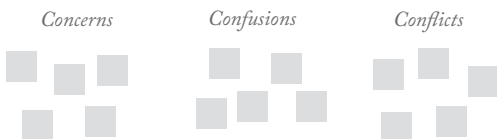
Stress-test your ideas through structured critique.

Withholding criticism during most of your creative process helps radical ideas surface, but at certain points critique is healthy.

As you become more comfortable with this, you can customise the prompts for each heading so they're more relevant to your context.

Concerns, Confusions, Conflicts

1. Briefly summarise the idea up for review, then write the following headings on your whiteboard/wall.



Alternatively, if you have a detailed visual or design to show, you can have people add colour-coded sticky notes directly to that. That way, you can easily see which element each piece of feedback relates to.

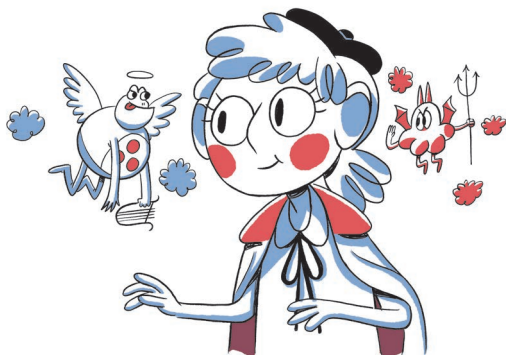
2. Offer any of the following prompts for each heading and set a 15 minute timer for this activity.

Concerns – why might this idea not work? What aspects have been overlooked? What context has been missed? What unintended consequences could there be?

Confusions – what don't you understand about the idea? What might confuse the audience? What could be made clearer?

Conflicts – would pursuing this idea stop us doing something else? Does the idea contradict our vision or strategy? Could the idea cause anyone to act against their own interests?

3. Use this feedback to  *Refine* the idea.



Angels & Demons

Shine a light on any issues that might hold your idea back, and identify what will improve its chances of success.

In this energetic group activity, one team will be the demons who want to derail the idea, and one team will be the angels who want to see it shine.

Tip: use this tactic sparingly, and ideally towards the end of your creative process.

Angels & Demons

1. Divide your group into two evenly sized teams. If possible, mix people with different perspectives.
2. Tell your angels they're here to guide the team's idea forward and illuminate the path to success. Tell your demons they're here to mess everything up.
3. Give both teams 10 minutes to list on sticky notes all the thoughts, feelings, and actions that could help (angels) or hinder (demons) the idea.
4. Now it's time for battle. Invite a demon to step forward first and read out one of their notes.

For example: *"There's no clear decision maker"*

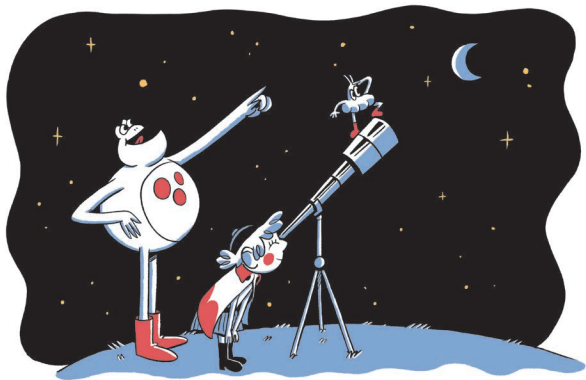
5. Then it's an angel's turn. Their job is to counter that concern with a note of their own. Do they have a good response?

For example: *"We'll plan a roles and responsibilities session"*

6. Continue like this until either the sticky notes or energy run out. Expect a little sassiness as people get more into character.

Tip – you can use what you learn here to:

- *strengthen your idea;*
- *improve empathy and communication in your team;*
- *plan how you'll test and launch your idea.*



Deep Impact

Make greater positive change with your idea by considering different perspectives.

“Impact” can be a slippery word. Everyone has their own definition. Look beyond the obvious goals for your idea and think through outcomes from diverse points of view. Use the questions on the back for personal reflection or team discussion.

