A ROUTINE TO DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS

by Simon Moss

Introduction

To be awarded a PhD—and to a lesser extent a Masters by Research—your contribution to knowledge is supposed to be original and significant. But nobody really knows what this principle means (for a discussion see Clarke & Lunt, 2014). How original should a thesis be? When is a thesis significant? Regardless of the answer, this criterion does imply that you need to be creative, defined as a blend of originality and significance. This document is designed to help you generate more creative ideas.

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| Activity | Evidence | Examples |
| Consider some problems in your life, or in society, that you would like to solve. Now imagine the world, perhaps decades in the future, after these problems have been solved.  | * Feelings of anger, when coupled with hope (e.g., De Dreu, Baas, & Nijstad, 2008), as well as the passion to assist a community (Grant & Berry, 2011) can promote creativity
* This contemplation of the future can also enhance measures of creativity (Chiu, 2012; Forster et al., 2004).
 | * Would like to diminish bullying in schools and workplaces
* Want to diminish anxiety in adolescents
* Would like to diminish the level of diabetes in Indigenous communities, especially in adolescents
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| To help you uncover significant problems in society, you can also skim “Research Fronts 2020” by Clarivate—primarily to identify the prevailing and emerging topics in your field.  |  | To access this report* visit [this webpage](https://discover.clarivate.com/ResearchFronts2020_EN)
* to access the report, complete the form
* you can then download the report
* or, if you would like to borrow this report, contact simon.moss@cdu.edu.au

Once you access this report, skim the table of contents to ascertain which pages correspond to your field. Then, skim these pages to identify the prevailing and emerging research questions and research topics in your field.  |
| Locate websites that summarise some of the most interesting discoveries in research, such as www.reddit.com or sciencedaily.com. Search articles about the problems you would like to solve. Then skim about 50 of these articles as rapidly as possible and transcribe some vague thoughts or insights that you experience during this task.  | * When individuals are exposed to a rapid sequence of insights or facts, their creativity improves (Clapham, 2001; see also Pronin, Jacobs, & Wegner, 2008).
* After people are exposed to innovative people or perspectives, they solve problems more creativity (Zhou, 2003).
 | Skim the recent editions of* ScienceDaily
* EurekAlert
* Phys.org
* Psypost
* Medical Daily.

In a file, record embryonic ideas* focus on marks could amplify bullying
* bullying provokes depression perhaps more in competitive classrooms
* diabetes is associated with distress of parents in Indigenous communities—so perhaps examine mediators
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| Now repeat this task, but search a more scholarly database, such as Google Scholar. This time rate the relevance of each article you read on a scale of 1 to 100. Then, read the 5 most relevant articles twice.  | After reading articles twice, people are more likely to develop a novel perspective about this work.  | In a database called PsycInfo, search * "bullying"
* "mental health adolescents"
* "diabetes Indigenous

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| After you complete this task, you should identify one to four of these publications you feel you could extend or combine. For example, if one of these publications reports the relationship between two variables, you might want to explore the characteristics or conditions that moderate or affect this relationship.  |  | Past research indicates that motivation to excel provokes bullying. So perhaps teachers that reward excellence might amplify this motivation to excel and thus provoke bullying.  |
| Attempt to categorize some of your random thoughts into clusters of overlapping ideas.Do not be too concerned about whether or not these suggestions are feasible yet. Instead, you should adopt a playful, rather than judgmental, mindset  | * After people attempt to generate these clusters, their creativity also improves.
* Likewise, after people contemplate the categories to which ideas belong, their attention shifts to abstract concepts rather than specific details (Fujita & Han, 2009)—a mindset that fosters many variants of creativity (Forster, Friedman, & Liberman, 2004).
* A playful attitude has also been shown to enhance creativity
 | * If you want to examine whether riding a carousel might improve mental health, you might recognize that a carousel is an activity at an amusement park. You might then consider other activities at an amusement park, such as waiting in a long queue.

Cluster 1* Focus on effort reduces bullying
* Focus on learning reduces bullying
* Distressed parents increase likelihood of bullying

Perhaps initiatives that show how effort now can improve life later might diminish bullying |
| Attempt to blend or integrate these clusters to generate even more creative suggestions.  | * These blended ideas are often more original and complex (Kao, 2018).
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| Occasionally, skim interesting articles in another field or discipline, especially a field or discipline you perceive as interesting. Attempt to integrate some of the insights of this field into your research. | * Exposure to diverse fields can enhance creativity (Kelly & Kneipp, 2009)
* Exposure to diverse methods and innovations can also enhance creativity (Kelly & Kneipp, 2009)
 | * Perhaps consider social network theory to explore features of classrooms that affect levels of bullying.
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| Use Google Translate to read articles from other languages. Exposure to other cultures improves creativity | * Exposure to other languages or cultures tends to enhance creativity (Fee & Gray, 2012; Lee & Kim, 2011; Maddux, Adam, & Galinsky, 2010; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009).
 | * Read literature on Indigenous communities in Russia—translated into English
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| Consider the opposite of your ideas occasionally. Likewise, identify a limitation of your ideas as well as a few potential solutions to resolve these limitations—but you should not be too concerned about the feasibility or plausibility of these solutions initially | * Attempts to reconcile conflicting perspectives also enhances creativity (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011).
* After people consider the impediments or obstacles to their proposals, their capacity to uncover creative solutions actually improves (Marguc, Forster, & Van Kleef, 2011)—especially if they do not judge their solutions (Litchfield, 2009; Paulus, Kohn, & Arditti, 2011).
 | * You might, for example, consider the dangers of carousels, for example
* If one of your ideas is to explore how horse riding could improve mental health, you might decide that horse riding is hard to organize and a carousel might be better instead
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 Furthermore, researchers have uncovered a range of methods that can be applied to improve creativity. The following table outlines these methods.

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| Activity | Evidence |
| To extend your ideas, you could visit a distant location that is surrounded by nature—environments that tend to promote creative ability. While clenching your left hand, you could describe the feelings and sensations you experience as well as the sights, sounds, or smells that surround your body.  | * Distant locations (McCoy & Evans, 2002), natural surroundings (Jia, Hirt, & Kapen, 2009), clenching the left hand (Goldstein, Revivo, Kreitler, & Metuki, 2010), and mindfulness (Berkovich-Ohana, Glicksohn, Dotan Ben-Soussan, & Goldstein, 2017; Agnoli, Vanucci, Pelagatti, & Corazza, 2018) all enhance creativity
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| You could perhaps complete part or all these tasks at night, in a dim room—a room that is lit by a single lamp with a naked light bulb.  | * These physical features tend to foster creative insights (Slepian, et al., 2010; Steidle & Werth 2013).
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| While listening to happy music or drinking tea, you could identify two to five strengths or talents you have developed or are developing now—especially strengths or talents your friends or colleagues do not share. You could then decide which of these strengths or talents you most cherish  | * Happy music (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017) and drinking tea (Huang, Huang, Choe, Lee, Wang, Wu, & Wang, 2018) enhance creativity. A focus on your unique qualities can also improve creativity.
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