

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How: Creativity & Innovation in the Workplace

OALCF ALIGNMENT

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A - Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency A - Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	2
Competency D - Use Digital Technology	N/A	N/A

Goal Paths (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Postsecondary |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit | |

Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

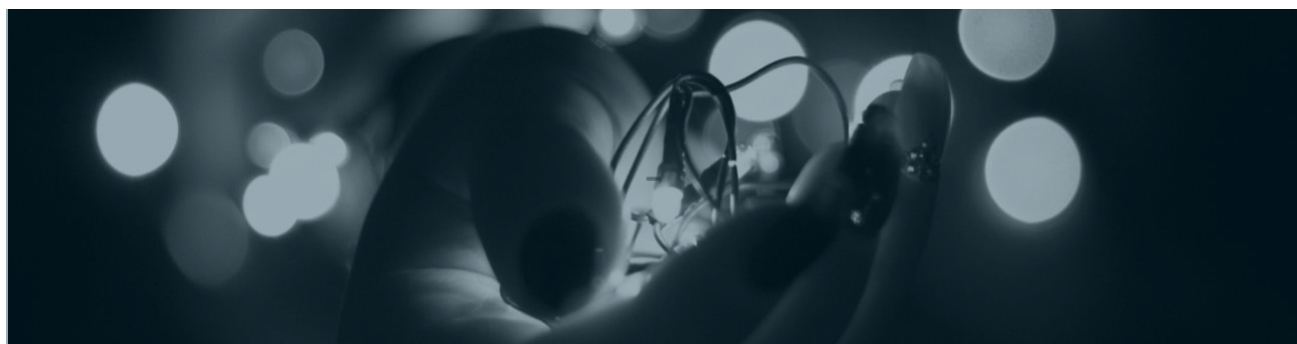
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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Creativity and innovation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital | |

NOTES: Part five of an eleven-part series on workplace norms for employed learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WORKPLACE SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND KNOW-HOW

Note for practitioners:

This series of **Skills for Success Curriculum Resources** is a beginner's guide to the modern workplace for LBS learners. The goal is to provide essential tools to employed learners, or learners seeking employment, so that they can thrive as employees. This series considers personal development topics ranging from conflict resolution to time management; topics focused on changes in the workplace; and mental health issues like stress management.

The overall focus of the series is on helping employees (or aspiring employees) understand their rights and responsibilities.

These resources are learner-based and activity-focused, with each topic area serving as a mini-lesson, followed by personalized activities. The activities invite learners to respond to lesson material or explore their own ideas on the subject.

The series is divided into eleven sections that can be used separately or in tandem:

- Your Rights in the Workplace
- Adaptability in the Workplace
- Collaboration in the Workplace
- Communication in the Workplace
- Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace
- Problem Solving in the Workplace
- Work-Related Stress
- Time-management
- Conflict Resolution
- Self-Advocacy
- Changes in the Workplace

WORKPLACE SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND KNOW-HOW: Creativity & Innovation in the Workplace

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*This is Section Five, Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How:
Creativity & Innovation in the Workplace*

Overview

Are you currently employed? Are you about to start a new job? There are many things about the modern workplace that you may not know.

This resource series is designed to help you get the most out of your employment. When you have a job, there are several important questions you should ask:

- What are my rights?
- How can I advocate for myself?
- How should I expect to be treated on the job?
- What are the expectations at a modern workplace?
- What has changed at workplaces over the last few years?
- How can I be my best at:
 - conflict resolution
 - time-management
 - communication

You may also face other challenges on the job. Do you have concerns about:

- stress on the job
- mental health at your workplace

This resource series will consider these topics and more. Participate in the lessons and activities, and you will learn to get the most out of the modern workplace.



Introduction

What is Creativity and Innovation?

Creativity is the act of thinking of original ideas.

Innovation is finding smart ways to use new ideas.

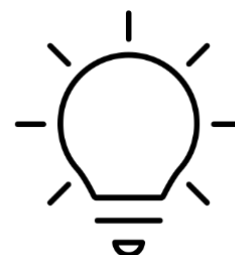
We often think creativity is only meant for artistic jobs like acting or graphic design. And we may think that innovation is only used in science or research jobs. But all employees can benefit from using creativity and innovation on the job.

