



Foundations in Design Thinking Certificate

Program Syllabus

Foundations in Design Thinking

Program Syllabus

Gain a practical understanding of the design thinking approach through our *Foundations in Design Thinking* Certificate. Earn the certificate by completing the *Insights for Innovation* and *From Ideas to Action* courses.

Courses and classes in a certificate program can be taken in any order. You will receive your program certificate upon completion of your last course.

*Your Instructors,
Teaching Team & Community.....* **03**

*Planning for a Successful
Learning Experience* **04**

COURSE 01
Insights for Innovation..... **07**

COURSE 02
From Ideas to Action **15**



Your Instructors, Teaching Team & Community

A wide range of individuals are stakeholders in your success in learning design thinking. As a learner, you'll interact with:

INSTRUCTORS

IDEO U courses are taught by experts and IDEO practitioners who have honed their skills over many years in the field bringing new ideas to market. They bring real-world case studies and examples into their recorded video lessons.

TEACHING TEAM

Receive support from a team of design thinking practitioners with teaching and facilitation expertise. These experienced professionals are present to guide discussions, foster peer connection, and provide feedback on your assignments.

COURSE COMMUNITY

Learn alongside a cohort of hundreds of passionate professionals from around the world seeking to bring innovation and creativity to their work. The IDEO U community spans 120 countries and countless professions and industries. Build your professional network by making valuable connections in each course.



MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Insights for Innovation

COE LETA STAFFORD

Managing Director of IDEO U



Since joining IDEO in 2006, Coe has led numerous creative teams across diverse organizations including Microsoft, Target, Intel, Wells Fargo, Ford, eBay, Hasbro, Sesame Street, and Government and Healthcare groups. Known for expertise in digital design, play, and data, her work has won international awards, patents for clients, and been featured in the New York Times and Wired. Coe Leta has a Ph.D. in Education from UC Berkeley and guest lectures at Stanford University's d.School.

JANE FULTON SURI

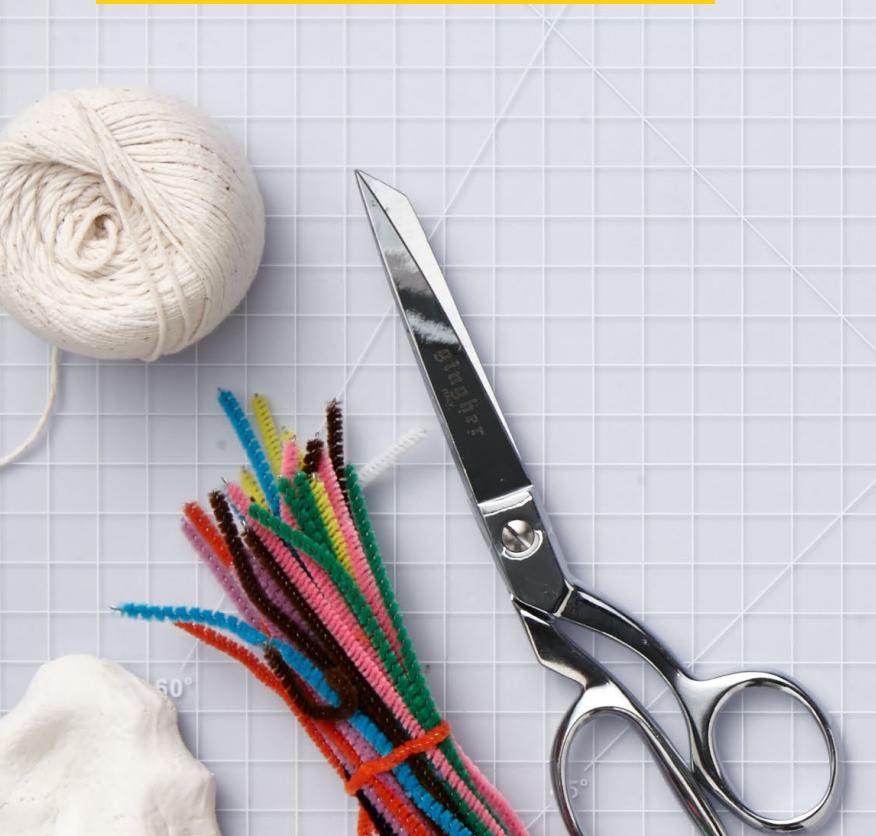
Partner Emeritus and Executive Design Director at IDEO



Jane founded IDEO's practice of human-centered insights, pioneering approaches that spread throughout organizations across the globe. To increase access to this approach, Jane published IDEO's Method Cards and Thoughtless Acts? Observations on Intuitive Design, a collection of snapshots that depict the subtle and creative ways in which people interact with the world. Jane lectures at Stanford, Harvard and other universities internationally.

