

CREATIVITY



Lesson: Creativity

This lesson shows students the importance of creative thinking and how they can use creativity in problem-solving.

Level: Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B1 and above)

Time: 60-90 mins

How to use this lesson:

Parts of this lesson can be done at home. Some of the exercises, however, are best done in class. Also allow time in class for discussion of the different aspects of the topic (see suggestions below). At all times, encourage students to offer ideas and suggestions as discussion forms a major part of this lesson.

Teacher's Notes

Worksheet A

- 1 The vocabulary in this text will be used later in the lesson and can feature in later discussions. If students do the task at home, make sure you spend time in class dealing with any difficulties with the words. If done in class, allow up to five minutes for students to read the text and complete the task. Those who finish quickly can compare their answers with a partner.

Answers

1 a	3 a	5 b	7 a
2 a	4 b	6 a	8 b

Encourage class discussion about the text and prompt with questions about companies and careers that your students might be interested in such as:

- ▶ *Why do you think [Apple/Microsoft/Samsung/etc.] are so successful?*
- ▶ *What kinds of problems might a successful company face?*
- ▶ *What kind of people get good jobs / get promoted in a company?*
- ▶ *Why would a factory need creative people?*
- ▶ *How do you think creative thinking might be useful in your chosen career?*
- ▶ *Can you give me an example of how [a doctor/lawyer/scientist/athlete/etc] needs to think outside the box?*

- 2 **At home:** Students mark whether they agree or disagree with the comments and try to add their own.

In class: Allow up to five minutes for students to read the comments and mark them. They should make a note of any further comments they have on the subject.

As they finish, they should compare their answers with a partner. Explain that you will be asking them to justify their answers.

Go through the comments, asking students to say whether they agree or disagree and why. Ask them for their own suggestions.

- 3a This can be prepared at home. Remind students that the point of the exercise is to come up with as many suggestions as possible. In class, students might need 10-15 minutes for this (give them longer if necessary and if time allows) but it is important that the ideas are their own, so discourage talking as much as possible.
- 3b As they finish, ask students to compare their answers. Tell them to try to discuss further solutions in pairs. After a few minutes of students discussing the situations, elicit a variety of comments from the class, aiming to involve everyone in the discussion. Did they come up with practical suggestions? Did they tend to think of very similar suggestions for each situation or were any of the suggestions 'outside the box'? Did they find it easier to work alone or with someone else? What do they think their answers say about them?





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As you go through the situations, you might like to add some of the ideas below if they have not already been covered.

Suggested answers could include:

- 1 Changes can be made to the lighting/heating/decoration of the room. Furniture can be removed, rearranged or changed. They could study with a friend or have music in the background.
- 2 Students could walk, run, cycle or take a bus. If they usually take a bus or train, they could get off at a different stop or station and walk the rest of the way. A different route might also take less time than they imagined.
- 3 Suggestions could include making a card, baking a cake, giving flowers picked from the garden, cooking a meal, taking their friend for a walk, etc. More elaborate suggestions could include making a music compilation/playlist or a photo montage.
- 4 Here, students need to stretch their imagination a little. Mystery stories about them could include crimes, such as kidnapping, murder, etc. They could focus on their home and write about a mysterious visitor, discovering a secret room, a hidden door, etc. They could feature as witnesses to something, paranormal activity, such as seeing a ghost or a UFO, etc.
- 5 Suggestions could include finding out more about the company you want to work for, researching on the internet, taking a relevant course, approaching companies directly, offering to do voluntary work, networking with people in the same field, dressing professionally, etc.
- 6 Students should be planning ahead here and buying things that will see them through the day. Answers will vary depending on how well they know how to cook. Some students will focus on prepared or convenience foods. Ask them who will be the best-nourished / hungriest by the end of the day.
- 7 Encourage a long list (beyond watching DVDs). Activities could include listening to music, playing board games, playing table tennis or cards, making something, cooking a meal, finding out something specific on the internet, etc.

Worksheet B

- 4 **At home:** Students read the tips and answer the questions. Encourage them to answer based on their own lives and experience.

In class: Give students up to 15 minutes in order to read the tips and answer the questions. You may wish to tell early finishers to compare their answers with a partner. While listening to their answers, conduct a discussion about what kind of people your students think they are. Encourage them to talk about their own experiences and beliefs in each case.

Follow up by asking them how useful the tips are, whether they would suggest different tips, if they would add anything else, etc.

- 5 This should be done in class in pairs or small groups. Encourage discussion about the tasks and ask students to note down their ideas. Again, the aim here is to think of creative answers, so the more suggestions they can come up with, the better.

To cover all the tasks, students may need 15-20 minutes. Once they have had the chance to discuss each one, ask them to tell you their suggestions. Make a point of praising more creative suggestions.

Suggested answers (there are many more):

- 1 Students may come up with their own answers to this but one suggestion is for the man to suddenly shout 'Fire!' or 'There's a bomb!' leading to panic as everyone rushes to the doors. In the confusion, he can easily make his escape through one of the exits.