Creativity is important for developing many workplace skills. Innovation is the way you put creative ideas to use. Developing your creativity and innovation skills will help you become an even more valuable employee. It will also give you new approaches to life.

Creativity and innovation in the workplace might look like:

- rethinking the system used at a dishwashing station to make it more efficient
- imagining a faster route to drive a forklift through a warehouse
- sharing ideas with managers so they can be tried at work

This resource will discuss creativity and innovation in the workplace. It will teach you how to improve your creativity and innovation skills.

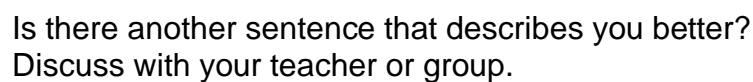




1. What does creativity mean to you?

2. Do you think of yourself as a creative person? Why or why not?

- ☐ I rarely feel my ideas are very good.
- ☐ I like to stick to what I know, not try new things.
- ☐ I have unique and interesting ideas.
- ☐ I like putting new ideas to work.



Everyone Can Be Creative!

Many people think they don't have what it takes to be creative. The truth is, everyone can be creative. Creativity is a way of seeing the world. It can be learned and practiced. If you practice looking at things differently, you will learn to see things differently.

Creative thinking means:

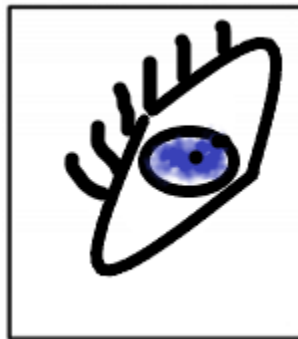
- looking at problems from new perspectives
- considering other points of view
- being curious
- seeking answers in a focused way
- making time for your imagination



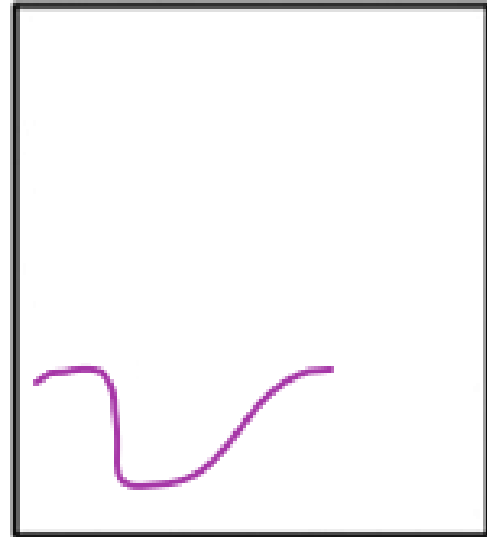
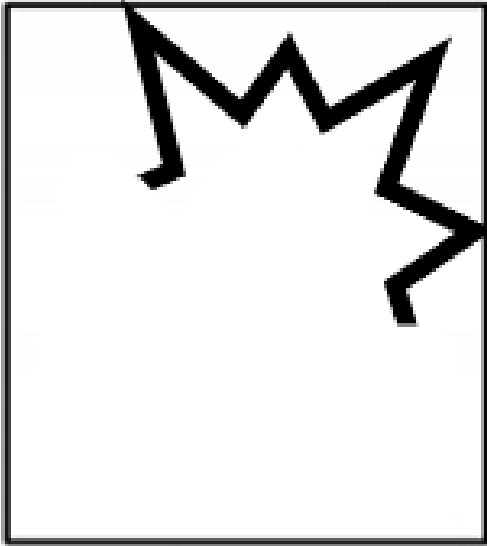
New Task!

Try a new perspective. Complete the picture. Bring your vision to life.

1. Look at the first box. It's the start of something. The next two boxes show what it could be turned into. An eye: And a monster:



2. Now you try. Complete the shapes below:



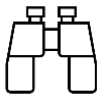
3. What did it feel like to imagine the rest of the shape? Was it hard? Was it fun?

4. What did you find most challenging about creating the rest of the shape?

Skills and Benefits

Learning to be creative doesn't come easy to everyone. It takes practice. Developing your creativity means building certain **skills**. The skills that most creative thinkers have include:

- being open-minded
- wanting to learn and discover
- being flexible and adaptable
- wanting to try new things
- taking an interest in other perspectives
- sharing your ideas



Let's look at an example.