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS

From Ideas to Action



BRENDAN BOYLE

*Partner at IDEO and founder
of IDEO's Play Lab*

Under Brendan's leadership, the Play Lab, IDEO's toy-invention studio exploring kid-centered solutions to the challenge of boredom, has invented and licensed hundreds of consumer products. Brendan also consults with companies about redesigning their organizational behavior to include space for play, wrote the course From Play to Innovation offered at Stanford's d.School, and co-authored the award-winning encyclopedia of never-before-seen inventions, *The Klutz Book of Inventions*.



Planning for a Successful Learning Experience

The IDEO U learning experience centers on four key ways of engaging, all designed to help you understand and retain new knowledge. In each lesson you have the opportunity to see, try, share, and reflect. This isn't a passive experience—to get the most out of each course, we recommend that you plan to engage with your fellow learners and practice your new skills with others in real-world settings.

To be successful in a course, we recommend planning for a **minimum of 4 hours of work per week**, including time to watch videos and read articles, complete assignments, and engage in discussion and reflection.



SCHEDULE TIME FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Some assignments will require you to engage with others outside of the course—hosting a brainstorm, for example. It may be helpful to plan these sessions in advance. Find more information on assignments and activities in the lesson breakdowns in this syllabus.

PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL VIDEO CALLS

These optional sessions offer the chance to engage with your peers, dive deeper into course concepts, and broaden your perspective. If you can't attend each week, try to participate in at least one of these video chats.

GIVE FEEDBACK

We believe that asking for and giving feedback play crucial roles in learning. Use our in-course feedback guide to give constructive feedback and make valuable connections with your peers and the Teaching Team.

STAY IN TOUCH

Your learning isn't over when the course closes. Tune in to hear from today's leading innovation experts and change makers on the [IDEO U Creative Confidence Podcast](#), get access to our LinkedIn alumni group, and consider guiding others through their IDEO U learning experience as an Alumni Coach.



Insights for Innovation

Course Syllabus

[VIEW COURSE](#)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify what really matters to your end users.
- Solve challenges using design thinking methods.
- Apply immersive technique to adopt your users' perspectives.
- Synthesize what you learn into an actionable insight.

TIME COMMITMENT

- We recommend a minimum of 4 hours per week.

Insights for Innovation is at the heart of what IDEO is known for—human-centered design. This 5-week course, an in-depth focus on the first phase of design thinking, will ground you in the needs of the people you're creating for. In this course, you'll develop empathy for your customers and surface insights for creating products and services they want and need. You'll gain practical design thinking skills and mindsets that will help you turn your customer needs into human-centered solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Choose Your Challenge

Be introduced to IDEO's approach to innovation, explore the power of insights, and choose your project challenge.

LESSON 01

Practice Observing

Practice how to listen with your eyes in order to understand what people value and care about.

LESSON 02

Interviewing

Learn activities and tools for asking the right kinds of questions and setting the stage.

LESSON 03

Empathy

Get beyond your assumptions by putting yourself in the shoes of the people you're designing for.

LESSON 04

Insights

Share compelling, quality insights that will inspire and motivate others to innovate.

COURSE

CONCLUSION

Learn how to continue to refine your skills over time and use your insights out in the world.



INTRODUCTION

Choose Your Challenge

In this lesson, you'll get a brief overview of the course, be introduced to IDEO's approach to innovation, explore the power of insights, and choose your project challenge.



VIDEO

*Insights Fuel Innovation—
Why seeing with new eyes
matters*

In this video, you'll begin to define insights. As you watch, consider how insights fuel innovation. Why is it important to see the world through different lenses?

