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# 5 Exercises that Will Make You 10 Times More Creative

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*Imagined by Bryan Searing*

**YOU CAN TRAIN YOUR MIND TO THINK  
CREATIVELY.**

The first time or two you do an exercise may feel difficult or uncomfortable. Just push through those feelings and do the exercise anyway. Then the ideas will start flowing.



## **WHAT'S THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATIVE PEOPLE AND LESS CREATIVE PEOPLE?**

**Creative people believe they are creative. Less creative people believe they are not.**

I don't buy the line that so many people use: "I'm not creative." Because I have seen some pretty boring people come up with great ideas, imaginative solutions to problems, and witty responses.

Say to yourself: I believe I am creative.

Everyone has a well of creativity within them! It might just be a matter of priming the pump.

When I'm stumped, I turn to creativity exercises that help me prime my pump. This collection includes a few of my favorites. I find them effective and use them regularly.



# 1. CIRCLES

Sometimes we don't see what's right in front of us. Creative minds notice the details. This exercise helps you free your mind to notice more. Even though you may read ahead, I recommend you follow the instructions in order—just so you can see the impact the sequence has on your mind.

## ROUND 1:

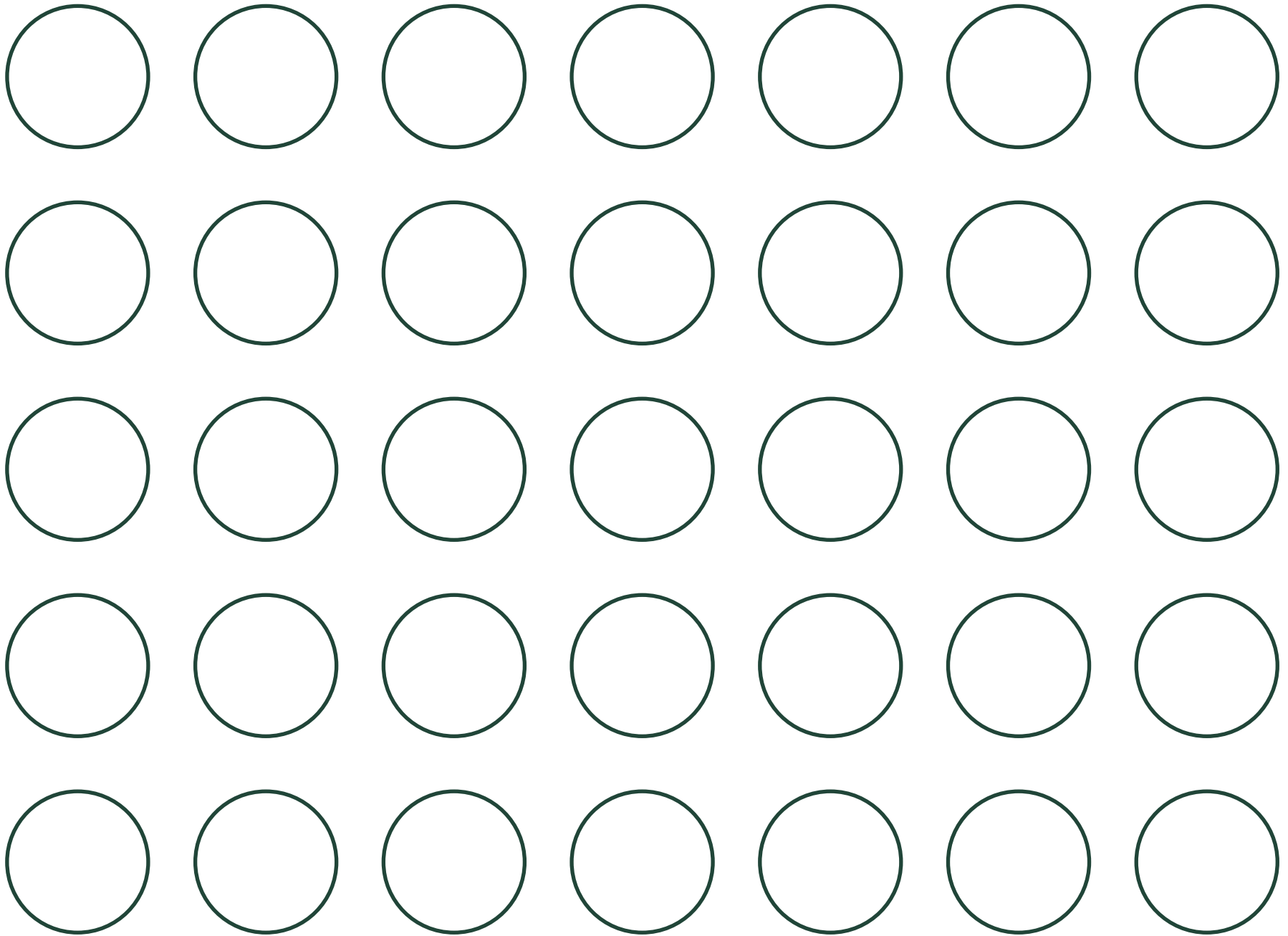
- Print up two copies of the worksheet on the next page.
- Set a timer for 3 minutes.
- Using one sheet, try to draw as many things as you can that are circle-shaped. You can draw inside the circle or outside the circle. Just don't repeat any pictures.
- At the end of the minute, count how many pictures you drew.