J has been working at a pet store for six months. One of the most popular products is dog food. The dog food is on shelves at the back of the store. So customers carry the bags up to the cash register. The bags are very heavy, so J helps when possible.

J is young and strong and doesn't mind carrying the bags. But J thinks about things from the perspective of the customers. J realizes they must find it very difficult.

The store has always been organized this way. But J tries to be flexible and open-minded. J tries to be willing to adapt. By thinking this way, J comes up with some new ideas. J thinks the store should invest in carts for customers. J also thinks that the dog food should be moved to the front of the store. This way it will be easier to carry.

J shares these ideas with the manager. The manager loves them!



Reflect!

Creativity & Innovation skills and benefits.

1. What creativity and innovation skills did J use to come up with the new ideas?

Look back at the list of skills on the last page. Check the boxes that apply below:

- ☐ open-mindedness
- ☐ flexibility
- ☐ adaptability
- ☐ being willing to try new things
- ☐ taking an interest in other perspectives
- ☐ sharing ideas

2. What did J do to put the ideas into action? What were the benefits? Fill out the chart below:

What J did to put the ideas into action. (Innovation)	Benefits of the innovation.

Practicing your creativity and innovation skills is worth it. There are many **benefits** to being creative and innovative in the workplace.

Creative and innovative employees:

- bring forward new and original ideas
- help to solve problems
- become good collaborators and team members
- help make the workplace more efficient and reduce mistakes
- are valued by management

In the modern workplace a creative mindset is more important than ever. It's key to your growth as an employee and to your personal growth as well.

So let's try some strategies to practice your creativity and innovation skills in the next section.



Strategies to Try

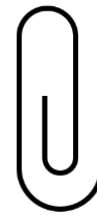
1. Consider Multiple Approaches

Creative thinking involves looking for many different answers. Don't always go with the first idea you have. Think of some other options too. You may come up with results you didn't expect.



New Task!

The paperclip game.

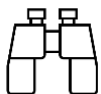


1. Everyone knows what a paperclip is. Everyone knows it is used to clip papers together. But can you imagine some **other** things it could be used for?
2. Try to come up with 5 or more different uses for a paperclip.

(Hint: what about an earring or a neck scratcher? No idea's too silly!)

Thinking of ideas like this is called **brainstorming**. This is when a group of people share as many ideas as they can think of.

To make this work, it's important not to overthink it. If you think too much, you may judge yourself. You may not offer up an idea that seems silly. Remember: sometimes ideas that seem silly are the best ones!



Let's look at an example.

X and Y work at a family-run deli. On their lunch breaks they always get turkey sandwiches from the deli counter. They both love turkey sandwiches. And they almost agree about what makes them great.

They both love turkey, cheese, and the veggie toppings. They also like mayo and mustard. But they disagree about some things. So every day they order their sandwiches a little differently. They want to find the perfect sandwich.

They try the sandwiches with different cheeses and toppings. They add onions and avocado. They try sauces and dressings. They can't quite get it right.

Finally one day they brainstorm. They say all the ideas that come into their heads. At the same time they yell, "Pineapple!" It seems silly but they try it and love it. Their pineapple sandwich becomes the deli's special sandwich.



Have you ever had an idea that was both **silly** and **good**? Discuss with your teacher or group.

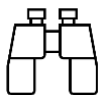
2. Ask a lot of Questions

After you come up with ideas, it's important to think about them. Not all ideas are going to work. Not all ideas are practical. Taking a moment to ask questions is useful. Asking questions about your ideas might help you:

- see the value of an idea
- develop an idea into something more concrete
- keep what's working and discard what's not

So what sorts of questions should you ask? Here are three common questions that creative thinkers use when faced with a tough problem:

1. What would happen if I change things?
2. What would I improve about things if I could?
3. If money were not an obstacle, what would you like to improve?



Let's look at an example.

At a Tim Hortons, three employees work the drive-thru on every shift. This leaves only one employee to work the front counter. This works well sometimes. But not always. Sometimes customers wait a long time at the counter. Sometimes the counter attendant is overworked.