VIDEO

*Project Challenge—
Learning by doing
through a project*

We believe in learning by doing. Consider your five-week experience a sandbox—or a place to take risks and try out new methods. You need a problem on which to practice these insights-gathering tools, so that at the end of the course you feel equipped to take them out and apply them to the challenges in your own organizations and communities. In this video, we'll introduce you to the suggested project for this course.

ACTIVITY

Choose the challenge that you will explore during this course.

JOIN A LEARNING CIRCLE

Your Learning Circle is a place to connect with a smaller community of peers working on the same challenge as you. Learning Circles are peer-led, and provide an opportunity to discuss assignments, gain inspiration, and dive deeper into course content. Join a group with those who will inspire and push your thinking. Note: Joining a Learning Circle is optional and you may also create your own.

VIDEO

*Assessing Your Progress—
How creatively
confident are you?*

In this video, you'll dust off your notebook and start getting your thoughts on paper. Let's take a closer look at "a-ha" moments and creative confidence.

DISCUSSION

Why is it important to see the world through different lenses?



LESSON 01

Practice Observing

Observing is listening with your eyes. In this lesson you'll discover how to observe others and unlock your curiosity.



LEARNING GOAL

Practice how to listen with your eyes in order to understand what people value and care about.

VIDEO

Practice Observing

In this video, you'll explore what it means to "listen with your eyes" and get an overview of the activities and mindset of this first lesson.

VIDEO

*Getting Curious—
What's in your bag?*

Time to get curious as you take a peek inside the walls of IDEO. What do these IDEO designers carry with them every day?

VIDEO

*Practice Interpreting—
Part 1: Whose life?*

Now we'll practice interpreting your observations. In this classic IDEO activity, you'll look at four photos from someone's life. What can you learn about this person through observation?

VIDEO

*See what an Expert Sees—
Part 2: Whose life?*

In this next video, you'll continue to practice observing. As you watch, make note of the what, why, and how of observation. These three simple questions will help you throughout the course.

VIDEO

*Compare an Observation
to an Interview—
Part 3: Whose Life?*

Whose life? Time to find out. Meet Katie.

VIDEO

*6 Tips for Observing—What to
Look for in the real world*

It's almost time to get out in the world and start observing. But first, check out these 6 Tips for Observing. What helps you get into a curious and non-judgmental mindset?

ACTIVITY

Practice Observing

Get out in the world and start observing your target audience and their behaviors.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you make assumptions or judgments about someone's (or a group's) character? Did you have any "a-ha moments"? What do you personally find most challenging about listening with your eyes?

EXPLORE MORE

There are endless ways to train your eye. Here are more examples to inspire and help you practice seeing with new eyes.



LESSON 02

Interviewing

Asking the right kinds of questions is just one aspect of becoming a great interviewer. Setting the stage is equally as important. The activities and tools in this lesson will help you hone your skills at both.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn activities and tools for asking the right kinds of questions and setting the stage.

VIDEO

An Interview Gone Wrong—And how to make it right

In this video, you're going to take a look at an interview gone wrong. Sometimes seeing something done wrong can help you get it right.

VIDEO

5 Tips for Interviewing—Conducting an awesome conversation

Great interviews take practice and a deep sense of self-awareness. Here are five tips for interviewing others.

ACTIVITY

Conduct an Interview

In this assignment, you'll plan and conduct an interview. As you work on it, think back to our tips for interviewing and how you might use these to get to deeper, more honest answers.