This tactic isn't only useful at the ★ *Review* stage. You can also use it to help shape your challenge, or as inspiration when generating ideas.

Deep Impact

Culture

How might cultural habits change how your idea is used?

How might your idea change culture? How would you explain your idea to an alien from outer space?

Inclusion

How could your idea better empower an underserved group?

Who else could your idea benefit beyond your target users?

What perspective have you failed to involve so far?

Trust

Why might people lose trust in your idea? How might they feel unsafe or exposed? What's the worst headline about it you can imagine? How will you let people give you feedback?

What will you do with that feedback?

Subversion

What could a "bad actor" do with your idea? What would predatory or exploitative behaviour look like, using your idea?

What features could be manipulated?

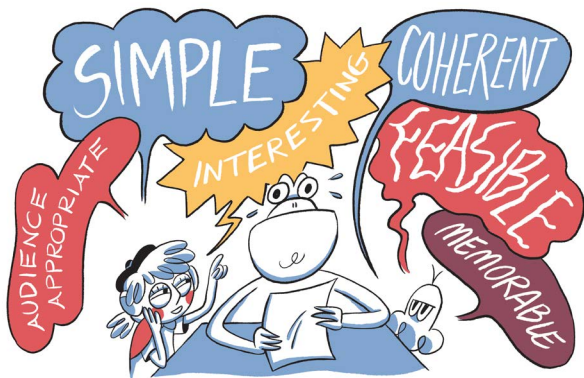
Excess

What would excessive interaction with your idea look like?

How will you encourage engagement, and how will you make it easy to disconnect? How does your idea respect people's boundaries and wellbeing? What would Mother Nature say?

Passion

How would a community of your most passionate fans behave? What might positive and negative communication around your idea look like? What happens if 100 million people use your product?



SICFAM

Prioritise ideas by scoring them on six key criteria.

What makes an idea good? Context is everything (obviously), but there are some fundamentals too. This card will help you find your most high-potential ideas and ruthlessly prioritise them.

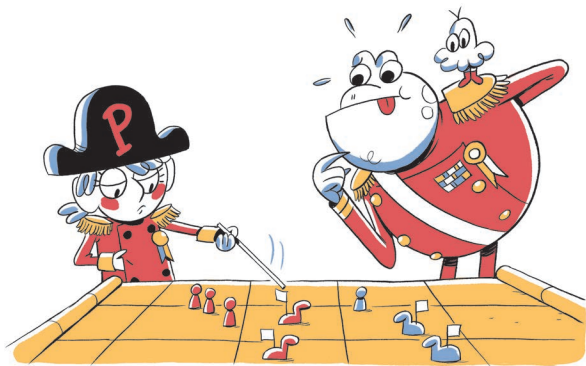
This tactic works best for ranking multiple ideas. You can also use this card as a set of  *Stretch* prompts to help make a single idea more compelling.

SICFAM

1. Introduce your team to the six dimensions of the SICFAM framework. Ideas will be scored 1–5 on each of these dimensions:
 - **Simple:** how easily could you describe the idea to a child?
 - **Interesting:** how likely is it you'd discuss the idea at a party?
 - **Coherent:** how true does the idea feel to your identity (as an individual, a team, or a brand)? Does it move you closer to your vision?
 - **Feasible:** how easily can you do it?
 - **Audience-appropriate:** how confident are you the right people will embrace your idea?
 - **Memorable:** what's the chance people will remember your idea in 30 years?
2. Gather any ideas you want to review, and invite everyone to privately write down a score from 1 (lowest) – 5 (highest) on the SICFAM dimensions for each idea.

	<i>Idea 1</i>	<i>Idea 2</i>	<i>Idea 3</i>
<i>S</i>	4	2	1
<i>I</i>	3	5	4
<i>C</i>	5	4	4
<i>F</i>	3	1	2
<i>A</i>	5	4	4
<i>M</i>	4	5	3

3. Collect everyone's scores, take them away, and add up the totals to get an overall ranking for your ideas.



Prep like a Pro

Maximise your chances of coming up with fresh, relevant, effective ideas.

