# Ideation

## Ideation:

- Ideation is the mode of the design process in which you concentrate on idea generation.
- Mentally it represents a process of 'going wide' in terms of concepts and outcomes.
- Ideation provides both the fuel and also the source material for building prototypes and getting innovative solutions into the hands of your users.

## Ideation Will Help You:

- Ask the right questions and innovate with a strong focus on your users, their needs, and your insights about them.
- Step beyond the obvious solutions and therefore increase the innovation potential of your solution.
- Bring together perspectives and strengths of your team members.
- Uncover unexpected areas of innovation.
- Create volume and variety in your innovation options.
- Get obvious solutions out of your heads, and drive your team beyond them.

## Why do we Need Ideation in Design Thinking?

We'll let Grand Old Man of User Experience, Don Norman, answer this important question in a down-to-earth and very relevant way. Don Norman helps us take one step back and reflect upon why we need to challenge assumptions, ask stupid questions and provoke our current understanding, which is—in fact—what Ideation methods such as Challenge Assumptions, SCAMPER, and Provocations help us do.

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## Get Started in Applying Ideation Methods

Ideation facilitation is a challenging and complex task. It requires experience in understanding and managing teams, people dynamics, adaptability and flexibility and a range of other soft skills, which in reality are really hard to master. Having said that, there's nothing like experience to help you learn the ropes of any field. The best way to learn is to take the theory and techniques you learn from the experts, and then apply and test them in your own context and adapt them to your own needs.

## Preparation before the Storm

When we're about to venture into stormy territory, we know we need to prepare for a bumpy ride and take extra provisions so that we come out on the other side and arrive at our destination unscathed. An ideation process such as Brainstorming or Challenging Assumptions is no different. Wandering into a Brainstorm without preparation is asking for trouble. You may inadvertently damage your team's perception of ideation and scar them for future creative activities. You could also damage team cohesion by going into a situation like this and causing team members to fall out with each other due to a brainstorming session gone wrong.

## How to Prepare Before You Start Ideating

Even though Design Thinking is not a linear process, it is crucial to take into account the first two stages or modes in Design Thinking before you start ideating. If you neglect to take these two modes and their guidelines into account before an Ideation session, you risk becoming lost. The Empathise and Define guidelines will help you develop the sufficient background knowledge and set a clear goal for your ideation sessions.

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## 1st Mode: Empathise

Design Thinking's first two modes or stages – as presented by the d-school and us here at the Interaction Design Foundation – can help us prepare for the Ideation session. The first part of the preparation is the Empathise mode, which is all about researching and observing in field studies – and watching, engaging with and listening to your users:

The Empathy mode will help you conduct relevant research and become an instant-expert on the subject and gain invaluable empathy for the person you are designing for.

## 2nd Mode: Define

The next stage, which you should to take into account when preparing an ideation session, is the Define mode, which is all about making sense of the widespread information you have gathered in the first mode:

Defining involves synthesising and making sense of all the available information you gathered during the Empathise mode, by discovering connections and patterns. You will often want to use methods such as Affinity Diagrams, and Sharing Inspiring User Stories and Personas. By the end of the Define mode, your goal is to construct a meaningful and actionable problem statement, also known as a Point Of View (POV).

## 3rd mode: Ideate

When you've developed your POV it's time to start ideating. Begin with your Point Of View or problem statement. Break that larger challenge up into smaller actionable pieces. Look for aspects of the statement to complete the sentence, "How might we…?"

## Characteristics Required for Successful Ideation

❖ **Adapting:** Be able to switch how you see, understand, and extend thinking as new input gets generated.

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* **Connecting:** Be able to connect seemingly unrelated concepts, attributes or themes in order to create new possibilities.

* **Disrupting:** Be able to overturn commonly held beliefs, assumptions or norms in order to re-think conventional approaches.

* **Flipping:** Turn dead-ends or deadlocks into opportunities by flipping them over or rapidly changing direction towards greater viability.

* **Dreaming and Imagining:** Be able to visualise a new picture of reality by turning abstract needs into tangible pictures or stories, thereby allowing the space required for inventing bridges to that reality.

* **Experimental:** Be open and curious enough to explore possibilities and take risks; be willing and eager to test out ideas and eager to venture into the unknown.

* **Recognise Patterns:** Seek to spot common threads of meaning, and ways of seeing, doing and behaving; be able to recognise attributes or shared values across a spectrum of influence and input; and finally be able to utilize these commonalities to build solutions.

* **Curiosity:** Be willing to ask uncomfortable, silly or even crazy questions. Be willing to explore and experience, in order to understand and learn something new and different.