PEER FEEDBACK

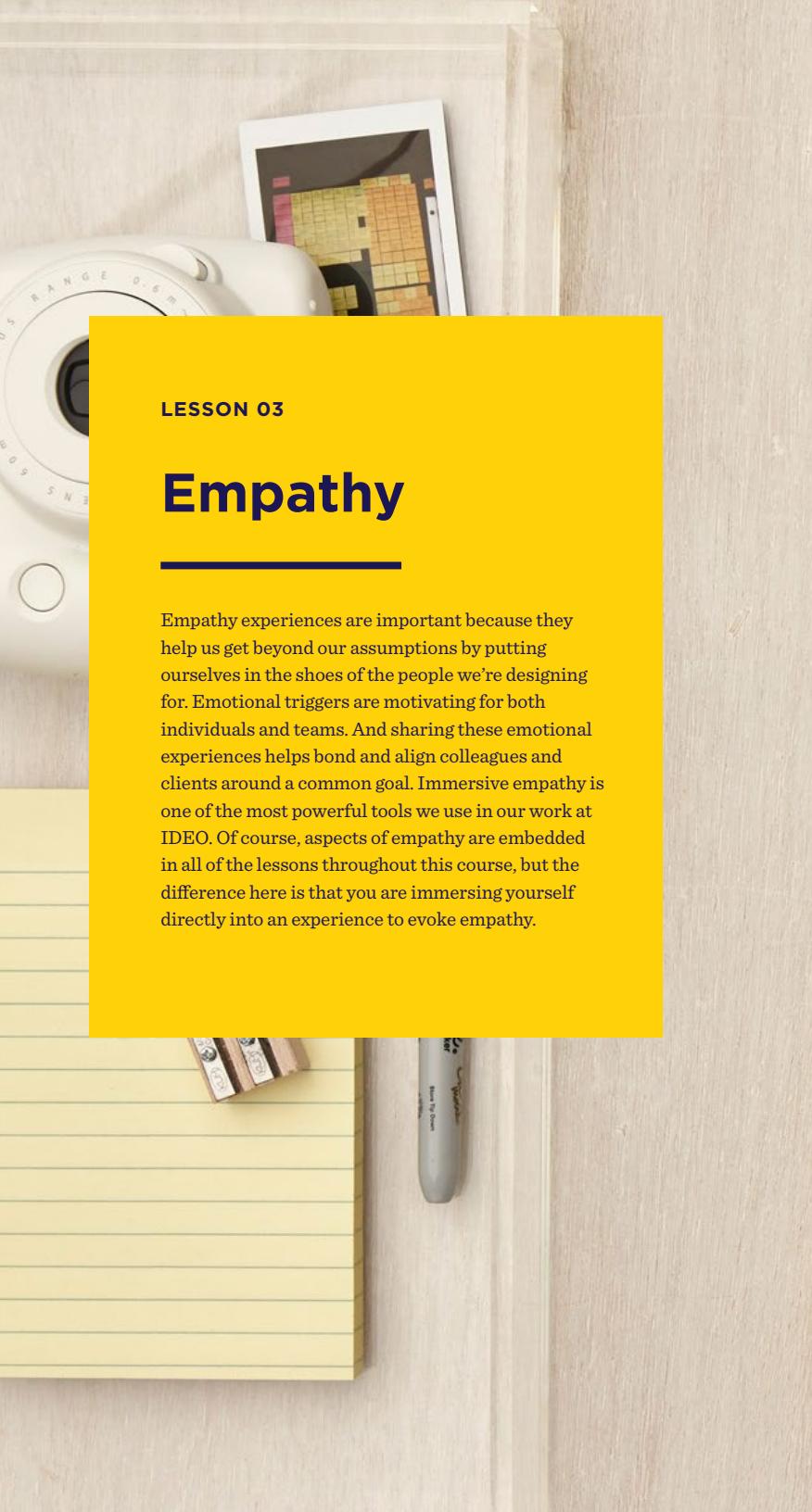
Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you practice true curiosity? Were you able to move past pre-existing assumptions, judgement and stereotypes about people and the problem?

EXPLORE MORE

Good interviewing takes practice. Check out these additional resources if you want some more tips, tricks, and perspective.



LESSON 03

Empathy

Empathy experiences are important because they help us get beyond our assumptions by putting ourselves in the shoes of the people we're designing for. Emotional triggers are motivating for both individuals and teams. And sharing these emotional experiences helps bond and align colleagues and clients around a common goal. Immersive empathy is one of the most powerful tools we use in our work at IDEO. Of course, aspects of empathy are embedded in all of the lessons throughout this course, but the difference here is that you are immersing yourself directly into an experience to evoke empathy.

LEARNING GOAL

Get beyond your assumptions by putting yourself in the shoes of the people you're designing for.