Take a minute to think about the situation. Then try to answer the questions on the next page.

**New Task!**

What if?

1. What might happen if there's a change to how things run at the Tim Horton's?
List any possible changes you can think of.
2. What are the things you would want to improve about the situation? List any improvements you can think of.
3. What could be done if there was lots of money to improve the situation? List any ideas that come to you.
4. Which question was easiest to answer? Which produced the best results?

3. Put the Pieces Together

You've come up with lots of ideas. You've asked lots of questions. Chances are a great idea is right in front of you now. Is it something unexpected? Is it something simple? Or could it be a combination of two ideas?

Sometimes this happens. An idea is half an answer. By putting it together with another idea, you have a solution. Let's try putting this into practice.



New Task!

Impossible objects. Try to creatively combine two different objects. If you are employed, try to think about objects from your workplace.

1. Each partner thinks of an object. It could be anything: a toaster, a lamp, an airplane. Write it down.
2. Partners show each other what object you came up with.
3. Now work together to imagine something that combines the two objects.
4. Really try to imagine the object and all the details about it. How big is it? What is it made of? (See below for examples.)
5. Finally, draw the object in as much detail as possible. See examples below.

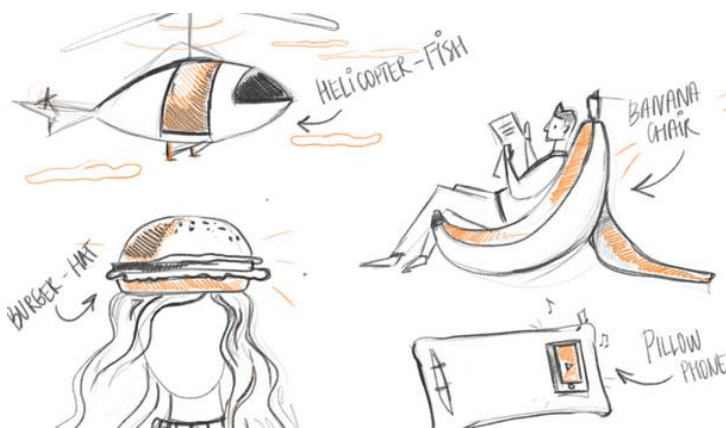
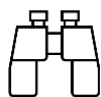


Image credit: <https://innovationlab.net/blog/9-best-exercises-to-spark-creativity-in-ideation/>



Let's look at an example.

The staff at a factory have a notice board for anyone who wants to switch shifts. Before the notice board was used, it was harder to switch shifts. Staff didn't know when someone wanted to switch shifts. And they had no way to tell everyone if they wanted to switch shifts.

Things were better after they began using the notice board. The staff find it very useful.

One day the staff are told that the factory is closing. There is a new factory 30 kilometers away. The staff will be relocated there.

The new factory is far away from their homes. Driving there takes a long time and is more expensive. **That is the main problem.**

Some staff want to solve this problem by driving together. Carpooling is convenient and saves money. But staff aren't sure when people can drive. They have no way to tell everyone when they can drive.



Reflect!

Put the pieces together.

1. The problem is that driving to work is expensive. What two ideas could the staff put together to solve it?

Final Thoughts

Remember: **anyone** can be creative. **Anyone** can innovate. Creativity and innovation is about seeing things in new ways. But it's also an attitude.

- Are you willing to try to see things in new ways?
- Are you open to learning and trying different approaches?
- Are you flexible and adaptable?
- Are you willing to consider other perspectives?

Believe in your own creativity.
Practice using your imagination.
And your creativity will grow.

You'll start to see **tigers**
where there were only trees.



Resources

Are you still struggling with creativity and innovation in the workplace? There are many more resources available to help you. Some are listed below:

- Skillshare offers free introductory online courses in lots of creative subjects:
<https://www.skillshare.com/en/browse/creativity-and-innovation>
 - Alison.com offers free online creativity courses:
<https://alison.com/tag/creativity>
 - 211 Ontario connects you to social services and community supports that you need:
 - Call **211** or toll free at **1-877-330-3213**
 - **Employment Ontario** offers career-related counselling and guidance:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>
- Also see the other resources in this series: **Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How**