## ROUND 2:

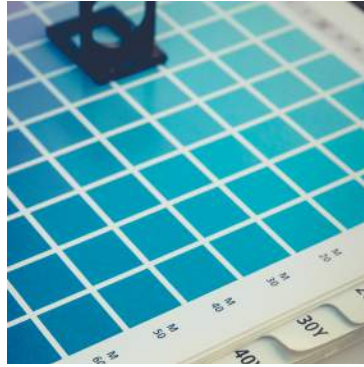
- You're going to repeat the drawing exercise, EXCEPT before you start drawing, spend at least 15 min walking around — inside or outside, it doesn't matter. Look for all the things around you that are circle-shaped or have circles as part of them. Then come back and repeat the exercise with the second sheet.
- How many pictures did you draw this time? Did you run out of time before you ran out of ideas?
- You could repeat this exercise as many times as you'd like — over the course of a week to see how you improve. You will notice circles everywhere!

## APPLY THIS TO YOUR PROJECT

I used circles as the focal point for this exercise about noticing. You can use any shape or color or concept from the project you are dealing with to get people noticing. For example, if you are a supervisor dealing with teamwork issues, do a variation where you list all the times when your employees interact with each other. The ideas will start flowing about which interactions are working and which are not.



# 2. IDEA MASH-UPS



You probably hear great ideas all the time. You read about them. They come across social media. You have one. Or you come across idea starters—which can be just as valuable as good ideas. You can exercise your brain by mashing these ideas together. It's all about making connections between disparate items. You can do this activity with a group of people, or you can do it alone. It works equally well.

## STEPS:

- Keep a journal or a box or a bowl of good ideas that you come across—either ideas that you generate or ones that you hear. It doesn't matter what walk of life the ideas come from—new inventions, business ideas, apps, solutions to common problems, life hacks—whatever.
- When you need to stimulate your brain, randomly select two ideas and try to come up with a new idea that borrows elements from both — like a mash-up. You might dream up a new business idea, an enhancement to the project you are grappling with, or a solution to world peace. Anything goes!
- If no ideas come to mind for that pair, throw them back and select two new ideas—until you come up with something.
- Share your ideas with the group. Then draw again.
- Variation: Do a round using 3 or more ideas to mash up.

## APPLY THIS TO YOUR PROJECT

Whether you're trying to solve a problem or complete a work of art, you can use this technique. Sprinkle in a few ideas—but not all—that relate to the project you are working on. See how they interact with ideas that have nothing to do with your project.

