Lesson Plan © Easy Access English

OUT OF THE BOX



EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn techniques and expressions for being more creative when presenting your ideas in English. Put those techniques into practice. Comprehension activities. Learn new adjectives and practice using them.

Activity One - Ask and answer with your partner or teacher.

- Are you are creative person?
- How do you define creativity?
- How can creativity be useful in your job?

Activity Two - Text and Definitions- **Match** the expressions to their definitions and then Read and Comment on the text.

Definitions

Expression/ Word	**Definition**
to flit	turbulent, not conforming
unruly	to move lightly and quickly
to shine	to depend on
a dead end	to glow with light
to rely on	enclosed on all sides
to be surrounded	a position which offers no hope of progress or has no exit

Text

“Thoughts flit in and out of my mind all night like unruly fish. And when I awake I find an idea, waiting for me like a pearl, to be discovered inside its tight shell of night. My creative process involves not getting much sleep. But it works. Almost every morning a new idea is there waiting, shining up from my pillow as I open my eyes.

If I can’t find a way around something easily, a solution to a problem, then I have to rely on my creativity. Sometimes it seems like I’ve reached a dead end, that I’m closed in and surrounded, enclosed in a problematic little box. Then I have to reach higher and think out of the box.” JF

- **Comment**: Is creative problem solving a strength for you? When are you at your most creative? Are you a person who regularly thinks out of the box?

Activity Three - Read the text and answer the comprehension questions.

By Frederick Marks (http://americancityandcounty.com/blog/creative-problem-solving)

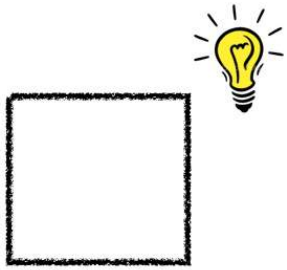
I used to work for a dull guy whose standard answer to a problem was to encourage you to "think outside the box". I think he meant I should apply creative thinking to solve a problem, but "thinking outside the box" was his standard way to express problem solving. Why limit your ability to solve a problem by boxing it? The only box is the one you have imposed on yourself. Once you realise there is no box, you are on your way to creative problem solving.

Don't worry about being wrong. By taking the constraints off your brain, you can expand your options. What's the worst that can happen? Anything you can do to solve your problem creatively will work, including being wrong. Even a frivolous answer might contain the germ of an idea. And, there is no rule that says you have to be practical, either. Let others restrict themselves to saying, "We can't do that." Being logical is also restrictive. Life and problems aren't logical; why should you be logical to solve them?

When brainstorming, don't discount the easy answer. Sometimes an easy answer is the best. To prove that an egg could stand on its end, Columbus simply mashed the end in to form a base. Problem solved! Of course, he broke the egg, but the point was that it could be done. Don't think there is a perfect or right answer to all problems. There isn't! There are best answers given a set of circumstances. And your first answer may not be the best one, so come up with a few.

Learn how to ask the right questions — how to direct the thinking of you and your group. Don't be bound by a formula or book on "How to solve your problem in 10 easy steps." Develop your own methods to suit your background and experience. Don't think that you don't have creative problem solving skills. They're in our professional DNA. For years we have been helping our organisations become more efficient and professional. Look for the problem solving challenges, build up your resume of skill sets. The more you undertake challenges, the better you become at solving them.

Questions: According to the text:



1. What does "thinking outside the box" mean?
2. What does he say you need to become aware of about the box?
3. What does he say you need to do in order to expand your options?
4. What does the word frivolous mean in the context of the article?
5. What is the first piece of advice he gives when brainstorming?
6. What example does he use to explain this advice?
7. Is there always a perfect answer to a problem?
8. How do you become better at problem solving?

Activity Four - Simple Solutions



SIMPLICITY. Sometimes that word can be surprisingly complicated to use. In fact we often overlook simple practical solutions which could work just as well as complicated and sophisticated ones. The solutions to our problems are sometimes so simple that we don't even see them them. We look everywhere for an answer, we do a lot of research, but a simple solution was there all along. Sometimes thinking out of the box, i.e, looking at things in a different way, can allow you to see these simple solutions. With no box around you, no limits to your vision, then you can see even the simple things.

Can you give an example from your own experience of a simple solution you found to a problem or of a particularly creative solution you found in the past.



Activity Five - Being Creative In English

SIMPLE SENTENCES, and SHORT SENTENCES often work best when you want to explain a complicated idea. However, you also need to know how to make more COMPLEX or CREATIVE sentences when you want ideas to come alive. Here is some advice:

1/ Use the RIGHT words.

ADJECTIVES are the KEY to SUCCESS when it comes to explaining ideas or solutions, presenting results and generally influencing people. If you can find the right adjective to describe your ideas then you will illustrate your ideas well. With adjectives you can distinguish your original concepts from others. With the right adjectives you can show your difference. Learning new adjectives is a great way of broadening your vocabulary in general and making what you say sound more interesting. In activity Six we will test your knowledge of some useful adjectives.

2/ Make COMPARISONS. (It would be like…. it will be like…. We will be the…. of….).

