

Creative Prompts for Ideation Sessions

16 ways to whack your brain
into new ideas for your next
creative session.



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Explorer Series

Where can you **inject** **novelty** today?



Picasso turned a bike seat into a bull's head. Bowie reinvented himself. Break routines: sketch with crayons, brainstorm in the wrong medium. If your brain's surprised, your audience will be too.

Neuro Note

Novelty sparks dopamine, creating fresh neural pathways.

Action

Do one creative task today in a completely new medium.

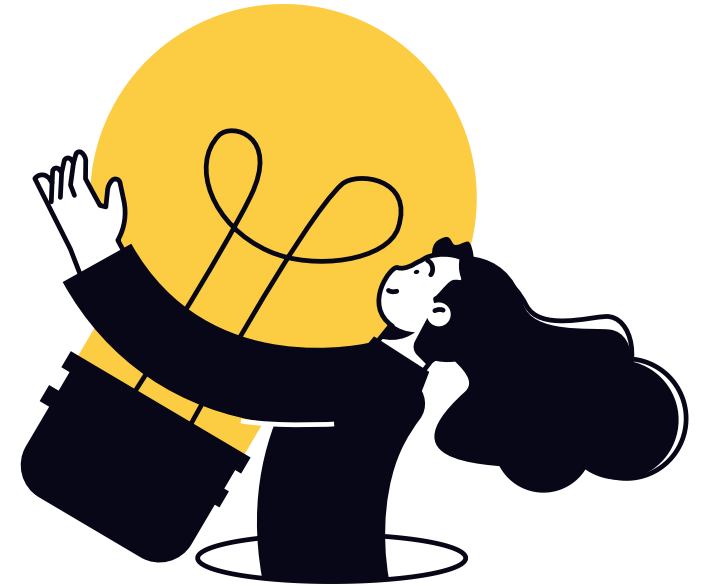


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Where else can you prospect for gold?



Warhol found inspiration in soup cans. Keep digging the same mine and you'll get dust. Borrow from fashion, nature, TikTok memes, or graffiti. Gold hides in unexpected places.

Neuro Note

Reframing: exposing your brain to unfamiliar stimuli creates new links.

Action

Collect 3 examples today from outside your industry.

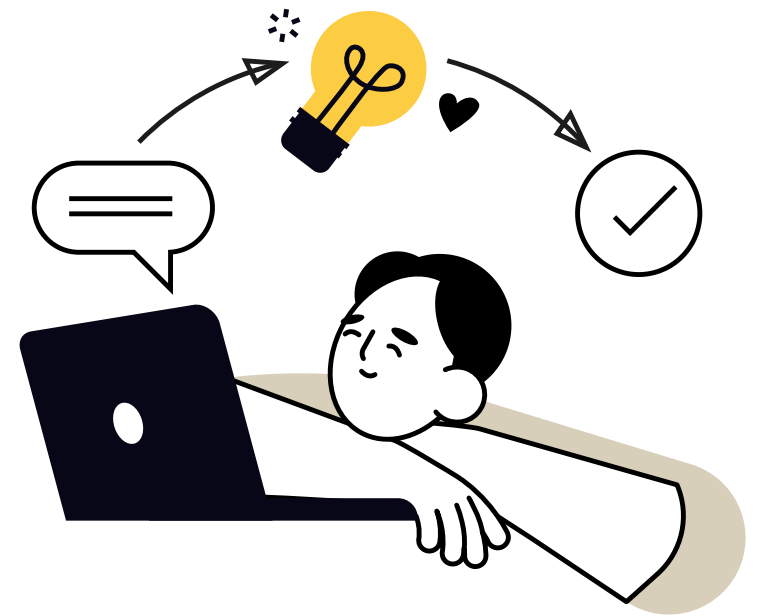


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What other discipline **has** your **curiosity**?



Eames stole from architecture, Miyazaki from forests. Ditch branding blogs—study insects, vinyl covers, factory floors. Creativity compounds when you trespass outside your category.

Neuro Note

Cross-domain thinking fires stronger synapses.

Action

Spend 15 minutes exploring a field unrelated to your own.



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Whose idea deserves your remix?



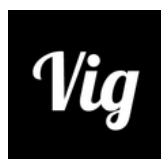
Jobs studied calligraphy; it shaped the Mac. Don't plagiarize—steal perspective. Remix overlooked ideas until they're uniquely yours. Creativity is adaptation with style and audacity.

