

Overview for The Habits of Entrepreneurial Mindset

A **mindset** refers to a set of internal framings, attitudes, awarenesses, dispositions, habits of mind, values, etc. that help us navigate our complex, interconnected world. An **entrepreneurial mindset** (EM) is a subset of these mental attributes focused on discovery and exploration, innovation and impact, value creation and scale, as well as personal drive and initiative.

The KEEN Framework uses the 3Cs of Curiosity, Connections, and Creating Value to define EM and provides a roadmap for educators. The Habits of Entrepreneurial Mindset document supports and builds upon the KEEN Framework by emphasizing the importance of cultivating mental habits rather than merely labeling activities as embodying the 3Cs.

The habits listed in this document are meant to be a tool for faculty to sharpen the definitions of the 3Cs with specific characterizations, reinforcing that EM is a collection of interrelated mental habits.

Our goal with EM is to foster enduring mental habits in students. Each broad category listed has the power to transform the way students think, enhance technical excellence, and change entire career trajectories.

The EM Habits

- **Curiosity:** Habits that fuel exploration, challenge assumptions, and reveal opportunities.
- **Connections:** Habits that integrate different perspectives, ideas, and systems to drive innovation and impact.
- **Creating Value:** Habits focused on delivering meaningful outcomes that benefit others at scale.
- **Action Orientation/Agency:** Habits that drive initiative, persistence, and proactive problem-solving.
- **EM-Enhancing Foundations:** Entrepreneurial mindset is enriched through ethical thinking, continuous improvement, and self-awareness.

These habits address common misconceptions about what EM and the 3Cs represent. For example:

- If an instructor does something **curious**, is that EM? No—not unless it develops habits that fuel exploration, challenge assumptions, or reveal opportunities.
- If an instructor makes **connections** between theory and the real world, is that EM? No—not unless it develops habits that drive innovation and impact.
- Is education alone sufficient to count as **creating value** in EM? No—not unless it fosters habits that help students deliver meaningful outcomes to others.
- If an instructor employs active learning, is that connected to **action orientation** in EM? No—not unless it increases students' drive, persistence, and proactive problem-solving.

You can find an expanded list of these habits with select, specific examples on page two.

The Habits of Entrepreneurial Mindset

While habits can be developed individually, they work best in combination with others.

- **Curiosity:** Habits that fuel exploration, challenge assumptions, and reveal opportunities.
 - Inquisitive: Leans into work with curiosity about our changing world.
 - Contrarian Thinking: Explores alternative or disruptive views of current or accepted solutions.
 - Opportunity Seeking: Actively identifies trends and unmet needs to uncover new opportunities.
 - Experimentation: Constantly experiments and iterates to refine methods and solutions.
 - Embracing Ambiguity: Develops comfort with uncertainty to make decisions when information is limited.
- **Connections:** Habits that integrate different perspectives, ideas, and systems to drive innovation and impact.
 - Creativity: Integrates information from disparate sources to spark new ideas.
 - Systems Thinking: Recognizes interdependencies in systems and identifies leverage points.
 - Implications Thinking: Anticipates the long-term impacts and consequences of actions.
 - Strategic Thinking: Develops long-term strategies with clear milestones.
 - Assess and Manage Risk: Proactively incorporates risk management into decision-making.
- **Creating Value:** Habits focused on delivering meaningful outcomes that benefit others at scale.
 - Value Awareness: Focuses on solutions where extraordinary value can be created.
 - Customer-Centric Thinking: Frames efforts in terms of the customers' actual needs.
 - Scale: Leverages systems and networks to expand reach and maximize outcomes.
 - Persistence: Maintains sustained effort to achieve goals despite obstacles or delays.
 - Socially Mindful: Prioritizes creating meaningful and positive societal impacts.
- **Action Orientation/Agency:** Habits that drive initiative, persistence, and proactive problem-solving.
 - Initiative: Drives progress by initiating solutions and creating forward momentum.
 - Resilience: Bounces back from setbacks and recovers from failures.
 - Continuous Improvement: Continuously refines methods to enhance outcomes.
 - Adaptable: Adapts strategies and pivots to respond effectively to changing conditions.
 - Resourcefulness: Solves problems creatively with available resources.
- **EM-Enhancing Foundations:** Entrepreneurial mindset is enriched through ethical thinking, continuous improvement, and self-awareness.
 - Character: Considers the ethical implications of decisions.
 - Growth Mindset: Embraces learning and feedback for development.
 - Intellectual Humility: Acknowledges limitations, seeks diverse perspectives, and avoids overattachment to one's own ideas.
 - Accountability: Takes responsibility for actions, decisions, and their consequences.
 - Metacognition: Reflects on thought processes to improve self-awareness.

Criteria for the EM

Criterion I: Does the intervention foster a mindset?

Level	Description
Not a Mindset	The intervention focuses on skillsets, tasks, or technical abilities without targeting habits of thinking, acting, or mental approaches.
Somewhat Mindset-Oriented	The intervention includes elements that encourage students to reflect or shift their thinking, but achieves this indirectly or without a clear focus on mindset or mental habits.
Clearly Mindset-Oriented	The intervention explicitly targets habits of thinking, awareness, values, dispositions, and internal approaches to problem solving (e.g., curiosity, implications thinking, persistence).

Criterion II: Is the mindset an entrepreneurial mindset? (see *The Habits of EM*)

Level	Description
Not Entrepreneurial	The intervention fosters habits or mindsets unrelated to entrepreneurial thinking (e.g., habits of pure technical mastery, soft skills, or general professional skills).
Somewhat Entrepreneurial	The intervention fosters habits that overlap with entrepreneurial mindset but may not clearly align with developing habits like curiosity, connections, value creation, action orientation/agency.
Aligned with Entrepreneurial Thinking	The intervention intentionally develops habits that support entrepreneurial thinking (e.g., habits of exploration, integration, value creation, or taking action) as exemplified by the EM habits.

Criterion III: Are the habits of mind clear to the student?

Level	Description
Implicit	Mindset development is hidden or unaddressed. Students may benefit incidentally, but the mindset is not explicitly discussed or made clear or accessible to students in the learning intervention.
Somewhat Explicit	The intervention includes reflective or discussion elements, but they are inconsistent or unclear, leaving students unsure about the mindset or habits that are being developed.
Explicit	The intervention ensures mindset development is explicit through intentional discussions, reflections, or exercises, helping students consciously engage with, develop, and take ownership of the mindset.

For high-quality examples of EML, use the “advanced search” tool on engineeringunleashed.com and click the “exemplar” checkbox under “Quality Content.”