If you help people to relate to an idea by comparing it to something they know then you will help them to understand what it could mean to them. If you help them to project, to imagine what it will be like when your plan is implemented or when your goals are achieved, then you will motivate them to get on board! So always think - who am I presenting this idea to? What is their perspective? How can I get them to relate to what I am saying? Personalise your comparisons:
"It would be like reaching our yearly target in February', 'It will be the best thing our team has ever achieved', 'We will be the first team to have ever done this' etc..

Here are some common idiomatic expressions which use this technique: *'You will be the queen of…', 'You will be the kind of…', 'It will be as if all your Christmases have come at once !', 'You will be on top of the world', 'It'll be the best day ever!' 'It will be like taking candy from a baby', 'it will be a walk in the park', 'it's a piece of cake'… etc.*

Creating an image of success in the mind of your audience will always help them to perceive your idea in a positive way.

Making comparison with down to earth concepts helps people to visualise ideas and can also be quite humorous! *(It would be like a three legged chair, like a dog with a bone, like a car with no petrol etc.. etc..)*

3/ Be authentic.

TRUST is an important element of persuasion. You can't convince people or influence their opinion if they don't trust you. They are unlikely to trust you if you don't come across as being authentic or true to yourself. CREATIVITY in COMMUNICATION is a way of demonstrating the uniqueness of your ideas and therefore their authenticity. Use examples from your own experience. Choose words which show your personal commitment and engagement. Don't be afraid to show your feelings! *(I really feel that, I feel strongly that, It really made me think when…, I am really convinced that… On a personal note…., from my own experience….., from what I have seen… etc..)*

4/ Get CREATIVE.

Do you want to make a presentation memorable and really get people to hand on your every word and listen actively? Well then you need to get creative in general. You need to do more than just explain your ideas clearly. You need to create suspense by asking questions which you don't answer straight away *(How many… or how much… do you think we sell every year?, How long do you think people spent on that on average last year?.. You will be surprised when I tell you..)* You can create suspense or build mystery, by repeatedly referring to something that you don't reveal until the end. *(You will soon see how our new process will solve that issue… soon you will understand how this new method can resolve these problems.. etc..).* Tell a story rather than just delivering facts. You can build up with some history, including plenty of adjectives and anecdotes that bring the story alive. Then you can reach a conclusion by introducing your idea. *(Today I am going to tell you a story. A story about waste…., Today I'm going to tell you a story about our teams and how they have been feeling recently… etc..)* Think carefully about your words and use more dramatic and emphatic words when you want to really draw attention to a problem. *(It was a disaster waiting to happen, It's had a huge impact on morale… etc..).* Use short sharp shocks when you want maximum impact and your main idea is revealed. *(This is it. Let's go for it. The time is now. etc..) Ask and answer a question to bring your point home.(So can we solve these problems? Yes we can!, So can we now reach our goals? Yes we can etc..)*

Of course there are many other techniques you can use to spice things up in meetings and presentations and show your uniqueness. Other ways you can think out of the box when presenting your ideas. But I hope that these four points will get you started! Go for it! **JF**

Activity Five - ADJECTIVES.

A/ Match the adjective to its definition. Then use each one in a **sentence**.

accurate	Steady and energetic effort
momentous	Fairly presented, well proportioned
balanced	Of great significance
decisive	Honest and sincere communication
candid	Settling an issue or producing a definite result
robust	Causing admiration and wonder
spectacular	Creative, odd or unusual
diligent	Of considerable importance
offbeat	strong and impressive
substantial	Correct in all details



B/ Read the **adjectives** below and then **fill the gaps** in the sentences on the next page with the correct ones.

makeshift ***remarkable*** ***reliable***
real time ***painstaking*** ***relevant***
compliant ***resilient***
grounded ***outstanding***

1. It's been a _____ job checking each one of the items for damage but at least we avoided having to throw the whole shipment away.

2. The question of overtime is just not _____ at the moment. We are trying to reduce working hours not increase them!

3. It's been a hard year for the whole department but the team are really forward thinking and _____ and they are getting on with the tasks in hand with a positive mind set.

4. There's no point investing in a _____ solution which will never really be _____, just because you are short of time.

5. What an _____ achievement to have sold more than any other store this year!

6. The system is very practical because users can see results in_____ _____ and therefore act on the information before it's too late.

7. She's really _____, which makes it easier for her to deal with other people's problems, as she is so stable herself.

8. Your _____ achievements this quarter will be rewarded and recognised by your managers.

9. By the end of the year he was fully _____ as regards the new system, but it took him too long to implement the changes.

10. I'm happy to work with him because I know I can trust him to arrive on time and work hard. He is a really _____ person.

Activity Six - Practice makes perfect.

Using precise adjectives to describe exactly what you mean and trying to use some of the techniques from activity five, present the following to your teacher:

A. A new idea you have had recently at work for solving a problem in a creative or original way. (Or someone else's idea if you have not had one recently) :-).

B. Your latest work project and results.

C. An amazing new idea for reducing work related stress.