Neuro Note

Transfer learning: borrowing patterns across domains unlocks originality.

Action

Pick one old idea and sketch a remix today.



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What's idea number ten—or twenty-seven?



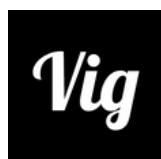
Ogilvy wrote 100 headlines. First answers are clichés. The spark hides in idea #27, when you're tired enough to risk brilliance. True originality crawls out after exhaustion—when the obvious is stripped away, and only the dangerous idea remains.

Neuro Note

Idea fluency—pushing past the obvious—forces deeper thinking.

Action

Write 20 ideas before picking one.



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What question should you really be asking?



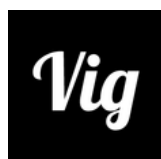
Netflix didn't ask how to rent DVDs cheaper—they asked how to kill Blockbuster. If you're stuck, change the question: not “How do we sell?” but “Why would anyone care?”

Neuro Note

Cognitive flexibility: reframing forces new circuits.

Action

Rewrite your challenge as a new question.

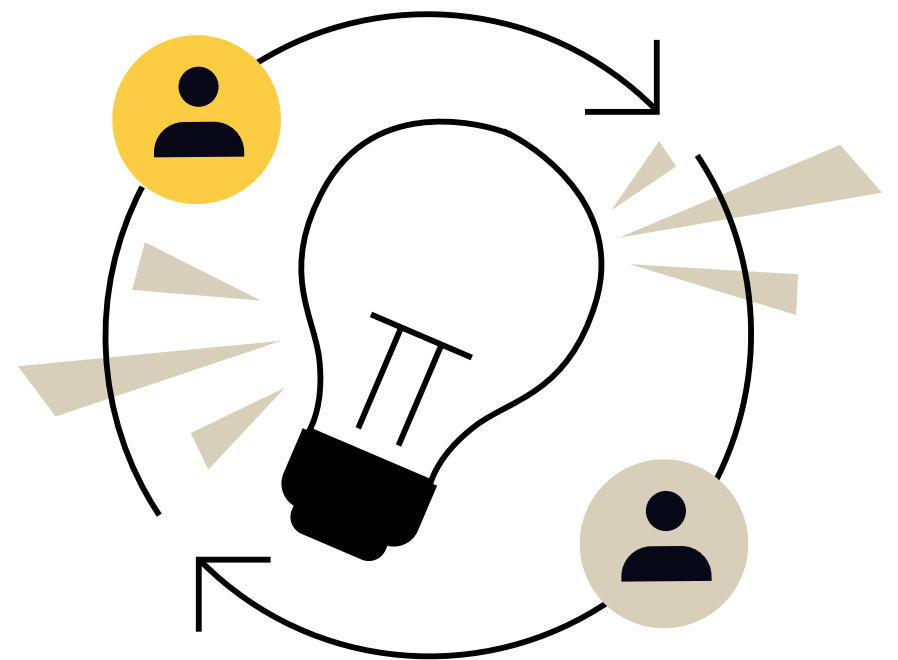


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What bigger system are you part of?



An Iowa farmer saw trains, not revolution. Don't obsess over tactics—predict ripples. You're not just making an ad—you're fueling culture.

Neuro Note

Systems thinking: zoom out, predict second-order effects.

Action

Map how your project affects at least 3 groups beyond your audience.

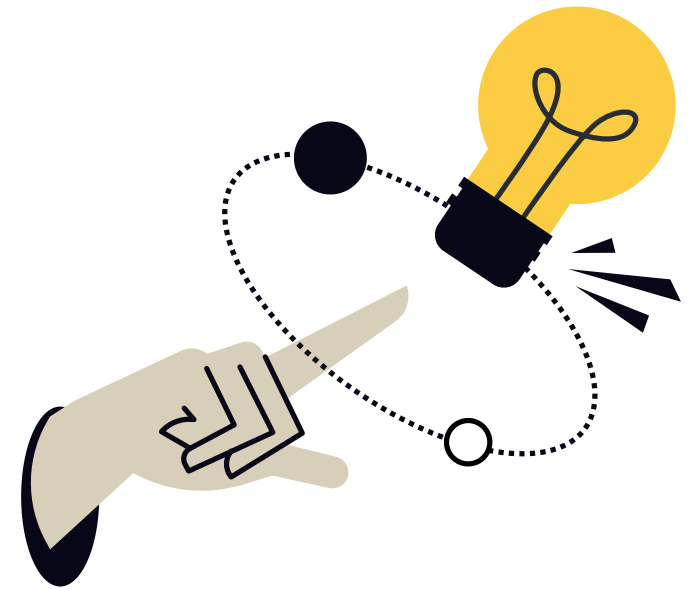


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What wrong turn could spark your best idea?