VIDEO

*Why Empathy Matters—
A visceral way to
inspire action*

In this video, we'll share how immersing in empathy allows our senses to become tools for learning and gathering insights. How does empathy spark creative problem solving?

VIDEO

*An Exercise in Empathy—
Cycling commutes around
the world*

This video will help you practice seeing through other people's perspectives. You'll meet three individuals from around the globe and get a first-person view of their daily bicycle commute. As you watch this video, keep track of how each bike ride makes you feel.

VIDEO

*4 Tips for Empathy
Immersion—Ways to
experience new perspectives*

In this video, you'll take a closer look at immersive empathy. As you watch, think about how our 4 tips for empathy immersion might help you and your team uncover solutions in new ways.

ACTIVITY

*Conduct an
Empathy Experience*

Design and conduct an empathy experience to better understand a different perspective. The steps provided will help walk you through the planning and implementation process.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Were you able to challenge some of your incoming assumptions to discover surprising needs and opportunities? If not, re-examine your experience with an increased attention to the objects, environments and interactions you encountered. How did each affect you (Or not affect you? "Flat" moments can be great opportunities for intervention)? What's challenging about walking in someone else's shoes? What ways might you practice empathy in your daily life?

EXPLORE MORE

Want to learn new ways to approach immersive empathy? Check out these additional resources.



LESSON 04

Insights

Take what you've learned—through observation, interviewing, and immersing in empathy—and turn it into compelling insights that you'll share with others. This is a critical step that turns insights into fuel for innovation. Even if you are working independently, it's still great practice to capture your insights to motivate and guide yourself.

LEARNING GOAL

Share compelling, quality insights that will inspire and motivate others to innovate.

VIDEO

The Anatomy of an Insight—Leveraging what you've learned

At this point in the course, you've probably identified lots of interesting opportunities in your project challenge, but you might be asking, "Which of these are insights?" In this video, you will learn how to define and craft compelling insights.

VIDEO

4 Steps for Summarizing Insights—Narrow down and make sense of it all

Now it's time to narrow down your learnings. Here are 4 tips for summarizing insights.

ACTIVITY

Final Project

Now it's time to distill what you've learned from the previous lessons. Move through the 4 Steps for Summarizing Insights to narrow down and create one to three insights.

You'll then incorporate these insights, along with specific pieces of evidence or things learned while observing, interviewing, and immersing in empathy, to create an Insights Report that brings your insights to life through images, quotes and stories. If possible, do with a group.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you use visuals to bring your story to life? Consider how you might amplify your audience's connection with the people and the problem through thoughtful visual storytelling. What was challenging about capturing insights? In your own words, what makes for a compelling insight?

EXPLORE MORE

Want more on how good insights are used to identify new opportunities for products, services, and experiences? Resources here.

Course Conclusion

Take what you've learned—through observation, interviewing, and immersing in empathy—and turn it into compelling insights that you'll share with others. This is a critical step that turns insights into fuel for innovation. Even if you are working independently, it's still great practice to capture your insights to motivate and guide yourself.

VIDEO

Insights are just the beginning

You've almost made it to the end of your course journey, but insights gathering doesn't stop here. Before we bid you adieu, you'll hear some final thoughts from Coe Leta and Jane, and complete your final project. In this video, you'll learn how to continue to refine your skills over time and use your insights out in the world.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

What was the biggest challenge you faced in gathering insights? Reflect on how you overcame or might overcome this challenge. What was the most revealing moment for you in the course? How will you apply what you've learned to a current challenge in your life or work? Share your "a-ha" moments.

EXPLORE MORE

If you're seeking additional inspiration, here are a few starters. We encourage everyone to add to the list.

02

From Ideas to Action

Course Syllabus

[VIEW COURSE](#)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Apply ideation methods to generate new and useful ideas.
- Identify the right parts of your idea to test.
- Build quick and early experiments to prototype solutions.
- Refine your ideas by sharing them and gathering feedback.

TIME COMMITMENT

- We recommend a minimum of 4 hours per week.

From Ideas to Action is a deep dive into the design thinking skills of ideation, prototyping, and iteration. This 5-week course will teach you how to frame your ideas as experiments and bring others in on your vision of the future. Use experimentation to learn from failure and move from incremental to radical innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1

An introduction to three approaches that will get you from ideas to action: ideation, prototyping, and iteration.