# 3. DESCRIBE YOURSELF

When meeting new people, most adults describe themselves in terms of the work they do. Why is that? There's so much more to people. This activity is about constraints. You are going to place constraints on yourself about how you describe yourself. And you'll find—as I have found—that constraints actually spur creativity, rather than limit it. You can do this alone or in a group.

STEPS:

- Imagine you are introducing yourself to someone new. Your new friend asks you to tell about yourself — in an unconventional way.

- Select one of the description categories below as your “constraint” (or make up one of your own):

**Shoes**

**Apps**

**Animals**

**Plants**

**Things in your purse/briefcase**

**Books**

**Food**

**Movies/TV Shows**

**Bucket List**

**Things in your closet**

- Generate 10 statements about yourself that relate to the “constraint.” Note: there's no particular format to these statements. Check out some of the examples below and then be creative!

- List-type Example: I have 10 different types of shoes. First, are my water shoes because I love to canoe. Second...

- Comparison-type Example: I'm like a panda because I love to eat and nap. I'm like an otter because...

- Variation: Describe someone or something else using the same technique.

APPLY THIS TO YOUR PROJECT

Instead of describing yourself, describe the project you are working on. For example, if you are a blogger looking for new topic ideas, describe your blog using one of these constraints. See what new thoughts

# 4. OBJECTS AROUND THE HOUSE

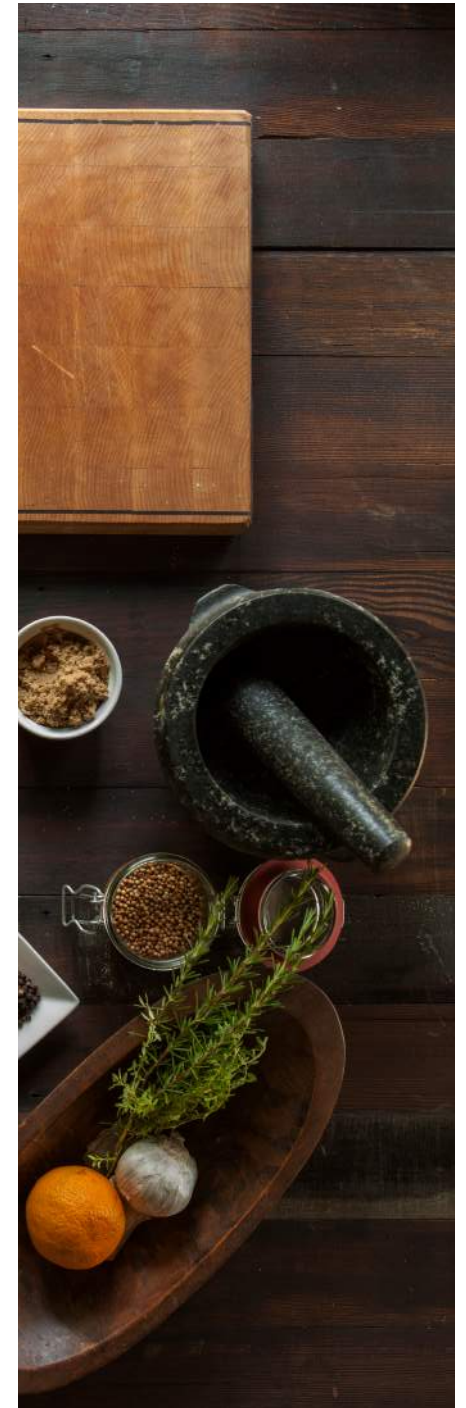
A good teacher frequently uses common objects to draw parallels to abstract concepts. She helps the students understand the concept. And if the student studies the object in greater depth, he can usually pull out deeper understanding of the concept. This exercise is about analogies. Generating analogies is a great way to stimulate imagination. This activity works well either solo or in a group.