Before you get playful, it's worth taking some time to plan. This card helps you decide who to involve and how to get them ready for a successful creative session.

Prep like a Pro

Getting people ready

As you get ready to journey through a new creative mindscape together, it's helpful to give people a chance to check-in;

 *Frame* your challenge before you next gather together.

You can also ask individuals to complete  *Explore* tactics like  *Combinaboards* and  *Fame vs Shame* before a workshop – that way they'll already be immersed in the challenge when it's time to come up with ideas.

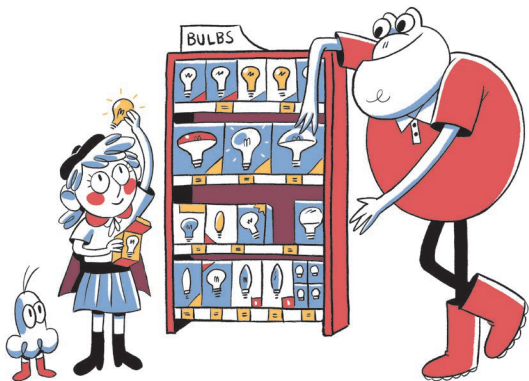
Who to involve

Is my group diverse enough?

We fetishise being “on the same page” in business, but idea generation often benefits from mixing diverse perspectives together; beware of only collaborating with people who think like you. Aim to mix people with different frames of expertise, different backgrounds, and different thinking styles.

Is my group too big?

The bigger the group, the more risk of gravitating to a reasonably “safe” consensus (not to mention the pains of finding a time everyone can make). Research has shown that smaller “deviant” groups can be more effective at radical thinking. Try collaborating with no more than three other people on a recipe like  *Be Distinctive* to get a feel for these dynamics yourself. In all situations, be intentional about who you involve.



Invaluable Inputs

Gather information that will help you generate high-value ideas.

Starting with rich insights and a sense of direction, you'll find it much easier to consistently do your best creative work.

Invaluable Inputs

Good ideas flow from rich research

Many people expect research to tell them what to do. That's a mistake.

Research should help you update your model of the world. The most useful research for creative purposes is research that surprises you, forcing you to look at something differently. That new perspective is your creative fuel.

If you're not involved in research, make friends with the people who are. 🎨 ***Draw Your Job*** is a great activity for building understanding and empathy with each other.

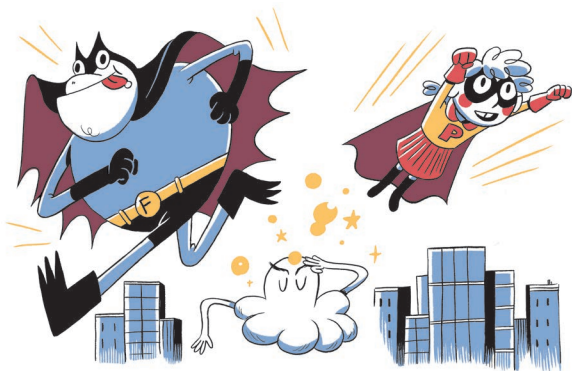
A clear vision will inspire and guide your ideas

Generating bold ideas is much easier when you have a clear vision. A vision helps you prioritise too.

The best organisations know what they stand for. The best products have a clear point of view. The most effective people have their own motivating “why?”.

Knowing these things (and making them visible) will help drive creativity in a focussed direction. And a clear vision will help you decide what not to do, too.

You can use 📖 ***Fantasies of the Future*** to explore and articulate your own long-term vision if a compelling one doesn't already exist.



Facilitation Tips

Create the right atmosphere for free thinking, expression, and collaboration.