LESSON 01

The Art of Ideating

Week 2

Get comfortable with generating an abundance of ideas, even ones that might seem ridiculous at first.

LESSON 02

Rapid Prototyping

Week 3

Learn how to make your ideas tangible so you can share, get feedback, and push them even further.

LESSON 03

Iterate Your Way Forward

Week 4

Learn how to move your idea forward through multiple rounds of ideation and prototyping.

COURSE

CONCLUSION

Final Project

Week 5

Wrap up with a final project summarizing your key takeaways and highlighting your plans for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Choose Your Challenge

In this lesson, you'll get a brief course overview, review how insights help spark ideas that lead to action, and choose your challenge. The challenge you choose should be a problem you're genuinely interested in generating ideas about and bringing to life through prototypes.



VIDEO

From Ideas to Action—Ideate, Prototype, and Iterate your way forward

What prevents us from sharing our ideas with the world? Or, bringing them to life in droves? Is it fear of judgement or failure? Or not knowing where to start? We want to explore these questions with you in this course. To begin, let's look at three approaches that will get you from ideas to action.

VIDEO

Design Thinking & Insights—Understanding the role of insights

You might have already taken our *Insights for Innovation* course. If so, this will be review for you. If you haven't yet, we're going to give you our best recap in less than three minutes to help better situate you in the design thinking process.

ACTIVITY

Choose the challenge that you will explore during this course.

JOIN A LEARNING CIRCLE

Your Learning Circle is a place to connect with a smaller community of peers working on the same challenge as you. Learning Circles are peer-led, and provide an opportunity to discuss assignments, gain inspiration, and dive deeper into course content. Join a group with those who will inspire and push your thinking. Note: Joining a Learning Circle is optional and you may also create your own.

LESSON 01

The Art of Ideating

In this lesson, we're going to talk about ideation. Ideation is all about exploring new possibilities and coming up with solutions to challenges. That means you have to quickly generate, develop, and test ideas.



LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, we're going to talk about ideation. Ideation is all about exploring new possibilities and coming up with solutions to challenges. That means you have to quickly generate, develop, and test ideas.

VIDEO

What is Ideation?—Getting comfortable with divergent thinking

If you land on a solid idea, why should you keep generating more possible solutions? Shouldn't you just stop when you've come up with something good? At IDEO, we believe some of the most brilliant ideas come when you fight the urge to stop on an early solution and embrace the discomfort that comes from exploring more. Let's take a look at how divergent thinking invites you to play longer and stretch beyond your early ideas.

ACTIVITY

Creative Muscle Warm Up

Here's your chance to warm up your creative muscles.

VIDEO

Ideation Methods—Ways to generate ideas

Our world needs more ideas. Outrageous ideas. Brilliant ideas. Paradigm-shifting ideas. There's a lot to figure out, and we need your input. In the name of that game, let's introduce you to some effective ideation methods that will help you generate tons of ideas.

VIDEO

Brainstorm Rules—Leading your own brainstorm

What do you think of when you hear the word brainstorm? What is it? Why is it useful? Take a minute or two to jot down what comes to mind. In this video, you'll hear what David Kelley, founder of IDEO, has to say about what makes for an effective brainstorm.

ACTIVITY

Zoo Ideation Activity

Run your own ideation session to generate ideas for how to increase attendance at the local zoo. Share back with the community. What were some of your wildest ideas? Get visual if you can. Show us. What were some of the key takeaways?

VIDEO

*Observe Experts
Brainstorming—See an IDEO team in action*

Now that you've run your own zoo ideation session, take a look at how we approached the same challenge here at IDEO. What stands out to you?

VIDEO

Converging After Idea Generation—How to make choices and move forward

Generating tons of ideas is great. But it's equally important to know when and how to focus in on the ideas with true potential. In this video, we'll help you get from what could be to what should be.

ACTIVITY

Ideate

It's time to ideate around the project challenge you selected in the Introduction. Let's get comfortable with quantity.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

In a few sentences, reflect on your ideation session. What were some of the challenges you faced as a facilitator? What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges? If you went through the ideation session solo, what did you find challenging about the process? What hurt a little? To deepen your reflection, comment on another learner's post.