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- 2 Tell your students that there are at least a hundred uses to be found for each item (though in practice, many of these uses are very similar).

A box of paper clips

Note that on the internet, there are various sites suggesting hundreds of uses for paper clips. They include repairing a piece of clothing, fixing a pair of glasses, unblocking a nozzle on a perfume bottle, re-setting an electronic device, etc. More extreme uses include magnetising one and floating it on water to make a compass, wearing them as earrings, joining them together to make necklaces, or decorating a Christmas tree with them.

A ruler

Rulers are used for measuring or drawing straight lines (did your students remember these two basics?). Rulers with both inches and centimetres can also be used to convert between these two units. A ruler can be used as a weapon, a means to cut a folded piece of paper, a back-scratcher, a shoe horn, etc.

A cardboard box

This could be used for storing things, for making a bed for a pet, for covering and using as a bedside table, for sliding down grassy slopes in, for using as a camera tripod, for boosting the sound from a small music device, for tearing up and starting a fire, for making a children's doll's house or a multi-storey car park for toy cars (there are hundreds of model-making possibilities). As well as this, cardboard boxes have been strung to make musical instruments, joined together to make a maze for small children, painted and used as clock faces – the list is endless!

A packet of drinking straws

Drinking straws can be used for unblocking sinks, holding up cut flowers in a vase, removing the centres from strawberries, stopping necklace chains from getting tangled, removing broken pieces of cork from a wine bottle, etc. By closing the ends, they could also be used as containers for make-up, salt, sugar or pepper when travelling. Woven together they can make table mats. Filled with jelly, they could be used to make jelly worms. By placing a finger over one end, they can be used as a dropper for liquids, e.g. in an experiment or to move small quantities of food colouring.

A piece of string

This could be used as a replacement belt or shoelace, as a dog lead, to amuse a cat, for tying up a present, for holding a balloon, for tying up plants in the garden, for fishing, as a wick for a candle, for raising window blinds, etc. Some young children have used string to pull out loose teeth. Tied and pulled tight between two yogurt cartons, the string carries sound as a toy 'telephone'. It has also been used as a musical string attached to a large box in improvised instruments.

- 3 Accept all logical suggestions and give help if necessary by answering yes or no to their questions. The boat is a river boat (students might get stuck on the idea that it is at sea). A snake (or even a gorilla) has dropped onto the deck from an overhanging tree. In their panic, all the passengers on deck rush to one side of the boat. As a result of the weight imbalance, the boat tips over and sinks.
- 4 There is no 'correct' answer as long as students can justify what they suggest in a logical way. They might see the need for a fourth word with something in common with the others. Alternatively, they might find a word which somehow unites the words.

Suggested answers:

- ▶ water-thought-sleep-*deep*
 - ▶ introduction-shelf-read-*book*
 - ▶ time-hair-wait-*long*
- 5 You might want students to ask you yes or no questions here. The answer is that the man had already put sugar in his coffee, so when he tasted the 'fresh' cup, he knew it was the same one. Accept all logical alternatives.
- 6 Again, you might want students to ask you yes or no questions. Apart from the man being a time traveller, it is difficult to think of a solution. The answer is that 2015 and 2005 refer to rooms in a hospital. He was born in Room 2015 and died in Room 2005.



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Follow-up

- ▶ If students don't already know it, you could follow the tasks in this lesson with the well-known candle problem created by Karl Duncker. For this, tell the class that they have a box of drawing pins, a candle and a book of matches. Their task is to fix the candle to the wall.
- ▶ Allow time for the students to think of solutions (in pairs or small groups if you prefer) before eliciting suggestions. As usual, there are several ways to do the task, but it is the inventive thought processes that we're interested in here, so listen to all suggestions, however odd they may seem.
- ▶ Suggestions could include pinning the candle to the wall, perhaps strapped by torn up pieces of the book of matches. Another way would be to push the drawing pins into the wall just enough to hold the weight of the candle, or to melt some wax from the candle to stick it to the wall, or a combination of these two.
- ▶ Students might also think of pinning the book of matches to the wall and somehow folding it so that it forms a shelf to stand the candle on. Alternatively, it might be possible to form a platform by interweaving some of the matches and using others as supports
- ▶ The 'approved' method is to use the empty box from the drawing pins. Pin that to the wall and stand the candle in it or on it. The reason this is the 'correct' version is that it shows students have overcome the problem of 'functional fixedness'. Many people are content to see the box as a container for the drawing pins and nothing more. People who 'pass the test' see the box as a tool in itself, not just a container for the pins, showing that they can, quite literally, think outside the box.
- ▶ Interestingly, emptying the box and placing it separately on the table encourages a greater success rate, as does describing it as a box and drawing pins instead of a box of drawing pins.

Teacher's notes



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Worksheet A

1 Read the text and choose the best meaning, *a* or *b*, for the words in bold.

Why is creativity important for your career?

