



# Creative Process



Ways to help groups  
create new ideas



Toolkits of ideas for working teams

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# Creative Process

## Why is a process for finding new ideas important?

The Bible begins with God creating. Creativity is right at the center of what God has done and is still doing. We are made in God's image, and creativity is a key expression of this. He has given each of us a brain of extraordinary creative capacity.

Psalm 98 exhorts us to "sing to the Lord a new song". Why a new song? Is it because each day is new, with fresh understanding and opportunities?



Our world is changing all the time. Challenges and new frontiers are everywhere. We need ‘new songs’! Therefore, the process of working out innovative solutions is as vital today as ever.

Ideas and solutions are ‘birthed’ within a creative process. New ideas are fragile and undeveloped at first, so trust, clear communication, and positivity will help the team to get the best results.

Therefore, a leader needs to be intentional to create a safe, productive, creative process.

Ideas and solutions that originate in this creative process are best when they are innovative and owned by all, but they also need to be simple and practical.



# Four step process

There are four steps in the process of developing new ideas:



## 1. Clarify/define | *Convergent Thinking*

Make sure everyone understands the topic or challenge. Be specific and define the problem you are trying to solve.

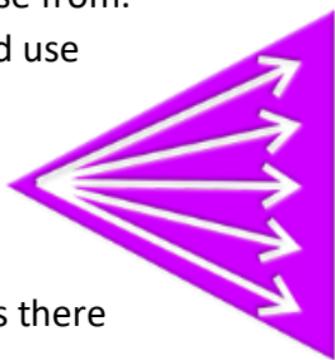
Take time to understand each other's terminology. Also ask what has been done to solve this challenge in the past.



## 2. Stretch | *Divergent thinking*

Create a range of ideas to choose from.

Brainstorm, stretch thinking and use roadblocks to think in new directions. Ideas need to be many, wide ranging, and unique. The more ideas you gather together, the more ideas there are to eventually choose from.



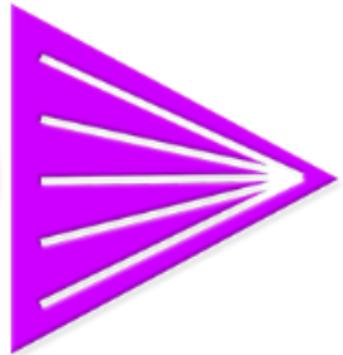
### 3. Play | *Emergent thinking*

Develop ideas to see their potential. Explore, design, play, workshop, make prototypes, collaborate, test and have fun. Keep an open mind because some 'crazy' ideas can lead to very innovative and practical solutions.



### 4. Choose | *Convergent thinking*

Choose the best and most usable ideas. Prioritize, shape a template, write, edit, trial, evaluate and use. This is a time to be practical and understand that ideas will need to be useful and uncomplicated if they are to be implemented.



A good idea  
is born!

# 1. Clarify the key question

*Before discussing and wrestling with an issue, it is wise to make sure the issue is clear to everyone.*

Choose an issue that is a high priority to explore and resolve. Work in pairs. Each pair writes one clear

and succinct sentence explaining the actual issue or problem. Then two pairs join together to make 4. Share the sentences and then make a new one that reflects the best ideas. Continue this process in groups of 8.

Now write the sentence of each big group on a flipchart. Combine and summarize the sentences to produce the clearest sentence that explains the problem. This whole process need only take 5 minutes but it will make the discussion more efficient later.



## 2. Brainstorming

*Use this tool to create many new ideas around a topic or challenge.*

Work in teams of 4 or 5. Spend a limited amount of time listing as many ideas as possible. Don't judge the ideas too quickly. 'Piggy back' ideas onto one another, using one idea to build a new idea. Crazy, 'out-there' ideas can lead to very innovative, workable ideas later on. The effectiveness of a brainstorm is measured in 3 ways:

- How many ideas?
- Range of ideas – the number of fundamentally different ideas
- Original ideas – the most innovative ideas



*Next:*

Choose one or two ideas and find a way to join them together.

Choose an idea to develop further.

### 3. Add roadblocks

*Problems and challenges will always emerge as a group works together. A 'roadblock' is simply an opportunity for a creative solution.*



Roadblocks can come from an external situation (*no money, war, disaster, mistake, etc.*) or one we create (*size of our resource, add an object, put in limitations of time, etc.*). As we explore a way around the roadblock, it gives us an opportunity to find a solution we have never tried before.

Read Luke 5:17-26. Jesus describes the friends' creative solution as faith. Solution finding is very important in Gospel work.

#### **Try these roadblocks:**

- **Size of your resource** – try to explain every key idea in one small phone page of 100 words or less. (*This is a roadblock we've tried to use in these toolkits*).
- **No words** – try to change a page of writing into a diagram or picture that communicates the same message.



## 5. Stretching questions

*Use this tool to move people out of complacent ruts.*

The facilitator asks questions that seem impossible but will force the group to see from a new perspective and stretch their thinking.

Questions:

- How will we multiply the effect by 1000 without spending more money?
- What if we could no longer ... (travel, print materials, go to church etc.)?
- What if we could only meet 3 people at any one time? How would trainings or meetings change?



## 6. Sticky note categorizing

*After new ideas have been generated, the ideas need to be grouped and processed.*

Ask a small group of people to gather around the flipchart after a brainstorm and place the sticky notes into categories. After this, put a label clearly on each category with a new colored sticky note. Each team explains the reasons why the sticky notes were categorized in this way.

