

Doodling

A. What is Doodling?

Doodling originally means ‘to draw, sketch or scribble idly’. Generally, doodling is an activity that people take up unknowingly when not able to pay attention to something else. For instance, you are sitting in a meeting and bored. Then, you start scribbling different shapes and patterns on the paper. That is a doodle. This is the reason that doodles are simple random sketches with abstract shapes.



But when you are listening to someone, you can make doodles of the information, as some sort of a record that you can visit later. So, while doodling is the result of some boredom, it is also useful when done creatively.

B. How does doodling affect the brain?

So, what's going on in our brains when we doodle? Well, usually when we do it, it's out of boredom, frustration or to release stress. Experts describe doodling as like a safety valve, that allows us to release pressure in a safe and non-threatening way.

However, there's far more going on than meets the eye. Firstly, doodling is thought to give us a powerful mirror into our sub-conscious. This can allow us to tap into other concepts and ideas we might not have otherwise considered. Doodling is also thought to give certain processes in the

brain a break, while firing up other, more helpful ones. Below, we delve into how doodling affects the cognitive processes of the brain.

C. Benefits of doodling for creativity, productivity and focus:

01. Doodling stops your brain from slipping into default state:

When your brain has nothing to do, current research suggests that it goes into a default mode, enabling certain circuits that let it sit and wait for the next task without using up too much energy.

The default mode network is what is active when you are daydreaming, or when you are replaying memories in your head. But sometimes instead of daydreaming, what you need is for your brain to disengage but to still be paying attention to outside stimuli. That is where doodling might come in handy. It prevents your brain from slipping into that state and essentially keeps it on stand-by.

02. Doodling improves your memory:

It could be that the doodling kept those people from falling into that default state and starting to daydream. It keeps them at just the right level of arousal where they were able to attend to the information while drawing away. The non-doodlers had no reason not to drift away into their daydreams.

03. Doodling makes you more creative:

Doodling is more than just a way to stop yourself from daydreaming and keeping your brain from falling asleep. The act of drawing is creative in itself and can help you come up with ideas to solve whatever problems you might be stuck on.

For instance, specific ideas can come via doodling. Doodling can also help generate and refine ideas that you have already had. In this respect, it seems authors are common doodlers.

04. Doodling helps you process emotions

When you are frustrated, anxious, or depressed, it can be difficult to convey those feelings in words. But an image might come to mind that describes your feelings.

05. Doodling reduces stress:

If you've been feeling a little tense or tightly wound lately, it might be time to put pen to paper. Research shows that much like other visually creative activities like coloring in or doing collages, doodling can help you unwind.

06. Doodling helps you learn more effectively:

Doodling when you're meant to be studying may sound like it would be counterproductive. But studies show that students who draw during lectures and assignments retain more information and can make sense of complex ideas. Not only that, but it's thought to increase the enjoyment of learning, which help make you more engaged with the course materials. Plus, it can reduce distraction and promote innovative thinking. All of these benefits work together to make you an A+ student, whether that's in school, college, at work or just in life!

07. Doodling can improve to big picture thinking:

Often, when we're trying to solve a problem or complete a task, we get 'tunnel vision' and are only laser-focused on what's right in front of us. Doodling allows us to take a step backwards and connect overarching ideas and concepts—whether that's from past memories, or our subconscious. This is conducive to the type of big picture thinking that leads to innovative solutions.

08. Doodling can help you understand yourself:

Much like our dreams, many people believe that our doodles are like a mirror into our subconscious. That is, the beliefs, memories and thoughts we store in our minds that we're not actively aware of on a day-to-day basis. Many researchers believe our absentminded scribbles give us insight into what's going on under the surface, which can help us gain a deeper understanding of ourselves. What we doodle is thought to help us shed the layers of our egos, and shine a light on our true nature.

09. Doodling makes you a better listener:

Doodling keeps participants in a state of “pure listening” that is close to meditation. “Doodling helps hit that sweet spot between listening too much and listening too little,” “It keeps you in a state where your mind can’t wander, and your mind can’t also reflect or think more deeply about what you’re hearing... it’s to such a great extent that if I do not doodle, I find myself having difficulty concentrating.” Essentially, listening makes you a more engaged and focused listener.

10. Doodling can boost your mood:

Not only can doodling make you smarter and more creative, research shows it can actually make you happier, too!

D. Doodling in Design Thinking:

It's safe to say customers and audiences are never satisfied with conventional solutions. We cannot deny the need for innovation and we probably know we always need to reframe the right problems in a creative way. Customers look for newer, faster, and more affordable options all the time and start-ups continue to raise the standard with innovative solutions.