The art of facilitation goes deeper than simply deciding which activities to run. Great facilitators energise people when everything feels flat. They're midwives to newborn ideas, providing the safety and nourishment they need to develop.

Every workshop is a chance to practise the principles on this card. There's no one right way to facilitate, though – half the fun is developing your own style.

Facilitation Tips

Enlist a co-facilitator

Find someone to help keep things running on time and theme/cluster ideas as you go. You'll be more present.

Plan timings generously

Suggested timings are provided with each tactic in this deck, but you should always build in some extra buffers.

Prioritise psychological safety

People can't be creative if they're scared of being judged. Prepare them to share their weirdest ideas with tactics like  *Mind-Body Dissonance*.

Model the behaviours you want to see

Offer half-formed or bizarre ideas so people know that's OK. Applaud and build on ideas as they're shared. Listen attentively to everyone, and ask interested, curious questions. Ask "what else?" to keep ideas flowing.

Use breaks intentionally

Breaks aren't just a chance for snacks, hydration and bladder-emptying – they're also a tool for creating a sense of transition. Try scheduling  *Diverge* activities in the morning, and  *Refine* activities after lunch.

Get serious about play

Sometimes it feels like you're not supposed to have too much fun at work. For surgeons that might be true; for most of us it's nonsense. Welcome laughter, joy and goofiness, and keep people energised with  *Prime* activities.

Don't forget recovery time

Pay attention to your own physical and emotional needs and schedule some time to recharge.



Boss Mode

Keep activities and processes feeling fresh with next-level tips and provocations.

Feeling comfortable generating ideas? Then it might be time to push things a little further. We're talking music, movement, and a bit of calculated mess.

Boss Mode

Be a workshop DJ

Music can totally change the atmosphere. Music with lyrics is best avoided, but you can play with tempos and moods to help people enter different headspaces. Check everyone's OK with this first.

Encourage movement

We spend a lot of time glued to our chairs. Where mobility and locations allow, get people moving every so often (especially if you're remote). Try including a short stroll in your next agenda. Don't rule out a drum circle.

Let go of linearity

The Idea Tactics process is yours to remix. For example:

- Start with an anything-goes 🍀 *Diverge* activity
- Look for interesting opportunities implied by the ideas you've just come up with
- Then do all five 📌 *Frame* activities in a row

Make space for incubation

Sometimes the best thing you can do is walk away. Try scheduling 🍀 *Diverge* and 🔗 *Refine* activities a day (or a week) apart. Separate the 🌟 *Review* stage from the idea generation stages.

Do more silly stuff

All the methods in this deck have a purpose, but don't feel guilty for "messing around" or going off-piste; sometimes it's the most seemingly frivolous things that spark the most astonishing thoughts. Try not having a plan once in a while. Make friends with chaos.

About the author, Joel Stein

I love seeing people at the peak of their creative powers, doing work that doesn't slowly drain the life from their eyes. I'm drawn to weirdness and wonder.

During my first decade working with companies on their content, I learned the power of a big idea. But I also witnessed a world awash with mediocrity; ideas that weren't pushed far enough, and ideas that should have been killed.



I became fascinated by what makes some ideas irresistible, and others forgettable. And I obsessed about the environment and activities that might help people think their most adventurous thoughts. I channelled my creativity into inventing new methods – searching for keys that open doors to unexplored worlds. Then I assembled them into a toolkit anyone can use – the deck you're looking at right now.

There are always challenges ahead – great and small – but with the right tools we can meet them. With every new idea we discover, fresh possibilities effloresce ahead of us like impatient ivy. And every so often, we stumble on something brilliant.

I hope Idea Tactics helps you work more playfully, think more distinctively, and create more things that make you proud.

Thanks to Rhian Davies-Kenny for ace edits and never-ending support. Also to Lynne Stein for a lifetime of inspiration and encouragement, and Richard Murdoch for helping me work all this stuff out over the years.

 twitter.com/joelstein

 linkedin.com/in/allaboutjoel