

# 1ST MAKER SPACE

## CREATIVITY TRAINING 1:2

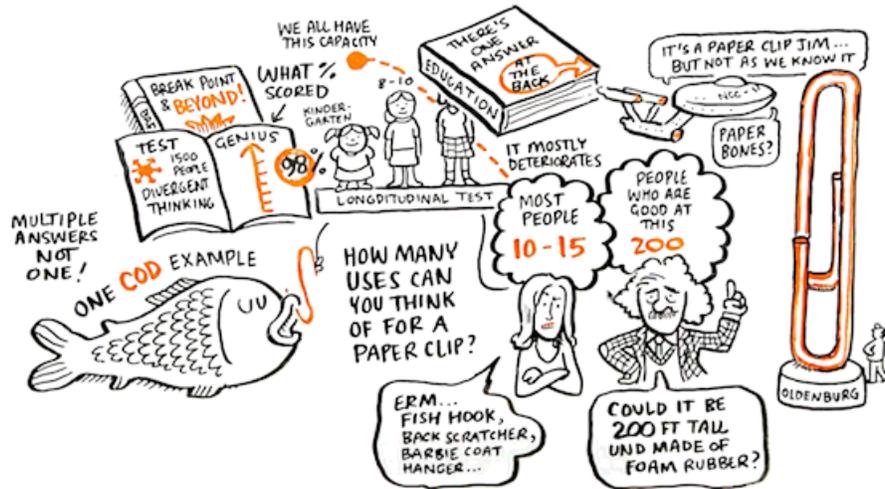


Image: RSA Animate www.thersa.org

## Testing Creativity

### Terms and Tools for Creative Thinking

By Arlon Bayliss Artist, Designer, Educator and Creativity Consultant - 1st Maker Space: [www.1stmakerspace.com](http://www.1stmakerspace.com)

"You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"  
George Bernard Shaw

*What is creativity? Can it be tested? Ethereal and mysterious; this harbinger of inspiration and genius has evaded understanding for centuries. At 1st Maker Space we believe all students are creative. Sure, some are also artistic, but every student possesses an amazing, essential ability to think creatively. Most importantly, we are certain it's a skill that can be exercised and strengthened to help them be better thinkers all round, and to live and work to their fullest potential.*

Since the 60's, in efforts to analyze and improve creativity, researchers have come to agree on some useful definitions for describing creative thinking skills:

**Fluency:** Describes thinking of many, many ideas. These ideas do not have to be unusual or very different to each other. When we use fluency, we try to generate as many ideas as we can in a few minutes.

**Flexibility:** Means thinking of different kinds of ideas. When we think flexibly, our minds easily hop or jump from one category of ideas to another. This way of thinking is commonly called, "divergent thinking".

**Originality:** Describes thinking of unusual ideas, ideas that perhaps no one else will think of. An original thinker thinks "outside the box". A good imagination is an original thinker's best asset.

**Elaboration:** Means adding details to an idea to make it stronger or more interesting. When we use elaboration, we think of variations and modifications that could improve our original idea.

To make these definitions user-friendly, and help our students remember these names and tools for creative thinking, we like to use the following prompts and explanations:

#### Flow (Fluency)

- let your ideas flow fast
- have as many as you can
- there are no bad ideas
- similar ideas are fine
- don't worry about being original

#### Bounce (Flexibility)

- it's OK to hop from one idea to another
- if you have ADD, this is where you can shine
- if you don't have ADD try to think like you do!
- be like a butterfly, visiting one flower of an idea after another
- Edward DeBono called this "lateral thinking"

#### Imagine (Originality)

- here you can invent
- anything is possible
- be original
- thinking outside the box
- use your imagination
- ask lots of "what if?" questions

#### Modify (Elaboration)

- fine tune your idea
- improve it
- could it be used in other ways?
- use creative thinking tools to help you make it better

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Understanding creativity will most likely never be an exact science. Nevertheless it's important we try to make distinctions. Let's also look for a moment at the important differences between *creativity* and *innovation*. These terms are often mistakenly used interchangeably, but they have two distinctly different meanings:

**Creativity is the skill of bringing about, or thinking up something completely new and valuable.**

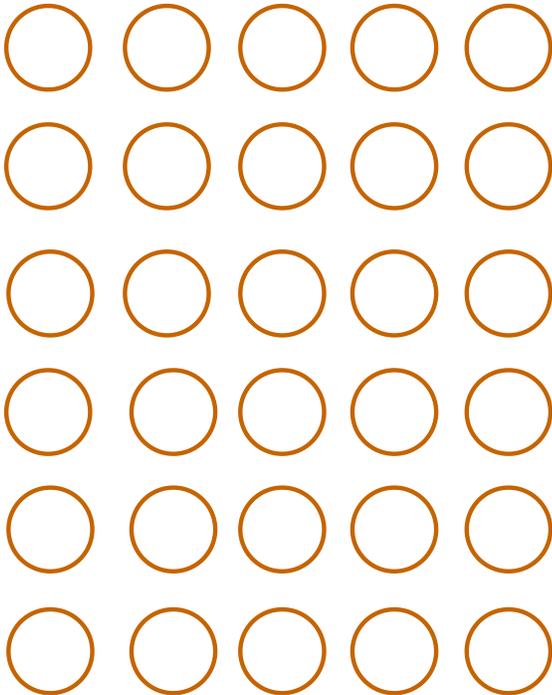
Innovation describes how we make an existing idea more successful. Innovation should occur over and over again, so that whatever we are working on or making gets even better.

Creative thinkers find alternatives. They break away from old patterns. They diverge from what is familiar, and then converge on new solutions. They break laws to remake them.

Innovators make clever, useful, sometimes major changes to existing products, materials and concepts. Innovation is an important and essential working partner to creative thinking.

### 1st Maker Space - 30 Circles Game

Use the circles to draw as many different objects or things as you can!



Here's a popular exercise that helps us think about creativity; one we use with our youth. The 30 Circles Test was originally developed in the 60's by Stanford University creativity researcher, Bob McKim.

### Instructions

Go to this [link](#) download and print the page. Make several copies and if you can, do this exercise together with family, friends or coworkers. Make it fun, not a competition. We don't want to squash creativity! That's why we call it a game).

*1. Use the blank circles to draw as many recognizable objects as you can in five minutes.*

Once you have completed the exercise, use the instructions below to help you compare results. It will be helpful and interesting to think about how you used different approaches:

*2. Look for the quantity (Fluency) of ideas. Most people don't complete all 30 in 5 minutes.*

*3. Look for diversity or (Flexibility) in your ideas. Are the ideas derivative of each other, (a basketball, a baseball, a volleyball) or distinct from each other, (a planet, a cookie, a happy face)?*

*4. Did you follow the "rules" or did you "break the rules" and combine two or more circles? (making a snowman or a traffic light). How unusual were your ideas compared to others? Either of these would indicate Originality.*

By completing this creativity exercise you can see first-hand how your powers of creativity work and how it's possible to measure them. With practice they can be improved and by learning some useful thinking tools and good technique they can become powerful tools or all kinds of problem-solving.

In my next article I'll be discussing some of the leading research on creativity, and describing three tests researchers most commonly use.

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