*Next:*

Divide the group into small teams. Each team works on a different category and develops the ideas further.



## 7. Make a prototype

*Create a prototype to develop an idea further.*

Work as a whole team towards a finished version of the idea you are developing. Give yourself a time limit. This will help clarify what you have and what you still need to do. For example, if you are writing a training session:

- List each component you want to include in the session.
- Begin filling in the parts with any detail you can.
- You could split into pairs and each pair write up one part and then come together with other pairs to cross-fertilize.
- As a team, evaluate the prototype and see if it is close to what you were imagining or not.



## 8. Playing with ideas

*Here are eight strategies to help your team playfully develop each potential big idea.*

We can illustrate the different approaches to thinking using a chair as an example. We all know what a chair is and what it is meant for. How do we take a basic idea and “play” with it?

- 1. Adapt**
- 2. Connect**
- 3. Disrupt**
- 4. Flip**
- 5. Dream and imagine**
- 6. Experiment**
- 7. Identify patterns**
- 8. Be curious**



*How could you  
apply these ideas to a chair?*

## 1. Adapt

Start with an old idea and modify it for a new situation.

*Take the parts of an old idea and rearrange them, mix them up, reorder them, and see what develops.*



## 2. Connect

Start with seemingly unrelated concepts, characteristics or themes, and combine them in order to create new possibilities.

*Pictured here - adding a cactus plant to a chair! Ouch!*



## 3. Disrupt

Overturn commonly held beliefs or assumptions.

*This can be done by asking disruptive questions: 'Do we really need this anymore? Why?'*





#### 4. Flip

Turn dead-ends into opportunities by looking at them in an opposite way, flipping them over or rapidly changing direction.

*Imagine your idea upside down or opposite to what you first thought.*



#### 5. Dream and Imagine

Be able to visualise new ideas and create realistic scenarios and stories where these ideas will thrive and develop.

*Share these narratives.*



## 6. Experiment

Be curious enough to explore possibilities and take risks.

*Be eager to test out ideas and evaluate them as you play with them.*



## 7. Identify Patterns

Try to identify repeated ideas or patterns. Once they are identified, you will be able to use or change the pattern to suit new situations.



## 8. Be Curious

Be willing to ask uncomfortable, silly or even outrageous questions.

*Try 'I wonder...'  
questions. Think again;  
think like a child.*



# 9. Group voting

Use this tool when wanting to pick two or three topics to work on from a long list of ideas from the group.

Each group member can put a tick next to 3 of the topics or ideas. The group then works on the topics with the most ticks.

<p>الأصجيل</p> <p>GOSPEL</p> <p>صوتنا من خلال الكنيسة</p>	<p>صوتنا من خلال</p> <p>MAKING DISCIPLES</p> <p>الرياضة والعب</p>	<p>طاعة الوعد</p> <p>OBEY THE BIBLE</p> <p>آدمية</p>
<p>IN #THROUGH CHURCH</p> <p>كخادم</p> <p>AS SERVANTS</p>	<p>SPORT AND PLAY</p> <p>فريق</p> <p>IN TEAMS</p>	<p>EVERY COMMUNITY</p> <p>مشروعات</p> <p>BY PARTNERING</p>

## 10. Low hanging fruit

*Use this tool for some quick success when there are many tasks to be done.*

After a number of options have been brainstormed, assess the difficulty of each option. Put them in one of three categories: difficult, medium or easy. This will require some thinking and discussion. If the team chooses to do the easiest tasks first, this is said to be 'picking the low hanging fruit'. Working on these tasks brings quick success and can be a great encouragement to the group and help motivate it. Other tasks can be scheduled for completion at a later date.



# 11. Quick opinion

*Use this tool to hear the opinions of those who have not yet spoken.*

Each person has **30 seconds** to say what they think. This allows all the ideas to be spoken one at a time. The facilitator summarizes these ideas and views before moving on.

It will raise participation levels and help to define a problem by asking each person in the group to state their views on the issue under discussion without being interrupted by anyone else in the group.

After everyone has spoken, ask: 'Do we need to make any changes to our direction in light of what has been said?'



## 12. Brain rest

*Rest allows people the time and opportunity to generate new thinking.*

The brain continually needs to be refreshed. Sleep is the best form of brain rest. Brain rest is vital for creative thinking. When the conscious parts of the brain are at rest, the unconscious parts of the brain are capable of making extraordinary connections with ideas.

However, sleep is only one kind of brain rest. There are many others. Energizers, creative challenges (that are related or unrelated to theme), solitude, café break, sport, games, prayer and times of personal reflection are all moments of brain rest. Build these into any schedule.





# Going further

To develop your skills:

Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit and read about Jesus' creative ways of teaching and discipling in the Gospels.

Use these tools regularly with different groups.

Collect new ideas in a notebook.

As you take part in the process, become an observer and try to understand the methodology and flow which contribute to birthing new ideas.

**More reading:** *Facilitator's Toolkit* - [www.ReadySetGO.ec](http://www.ReadySetGO.ec); **What is ideation** and how to prepare for ideation sessions – Interaction Design Foundation; Wikipedia - **Ideation** (Creative process).

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# Working Team Toolkits

Bible Handling  
Disciple Making  
Sports Stadium  
Effective Facilitation  
Intercultural Facilitation  
Physical Creativity  
Creative Process  
Team Writing  
Writing Curriculum  
Editing Resources  
Oral Learning  
Powerful Media