LESSON 02

Rapid Prototyping

Getting tangible with your ideas is a great way to work through the kinks and get to better solutions faster.



LEARNING GOAL

Learn how to make your ideas tangible so you can share, get feedback, and push them even further.

VIDEO

Why Prototype?—Make your ideas tangible and shareable

Let's say you have a brilliant idea. How do you invite others to experience something that exists only in your brain? How do you start making your idea tangible? We'll explain how prototypes help us solve for each of these questions.

VIDEO

Types of Prototypes—Anything can be prototyped

What's a prototype? Is it a model made out of glue and scrap wood? Is it the first draft of a story? Let's find out in this next video.

VIDEO

Show Me Your Prototype—Predict what became of early prototypes

We're about to take you on a virtual tour of IDEO to check out some early ideas. Let's play a little game we call "Show me your prototype."

VIDEO

3 Steps for Prototyping—Build, share, and reflect

Building a prototype is only part of the process. In this video, we'll share a simple framework that will help you move your prototype forward.

ACTIVITY

Tinfoil Hat Activity

In this activity, you're going to get your hands dirty and build to think.

VIDEO

Tinfoil Hats in Action—IDEOers tackle the challenge

Let's see how a group of IDEOers approached the Tin Foil Hat Activity. As you watch, pay attention to the energy of the room. What would it take for you to host your own tin foil hat challenge?

ACTIVITY

Prototype

Now, it's time to prototype your idea from Lesson 1. Don't overthink it. Just start building.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you push yourself to truly 'flare' again, and to move beyond honing your initial idea? Remember, if you haven't built a prototype that has failed yet, you haven't pushed far enough! What about prototyping felt uncomfortable? Which aspects of your prototype were people drawn to? To deepen your reflection, comment on another learner's post.

EXPLORE MORE

There's still a lot to explore in the world of prototyping. Check out these resources

LESSON 03

Iterate Your Way Forward

When we iterate, we repeat the process of ideation and prototyping to move our ideas forward.



LEARNING GOAL

Learn how to move your idea forward through multiple rounds of ideation and prototyping.

VIDEO

Why we Iterate—Fail early to succeed sooner

Thomas Edison said, "I haven't failed. I've just found ten thousand ways that do not work." Why is trial and error so important? In this video, we're going to explore the power of repetition.

VIDEO

4 Steps to Iterate—Managing risk and refining your ideas

It's easy to fall into the trap of racing ahead the second your idea gains traction. But you should take your time. Iteration will save you time in the end. Resist the urge to charge forward. Rinse. And then repeat. So, how do you start iterating?

VIDEO

SFUSD School Lunch Project

Let's take a look at the larger scope of the SFUSD School Lunch Project. We hope you enjoy hearing from some key players of this collaboration.

ACTIVITY

Iterate

Now it's time to apply what you've learned to your challenge.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you push yourself to truly 'flare' again, and to move beyond honing your initial idea? How has your plan for future prototyping shifted in surprising ways? What helped you get there?

VIDEO

Conversations with Brendan

We caught up with Brendan at the IDEO Toy Lab to have him answer a few questions we have been seeing in discussions and hearing in Community Conversations.

EXPLORE MORE

For more on iteration, check out the following resources.

Course Conclusion: Final Project

In this final lesson, you'll hear some closing remarks from Brendan and wrap up with a final project to create a pitch summarizing your key takeaways and highlighting your plans for the future.



VIDEO

*Course Conclusion—
Play, build, and experiment*

You're almost there. Let's turn it over to our professor of play to wrap up this course.

ACTIVITY

Final Project

It's time to bring together everything that you've learned in the course. You'll be building upon your previous assignments to create a pitch to senior leadership.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

What was your creative confidence before and after the course? Really think about how or why it changed. What was the most revealing moment for you in the course? The “a-ha” moment.



“Design thinking isn’t just a method—it fundamentally changes the fabric of your organization and your business.”

DAVID KELLEY

Founder of IDEO and the Stanford d.school

[Learn more about the IDEO U Foundations in Design Thinking Certificate.](#)

For any additional questions, reach out to us at hello@ideou.com