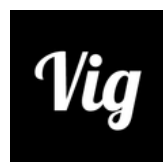
Twitter began as a podcast tool. Shopify sold snowboards. Sanders' bypass created KFC. Wrong turns can spark breakthroughs.

Neuro Note

Serendipity is pattern recognition in disguise.

Action

Revisit one past “failure” and mine it for lessons.

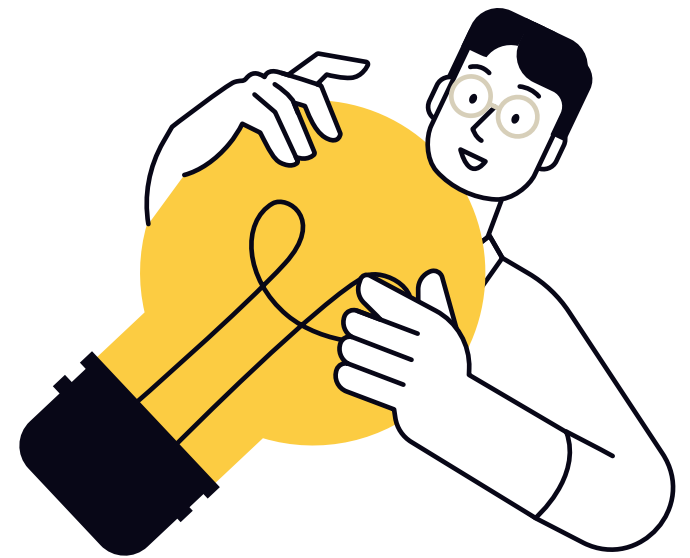


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What random cue can **spark** your next leap?



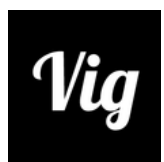
Brian Eno used random prompts to create iconic albums. Pick a random word, roll dice, scroll photos. Absurd cues break perfection paralysis.

Neuro Note

Stochastic resonance: randomness jolts the brain from predictable loops.

Action

Use a random word generator and force it into your idea.



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What hidden pattern **is waiting to be revealed?**



Architects use arches. Musicians use progressions. Strategists ride culture waves. Spot hidden cycles in data, culture, or design.

Neuro Note

Our brains reward completing patterns—it's pleasurable.

Action

Find one repeating pattern in your project or industry.



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Which neglected sense can guide your project?



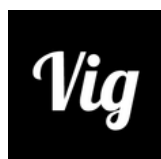
Kubrick obsessed over sound. Anderson over textures. Touch fabrics, taste flavors, smell spaces—bring them into your work.

Neuro Note

Multi-sensory input deepens retention and sparks cross-modal connections.

Action

Add one non-visual sense to today's project.

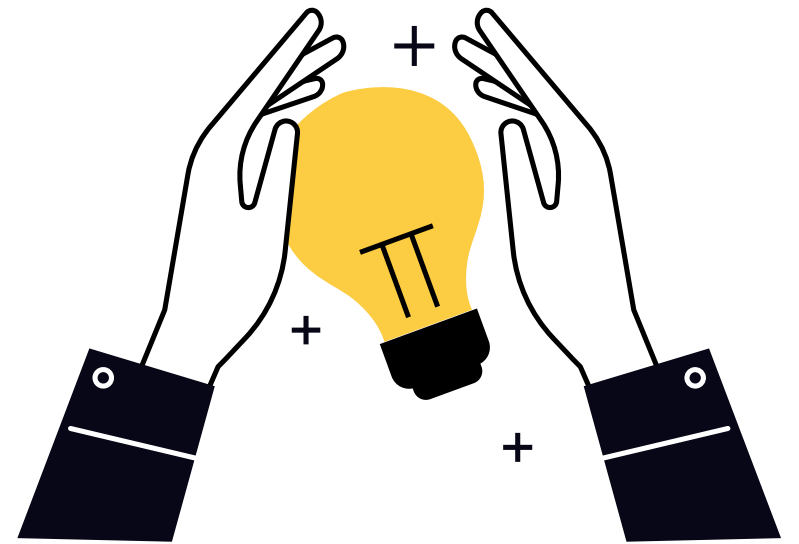


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What dream detail deserves a storyboard?



