



Ulisse  
Soft Skills for Employability

# EXERCISES FOR IMPROVING *CREATIVITY*



## INTRODUCTION

The following exercises are proposed to improve the soft skill of Creativity, which according to the ULISSE Project definition is to come up with unusual and useful ideas about a given topic or situation; create new solutions or ideas; demonstrate originality; suggest innovative proposals; develop creative ways of doing things.

The exercises proposed are Random Word Association and Brainstorming.

### 1. Random Word Association

*The Random Word Association technique is a tool that consists of generating some random words and create associations with the original problem or subject we need to get new insights.*

*Using this technique, students will learn to stimulate open and divergent thinking and seek creative new ideas. The technique is useful to re-ignite creative thinking when you are running out of ideas. It can also be used to get people out of a rut when their thinking is still rather conventional.*

*The required amount of time to dedicate to the exercise is at least 30 minutes.*

#### 1.1. Steps of the exercise

**1. Assignment of participants to teams.**

**2. Choose exactly the topic / problem** on which you want to generate new ideas. (2 minutes) Write with the least number of words the topic to be explored.

**3. Generate random words.** (3 minutes) With the mobile phone visit the website <https://randomwordgenerator.com/> . Select from the number of words to generate 5, and write them on a sheet (even if they seem to have nothing to do, it is important to use these words).

**4. Create associations between these random words and the topic you are exploring.** (5 minutes) If there is a word whose meaning you do not know, look it up in the dictionary. Your goal is to somehow connect the meaning of each word with the chosen topic. The more partnerships you think the better the end result. It may seem like many associations and ideas don't make sense, so instead of dismissing them, you have to ask yourself, how could this make sense? Do not judge yourself if it seems that associations don't make sense right now, the more associations the better.

**5. Increase your associations.** (10 minutes) Apply the three laws of association that Aristotle formulated:

a. **Contiguity:** Association by contact or proximity. Ex. A saddle can be associated with a horse, a tree with a forest, and so on.

b. **Similarity:** Association of similar things. Ex. A cat can be associated with a tiger, an eye with a camera, and so on.

c. **Contrast:** Association by difference or antagonism. Ex. A dwarf can be associated with a giant, night to day, sun to moon, and so on.

6. **Find more connections.** By expanding your perceptions beyond the usual patterns of thinking, you have discovered ideas that you would not otherwise have considered. With this exercise, you have managed to restructure your neural network and you have adapted to a new way of thinking.

7. **Presentation in the large group** (4 minutes)

8. **What do you get from the exercise** (4 minutes)

## 1.2. Tools and resource

List all the tools needed for the exercise:

- Paper and pen
- Dictionary and thesaurus of synonyms and antonyms
- Computer or mobile phone if you want to generate random words with <https://randomwordgenerator.com/>, and want to search in a dictionary and thesaurus online.

The exercise can be done in person or online using tools of collaborative environment like Google docs, Mural, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.

You can find explanation of the tool and examples in [http://creatingminds.org/tools/random\\_words.htm](http://creatingminds.org/tools/random_words.htm)

In our experience you need extra time to master the collaborative environment tools.

## 1.3. Suggestions for the trainers

The teacher should expect as a result from the students to get acquainted with a new simple tool to increase creativity. It is important to give an example to the students.

For managing the discussion of the results of the exercise for the class we recommend to be humble and avoid stressing students by lowering expectations. With the familiarity and use, mastery of the tool can be achieved and therefore better results achieved.

## 1.4. References

List books, blog posts, scientific papers to study in deep the theory and methods behind the exercise:

De Bono, E. (2007), *How to Have Creative Ideas: 62 Games to Develop the Mind*.

De Bono, E. (1992), *Serious Creativity: Using the Power of Lateral Thinking to Create New Ideas*

De Bono, E. (1967), *The Use of Lateral Thinking*

<https://benovative.medium.com/how-to-come-up-with-disruptive-ideas-using-random-words-including-video-84e5fcd6d609>

<https://academy.nobl.io/use-random-words-to-increase-creativity-at-your-next-brainstorm/>

<http://creatingminds.org/>

## 2. Brainstorming

*The Brainstorming is a creative tool that consists of a technique to define the problem, generate ideas and filter the best idea to be implemented.*

*Brainstorming works when people use each other's ideas to trigger their own thinking. Our minds are highly associative, and one thought easily triggers another. If we use the thoughts of others, then these will stop us getting trapped by our own thinking structures.*

*Giving out half-thought-out ideas or strange suggestions is normally socially frowned on and leads to people holding back in normal situations. Brainstorming deliberately gives permission to be 'stupid' and 'child-like'.*

*The required amount of time to dedicate to the exercise is at least 30 minutes, however it depends on the complexity of the problem and the motivation of the group.*

### 2.1. Steps of the exercise

1. Assignment of participants to teams: Teachers create teams of 4/5 people.
2. Choose a facilitator from among the members of the group to take note of all the contributions, to encourage and moderate the intervention of the members and to be the representative.