## STEPS:

- Pick up random objects around your house or office. Put them in a bag.
- Without looking into the bag, each person draws out one item. Work with the object you select. No do-overs.
- Create a life lesson with the item. Don't worry if the lesson doesn't sound smooth. Refine as you go.
  - Here's an example: Suppose you draw out a seashell. You might say, "If you hold a seashell to your ear, you can hear the sound of the ocean. In life, we should take time to listen to what's most important." (That's one example. Of course, a dozen people would create a dozen different object lessons with the same item. I love that!)
- Rinse and repeat. ;-)
- Variation: See how many different life lessons you can create from a single item.

## APPLY THIS TO YOUR PROJECT

When you are feeling stale, use this technique to make analogies to the project or problem you are working on instead of to life lessons. For example, if you are a stay-at-home mom looking for variety in your child's day, compare the objects to games, activities and hands-on learning experiences for your child.





# 5. STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

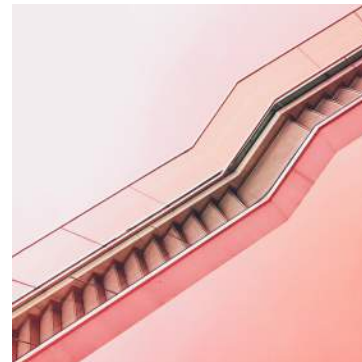
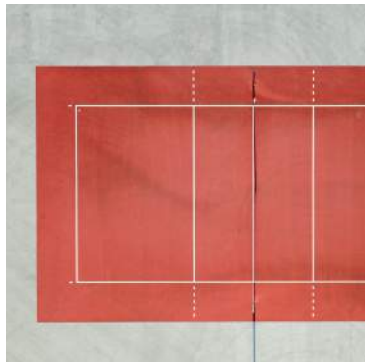
I work in marketing for my day job. So I think about business each day. A lot. But you don't need to be a business professional to do this activity. Since we are all consumers, anyone can do this. This activity is about combining. Combining unlikely pairs and dreaming what comes out of the union. Again, this works well alone or in a group setting.

## STEPS:

- On strips of paper, write the names of companies with which you are very familiar (one company per strip). If you're playing with a group, have each person write 5-7 companies. If you're playing alone, write 20 companies. (I have provided a starter list for you on the next page, if you need it.)
- Place the strips into a bowl.
- Draw out 2 company names. What if these 2 companies combined forces to innovate new products or services? Brainstorm a list of what you imagine their new products or services would be. It's okay if the list is messy. Creativity is messy.
  - Example: What if Apple and REI combined? What would they create? I can imagine a whole line of digital kayaks, baseball bats with speed sensors, and rock climbing walls with Siri-directed paths.
- Variation: Push yourself! Draw out 3 company names and do the same exercise.

## APPLY THIS TO YOUR PROJECT

Sprinkle in a few companies or brands that loosely relate to the project you are working on. For example, if you are an HR manager dealing with employee productivity issues, perhaps add Franklin Covey, Disney, and the Olympics to the mix. See what comes out.



# A STARTER LIST

FedEx Office	Target	Starbucks	PayPal	Nestle
Cartier	Under Armour	United Way	Uber	American Express
Coca-Cola	Lego	Samsung	Costco	Marriott
Facebook	Chipotle	Toyota	Ikea	H&M
Shell	Disney	Lowe's	NBC	Ritz Carlton



**NOW THAT YOU'VE PRIMED  
YOUR PUMP, GO CREATE!**

I firmly believe that you will also be inspired when you see the creativity in other people. Use these ideas at social gatherings or team meetings. The creativity of your friends will rub off.



## ABOUT BRYAN SEARING, AUTHOR

I have hiking shoes because I love to travel with my wife and we enjoy walking exotic cities, towns and trails.

I have snow boots because I live in Colorado.

I have sandals because I love to be outdoors in the summer—usually venturing into the mountains in my Jeep.

I have water shoes because I just purchased my first kayak.

I have dress shoes because I dress up for work and church and special occasions.

I have moccasins to keep my feet warm while I write my historical fiction manuscripts.

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