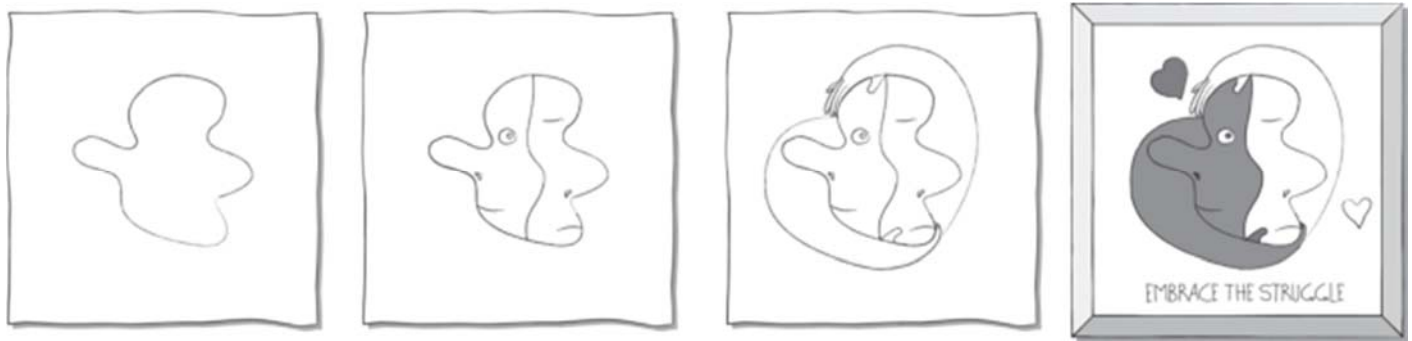
With challenges constantly coming up, an ability to embrace ambiguity and design a better experience with uncertainty can help you solve a problem that matters to people. That's where a creative problem-solving mindset can play a huge role. This mindset can help them navigate ambiguity and get to a place that's both unusual and better. Creative solutions may sometimes be simple ideas that rethink conventional solutions. Sometimes, they could even be a sophisticated interactive experience using AR, VR, Machine Learning and Advanced UI.

"Anyone can approach the world like a designer. To think like a designer requires dreaming up wild ideas, taking time to tinker and test, and being willing to fail early and often. The designer's mindset embraces empathy, optimism, iteration, creativity, and ambiguity."

The essence of adopting a problem-solving mindset is to remain open and exploratory in questioning the status quo, and more importantly, not to be afraid to really think about the whole idea of ambiguity itself. At this point, you're probably puzzled by how doodling, ambiguity, and creativity are connected?

How can Doodle Thinking be of any help to a designer's problem-solving mindset? "...doodling can help people stay focused, grasp new concepts and retain information. A blank page also can serve as an extended playing field for the brain, allowing people to revise and improve on creative thoughts and ideas." — **The Wall Street Journal**

That's right. To doodle involves thinking and making at the same time. It is action-oriented but requires in-depth thinking in order to solve problems within a design challenge. Now granted, playing around aimlessly with a piece of paper may not really be the best way to solve wicked problems. But the main idea about behind Doodle Thinking is basically having fun-filled playtime and solving that problem at the same time through following a loosely formed structure. It's like a design sprint where you generate new solutions in a roughly structured environment. Doodle Thinking gives you the opportunity to train your inner creative powers to become comfortable with ambiguity. That said, it provides you the opportunity to unleash your inner creativity.



Let's take a look and see how Doodle Thinking can help bring your imaginative side:

- **Set a design challenge.** Draw a random shape. Don't think too much about what to draw. Let your hand do what it wants.
- **Get comfortable with ambiguity.** Feel free to rotate the shape and find what you see in this random shape. The key to this stage is to avoid deciding what you want to draw too soon. An apple does not have to look like an apple.
- **Reframe a problem.** Start with adding eyes or other features wherever you want. Let your creative side play with the shape. Fill the inside and outside with triangles, circles or any other shape. Now, do you see something?

- **Make connections.** Think about a pithy title or statement that best describes your artwork. It's no worries if it takes lots of time to come up with the best.

This process may sound familiar to some of you. Doodle Thinking has many points of resemblance to the designer's problem-solving process against ambiguity. Doodling begins at a subconscious level, but when you get to a certain point of the process, you will find yourself thinking what this scribble turns out to be. If it does not go as you initially planned, you may quickly consider a different route to make your art piece still alive. You start with no pressure, but you often see yourself being obsessed with how to solve the problem. You don't even realize you are getting comfortable with ambiguity because it helps people get comfortable with ambiguity in many situations and build up their own creative muscles.

Final words:



Illustration by the author

- **Don't be afraid to do more, and think later.** Enough of the "I would" talks and just get to it already. Everyone has a good idea, but it is a matter of doing it or not. You will not be able to

achieve what you want if you do not just start on it. It does not matter where you start from, what matters is that you actually start. In the experience economy, it is very vital to have a series of quick Minimum Viable Products (MVP) or Minimum Valuable Services (MVS) to validate and improve your assumptions. In order to move fast and iterate more, you need to be action-oriented in applying different approaches to solving the problem.

- **Become a better visual thinker.** Doodling allows you to express yourself in ways that are beyond words and will help you tap into other areas in your brain to help you come up with a solution to the problem. Doodling can also help you retain information better, grasp new concepts, stay focused on being creative, and end up tackling ambiguous work. If you are running a design sprint or facilitating a brainstorming session, you may want to consider doodling for those who fear drawing to unlock their creativity and increase productivity.
- **Exercise your creative muscles.** The ultimate way to get that problem solved is to get your hands dirty, literally. Engage with something that will make you use your hands. Doodle Thinking is for anyone who likes to “question the status quo” and inspire their own world because it is never too late or even early to build your creative muscles. It can help you release your powerful inner creativity so you can be more creative in all aspects of life, and it helps you become an original thinker.