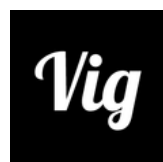
Kekulé dreamed the benzene ring. McCartney dreamed “Yesterday.” Dreams weave odd associations our waking brain censors. Keep a dream log, storyboard fragments.

Neuro Note

Dreams weave odd associations our waking brain censors.

Action

Record one dream fragment tonight and sketch it.

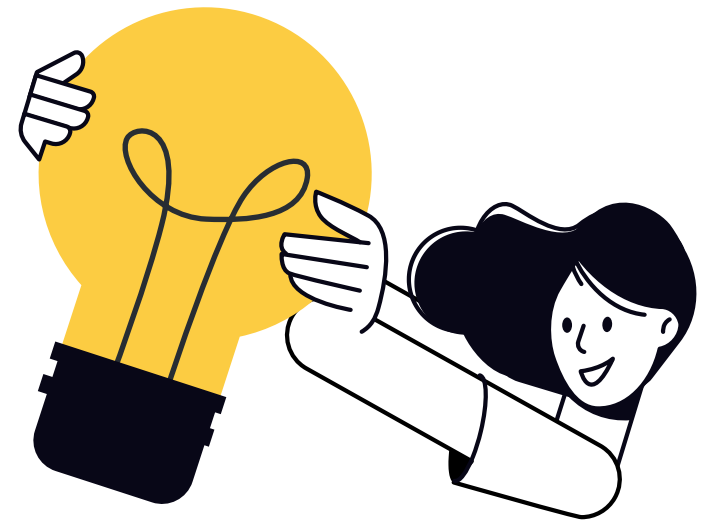


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What natural system **mirrors** your challenge?



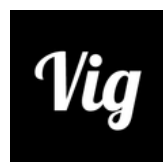
Velcro came from burrs. Helicopters from maple seeds. Study ant trails for traffic flow, bird flocks for swarm behavior, trees for networks. When stuck, ask: how did nature already solve this?

Neuro Note

Biomimicry is evolutionary R&D: millions of years of problem-solving to borrow from.

Action

Observe one pattern in nature and apply it to your project.

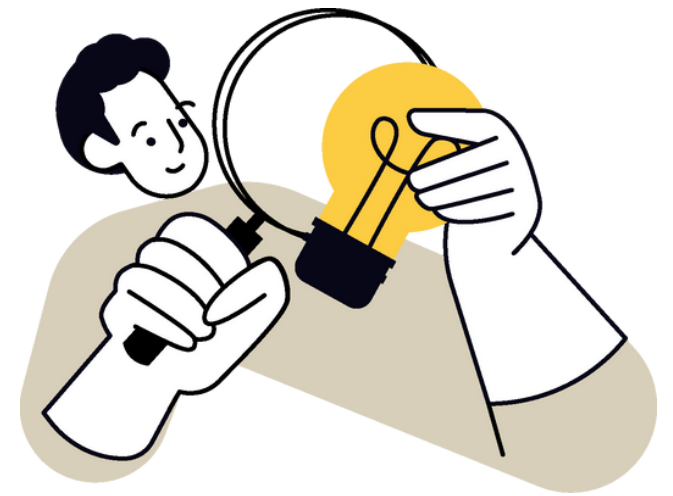


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Which moment in history **is** **your metaphor?**



Napoleon's march? Project management. Guerrilla warfare? A launch playbook. Bauhaus? UX before UX. History is an endless archive of creative hacks.

Neuro Note

Analogies rewire neural maps by blending distant concepts.

Action

Choose one historical event and reframe it as a metaphor for your project.



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Where's opportunity knocking—quietly?



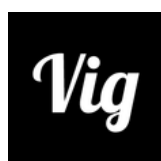
Spielberg's broken shark forced him to suggest menace instead of show it—Jaws was born. The glitch, complaint, or weird client note could be gold.

Neuro Note

Attention bias: opportunities hide in what others dismiss.

Action

List 3 annoyances in your work and reframe them as opportunities.



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What solution is **hiding in** **plain sight?**



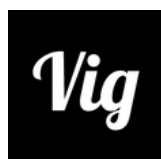
Creatives overcomplicate; brilliance often hides in simplicity. Strip back. Stare harder. Sometimes the best idea is embarrassingly obvious, which makes it undeniable.

Neuro Note

Inattentional blindness—missing what’s in front of us.

Action

Review your work and highlight the simplest possible solution.



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