**FINDING THE CORRECT PROBLEM:**

3. Generate ideas about possible needs or problems to be solved using "How to ....." that help redefine the problem. (5 minutes) For example:

- a. How to... Create a bus stop that facilitates the change of transport (bike / car / train / taxi / walk / bus ...)?
- b. How to... Design a stop that can be given different uses when it has less use?
- c. How to... Give a different use to information screens?
- d. Etc.

4. Select from the "How to ..." the one you think will generate the most impact. (1 minute)

**FINDING THE CORRECT SOLUTION:**

5. Generate solutions. (5 minutes) For example, if the option chosen is the last one (How to... give a different use to the information screens):

- a. Offering weather information.
- b. Offering information on schedules of other means of transport.
- c. Promoting sport.
- d. Doing a photo exhibition.
- e. Etc.

6. Choose one of the solutions by screening the ones generated through the following criteria: (5 minutes)

- a. Is it technically feasible?
- b. Is it economically feasible (for example: it costs less than 1,000 euros per stop)?
- c. Does it benefit a high percentage of the population?
- d. Is it sustainable (low or no maintenance)?

7. Presentation in the large group (4 minutes)

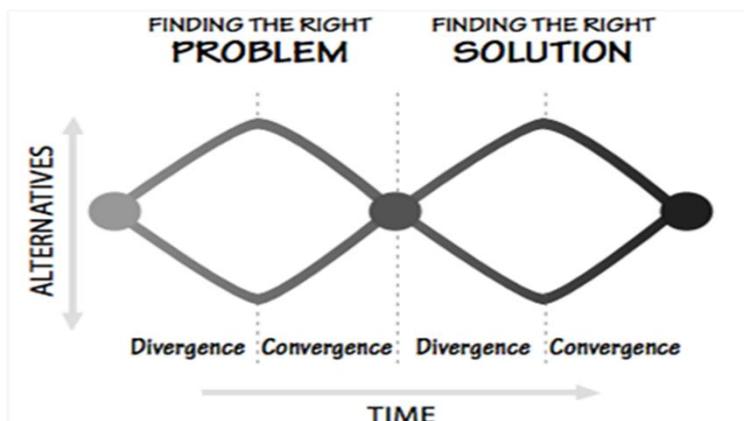
8. What do you get from the exercise (4 minutes)

**Rules for Brainstorming**

Brainstorming or brainstorming is the most used technique in all areas when it comes to achieving a massive and disorderly generation of ideas. From which some valid idea for our problem may arise later. Some rules improve the operation of this technique:

1. Clearly define the problem
2. The goal is to generate as many ideas as possible with the participation of all.
3. Someone will write down the ideas.
4. Accept all ideas without criticism or evaluation. Defer judgment. The key is to make everyone feel that they can express their idea and allow others to take advantage of it.
5. Listen and improve ideas. Being positive and building on the ideas of others requires some skill. During a conversation, this translates into using the "y" instead of the "but".
6. The more crazy you are the better.
7. Spend a maximum of 5 to 10 minutes.
8. Have fun but don't lose sight of the matter. Stay focused on the topic.
9. One conversation at a time. It is much more likely that the team will be based on an idea and take a creative leap if everyone pays full attention to those who share a new idea.
10. Be visual. In a shower of live ideas, we write in Post-its and then put them on a wall. Nothing creates an idea faster than drawing it. It doesn't matter if we're not Rembrandt!

Divergent and convergent BrainStorming process to find the right problem and solution:



## 2.2. Tools and resource

List all the tools needed for the exercise:

- Flipchart or board and chalks or markers

The exercise can be done in person or online using tools of collaborative environment like Google docs, Mural, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.

You can find explanation of the tool and examples in <http://creatingminds.org/tools/brainstorming.htm>

In our experience you need extra time to master the collaborative environment tools.

## 2.3. Suggestions for the trainers

The teacher should expect as a result from the students to get acquainted with a well-known tool to increase creativity that comprises from the reframing of the problem, the generation of new ideas and the selection of the idea to be implemented. It is important to let know the students the rules of brainstorming and the importance of differing judgement.

For managing the discussion of the results of the exercise for the class we recommend to be humble and avoid stressing students by lowering expectations. With the familiarity and use, mastery of the tool can be achieved and therefore better results achieved.

## 2.4. References

List books, blog posts, scientific papers to study in deep the theory and methods behind the exercise:

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De Bono, E. (1992), *Serious Creativity: Using the Power of Lateral Thinking to Create New Ideas*

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Gorman, R. H. (1978). Brainstorming your way to problem-solving ideas. *Personnel Journal*, 57(8), 438-440, 454, 456.

Rawlinson, J. G. (1981). *Creative thinking and brainstorming*. New York: Wiley.

<https://esferacreativa.com/tecnica-brainstorming/>

<http://creatingminds.org/tools/brainstorming.htm>

<http://creatingminds.org/>