

Creative Thinking

Thinking of new ideas is something that can be easy or difficult depending on how you go about the process. Some people seem to have a natural ability to come up with novel, new and exciting ideas all the time while others struggle to come up with even one idea now and again.

Understanding the processes of thinking can help us to be more creative.

Creative thinking involves using a number of techniques which will enable you, your Patrols and section to think in new ways and be more effective in realising the dreams and aspirations of your section.

There is nothing more excitingthan thinking of a new idea

There is nothing more rewarding....than seeing a new idea work

There is nothing more useful...than a new idea that helps you meet a goal

Creative thinking comes about by having the ability to create new ideas by accidentally or deliberately joining two or more unrelated ideas, thoughts or concepts together.

Thinking

Human are naturally lazy and will generally not push themselves beyond what is necessary. So, most people are happy to limit their thinking skills. 'That's impossible', 'I can't do that', 'I give up' are statements we are all fond of and say when we are confronted with tasks and thinking which requires effort. Nothing is impossible, it is only so because we can't think of a way to make it possible. By forcing yourself to think in new ways many alternative approaches and ideas can be generated to solve the same problem.

The brain divides its thinking into two forms left hand thinking and right hand thinking. The left hand side of the brain controls most of our thinking and tends to dominate it. The left hand side of the brain controls logic, calculations, analysis, ordering facts and figures whereas the right hand side of the brain controls music, colour, art, scale, rhythm. Generally speaking the right hand side of your brain tends to be the more creative side of your thinking and can visualise and connect ideas that the left hand side may reject as 'impossible'. This is often the case when trying to solve a puzzle or code. The left hand side rejects the coded message as impossible because it does not recognise the language or sequence of letters. The right hand side however can visualise a language which uses numbers instead of letters and so may provide alternative thinking. The solution therefore is a combination of left and right thinking. As the left tends to dominate it is often hard for the right to create new ideas and so we give up, but by working at it a little longer the left will recede so that the right can dominate and supply new thinking.

Group thinking

Thinking creatively is best done with others. Each member of a group can contribute an idea and the pool of ideas will spark other ideas in the group - this technique is called brainstorming. During a brainstorming session ideas are contributed no matter how mad or wild for a short period of time. Each idea is then assessed on the list for workability etc. and finally a number of possible ideas are explored.

Another good method is daydreaming, best done in a tent late at night or sitting around a campfire. Everyone is allowed to contribute their wildest daydreams - 'wouldn't it be great if....' or expand on or explore other people's ideas. It is normally best to stick to a theme or subject to get best results. When daydreaming try to image what it would be like in reality, by doing this it is often easier to see how it can happen in the future. There is a famous quote which goes along the lines of 'If you can dream it, you can do it'

Refining

Coming up with an idea can sometimes be the easy part making it work is the hard part. There are a number of ways of refining your thinking so that you have a clearer understanding of what has to be done to make it happen. Edward De Bono, a famous thinker and creator of a number of thinking techniques, uses a method called the Six Thinking Hats. Each hat has a different colour and when you are wearing or using this colour hat you only think in a particular way for a set period of time. By using this method it allows you to drag apart and explore an idea to the fullest and perhaps create new and more exciting ideas in the process. The technique is controlled by a leader who suggests the use of each thinking hat in turn - everyone thinks the same way - and monitors and takes notes of ideas and suggestions. The process can take time at first but as you practice the method your speed of processing a idea will improve.

White hat

This covers facts, figures, further information we need, gaps in knowledge. The object in using this thinking hat is to assess what we know and what we need to know to make the idea work.

Red hat

This covers feelings and emotions. The object is to find out 'gut feelings' on an idea, will it work, is it a good idea etc.

Black hat

This directs thinking in judgement and caution. It won't work because...., if we do this we are in danger because...., it is a stupid idea because... Thinking in this area should always be logical.

Yellow hat

Yellow hat thinking is positive. The object is to explore all the positive benefits and results that an idea will have.

Green hat

The green hat is the creativity hat. The object is to change, add too, expand, 'it would be interesting if....' To think of other ways to make the original idea better.

Blue hat

The blue hat control the overall process. Have we explored all the possibilities for this idea. Do we need to revisit a coloured hat again to review what we have done.

By using this process you should end up with a new idea that has been explored and can be used. As you work with your section at all levels on a weekly basis and on activities, adventures and challenges, you will become a collective thinking unit, that will be able to create new ideas and solutions to better enhance your Scouting. In your personal life learning how to think creatively allows your mind to expand and increase your capacity to learn and explore.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a technique that can be used to explore an adventure idea or suggestion. It is a visual tool that enables ideas to combine together. Often these ideas may seem unconnected to start with but through the use of the mind map or grid they can be connected to form new thinking on a subject.

The basic concept is to first place the idea on a page, it helpful to place a box around it to distinguish it as the base idea. You then invite the group, or yourself, to think of five or six things associated with the idea. These words or ideas are placed around the base idea and lines drawn to connect them. Then each of these ideas receive the same treatment until now you have perhaps 30 ideas stemming from one base idea. The process can be carried forward if you wish, or until you run out of connecting ideas. If you then study the resulting chart you will find ideas, usually on the outer edges that are different and often unconnected. These ideas however, are now connected via your mind map chart and can be used together in creating your programme.

Being creative in realising a dream

The Scouter needs to be clever and creative in transforming some ideas into a reality. For example...the section want to do parachute jumping as part of an adventure. The initial reaction of most adults is to say, 'No way, we can't do parachuting' insurance issues, safety, costs etc are offered as excuses. However, while the jumping out of planes part of parachuting may be difficult to achieve it is possible to build an adventure which allows the section to experience the thrill of parachuting. This might be possible via a parascending rig for example, or an aerial runway or a rope challenge course element known as the squirrel run. So, a Scouter needs to be creative, to see many different possibilities, and to be open to making it work!! In achieving the adventure many new opportunities for activities will come into play. In our example above, building a pioneering tower, Taking part in a rope challenge course, rigging up an aerial runway, packing a parachute, reading aerial maps, how to land etc.