

Mike's Ways to Work on Creative Thinking When You Have More Time

1

Write Stuff Down

Keep a creativity notebook where you write down everything you're curious about or things you've picked up along the way. It is important that these things be handwritten – since the act of writing also encourages more neural connections and increases the likelihood your ideas will connect to each other. Note random ideas that occur to you – the more random the better. Add sketches if you like. If it was good enough for Leonardo Da Vinci, it's good enough for you. This notebook can be a resource when you need inspiration....

-[How to Be a Creative Genius Like da Vinci \(podcast\)](#)

2

Sleeping on a Problem

Scientists have known for some time that the act of putting your problem aside until the next morning can yield a solution. The secret to success? Having something to take notes on, by hand – no devices, ready when inspiration strikes the next morning.

- [Sleep for Success: Creativity and the Neuroscience of Sleep](#)



3

Relax

Make a point of learning a few relaxation techniques and practice at least one per day. Do this like it's your job – because in a sense it is. When the physical body is relaxed the brain turns inward and begins making associations between random ideas emanating in the subconscious. This is where sparks of inspiration and creativity can suddenly come from.

-[Neuroscience: Relaxing Makes You More Creative](#)

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Travel or at Least Take a New Route

Travel has been shown to greatly increase creativity, but travel is not something we can all do at the drop of a hat. An alternative is to avoid driving, or especially walking, the same route to a place you go frequently. By finding new ways to get from A to B you'll not only stimulate your creative problem solving parts of your brain, but you'll start to see your world with new eyes.

-[4 Ways Travel Increases Creativity](#)

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Structured Walking

Go for a walk down a street or path where there are lamp posts or something else at regular intervals. Now count your steps for alternating intervals. By focusing on how many steps are between alternating sections of the walk you are occupying the conscious part of your brain, freeing up the unconscious. Alternatively do some research to see if your community has any a public labyrinth. Walking on these devices serves the same purpose.

-[Stanford study finds walking improves creativity](#)

6

Getting Lost

In the age of GPS-enabled smartphones this can be harder to do than it once was, but it is absolutely worthwhile. Walk, ride or drive in a pattern away from the familiar. Maybe do this by taking alternate right and left turns until you are lost. Once lost, explore the place you find yourself. This forcing the brain to confront the “new” encourages the brain to be open to the “new.”

-[Looking for Your Next Big Idea? Get Lost ... Literally](#)

7

Examine Everything More Closely

Become a scientist in your everyday environment. If it's not interesting to you, you're not looking closely enough. One way to do this is to use a camera or the one in your phone to try to photograph the smallest part of something you see.

-[How Being More Observant Makes You More Creative](#)



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Eavesdrop on Snippets of Conversation

These conversations are happening around you all the time and you mostly shut them out. But they are a rich source of human interaction and ideas. Pay attention and then, for some brain stimulation imagine what might happen next.

-[Listening Increases the Potential for Creativity](#)

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Read a Random Page of the Dictionary

You'll likely encounter many words you didn't know existed let alone know what they mean. This is a way to introduce new ideas into your brain and allow it to make random connections.

-[Using Random Words](#)



10

Read a Random Magazine

Supermarkets and bookstores may not appreciate it, but you can also do this in the doctor or dentist's waiting room: Pick up a random magazine and flip through it. Read a random article. Pay attention to a random advertisement. Both are exposing you to new ideas.

-[To get you started: 20 independent magazines that every creative should have on their coffee table](#)

11

Turn Off the TV

No, really. Find a way to limit your TV time and if you must watch it consider the quality of what you're watching. Research has shown again and again that our brains are literally GIGO (garbage in – garbage out).

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Laugh at Yourself, Others and the World

Finding the funny in everyday situations can make you smile or even laugh out loud. Such moments can also reveal insights into the world around you that you previously had not noticed.

-[The Power of Humor in Ideation and Creativity](#)



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Eat Brain Foods

Try some of these foods (all have been noted to increase activity in the creativity linked parts of the brain) and note which may help you: whole grains, walnuts, almonds, pecans, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, eggs, green tea, avocados, spinach, broccoli, red cabbage and dark chocolate.

-[For more: 7 Foods That Can Boost Productivity and Creativity](#)

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Learn a New Language

You can do this either by taking classes or literally going to live some place where the language is not your own. Forcing your brain to think differently in this way has been shown to open new thinking and creativity pathways. It's why, for example, some famous painters have done their best work after moving to another country.

-[Can Learning a New Language Boost Your Creativity?](#)

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Have a Bucket List

Having such a list can be simply aspirational or it can be closer to a To Do List. The latter will certainly mean you will be exposed to new things if, and only if, you do one thing on it regularly.

-[How Making Lists Can Quell Anxiety and Breed Creativity](#)