Successful companies look for people who can find the **causes of** (and think of good **solutions** to) problems. Businesses need to **keep up-to-date with** what is happening or they will not continue to be successful. **Linked to** this is the need for staff with a good knowledge of the market who can keep an eye on the competition. But companies need to go further – they need to **focus on** the future and make sure they stay ahead. They expect workers to think creatively and they often give staff time and **resources** to think up ideas that will make sure the company continues to do well in the years ahead.

A good company cannot **assume** it will always be successful, so they choose the very best creative thinkers. They pay employees to deal with problems, and the very best of these workers have learned to think **outside the box** and come up with new ideas. Are you one of these people? Are you a creative thinker? Can you think up new and inventive ideas? If you can, the chances are you will have a very bright future.

	a	b
1. causes of	reasons for	suggestions for
2. solutions	answers	examples
3. keep up-to-date with	stay informed about	learn more about
4. Linked to	Because of	Connected to
5. focus on	worry about	pay attention to
6. resources	things they need	instructions
7. assume	believe/expect	guess/predict
8. outside the box	quickly	differently

2 Look at the comments about creativity and write *A* (for *Agree*) or *D* (for *Disagree*) next to each one. Try to add at least one more comment of your own. Compare and discuss your answers with a partner.

	A / D
1. Creativity doesn't come from nowhere – you need to stay up-to-date with what is happening in the world.	
2. In business, creative people need to have important positions. They should have the time and resources to work on new ideas.	
3. The most creative people have a good knowledge of where others went wrong in the past.	
4. It is the job of creative people to focus on the present. The future will take care of itself.	
5. Creative solutions to problems often come from thinking outside the box.	
6. If I have a problem, I like to sleep on it. Then, when I wake up, I usually think of a more creative solution.	
7. Creativity doesn't belong in business. Only artists and people like that need to be creative.	
8. There is always more than one way to solve a problem.	
9.	
10.	

Student's copy



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3a Working alone, write down as many suggestions as you can think of for the situations below. Try to find at least five ideas for each one.

1 The room you study in feels uncomfortable and you don't want to go in there very often. What can you do to improve the atmosphere?

2 You're bored with your usual route to work, school or college. Think of alternatives.

3 It's a friend's birthday but you have absolutely no money to buy a gift. You're seeing this friend tomorrow. What can you do so that your friend knows you care?

4 Imagine someone is going to write a mystery story about your life. Note down some ideas.

5 What can you do to improve your chances of getting your dream job?

Student's copy





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Worksheet B

4 Read the tips below and answer the questions that follow.

Tips for creative problem-solving

Do you want to be more creative in the way you think? Would you like to be able to solve problems more easily? Here are some tips for you to try.

1 Look around you

Look carefully at situations that are problematic. Surround yourself with them and think long and hard about them. Question everything. How does this work? Could it be better? Is there another way? Don't think of things as problems; think of them as challenges. They are puzzles for you to solve.

2 Avoid traps along the way

We all sometimes assume things that are not true. For example, you don't ask a teacher to help you after class because you assume that the teacher is not interested in talking to you or has better things to do. But how do you know? Maybe that teacher would be perfectly happy to spend time with you. Another big trap is to keep trying to solve a problem in the same way – you'll never do it! You need to be creative and change the way you look at it.

3 Look at causes

Sometimes it helps to examine the cause of a problem. The problem you're trying to solve might be linked to a bigger, more serious problem that you need to look at first. Make sure you have a clear idea of what caused the problem.

4 Now take a step back

Once you've thought about a problem, try taking a step back. Sleep on it or do something completely different like going for a walk. Your brain is very powerful and it will keep working on ideas. But sometimes giving it a break will allow it to suggest solutions. It can also help if you choose a different time of day to think about a problem or if you move to another room.

5 Generate ideas

Think of ways to solve a problem – but they must be different. Write down obvious answers, and then think outside the box. When working in a team, each of you should suggest as many ways as possible to solve the problem. It doesn't matter if the suggestion is strange or seems impossible – it might give you other ideas.

- 1 Do you see problems or challenges? Do you question how things work or do you just accept them?
- 2 From your own experience, can you think of examples of these traps?
- 3 Think of a problem in your life. What is the cause, or is there more than one cause?
- 4 Have you ever found a solution after walking away from a problem or sleeping on it? Do you think this is good advice?
- 5 Do you prefer to look for solutions to problems on your own or with others? Why?



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5 Now do the following creative thinking tasks in small groups. Try to suggest as many answers as possible.

- 1 A man is wanted by the police and he hides by going to the cinema. The police know this and stand in all the exits so he can't leave, but he finds a way to escape. How?

- 2 How many uses can you think of for the following things?

- ▶ A box of paper clips
- ▶ A ruler
- ▶ A cardboard box
- ▶ A packet of drinking straws
- ▶ A piece of string

- 3 A boat suddenly sinks in good weather. There is no problem with the boat and the crew did nothing wrong. What happened?

- 4 Look at the three words in each group below. Then suggest a fourth word that belongs in the same group and explain why.

- ▶ water-thought-sleep-?
- ▶ introduction-shelf-read-?
- ▶ time-hair-wait-?

- 5 A man complains that his coffee has a fly in it and demands a fresh cup. The waiter returns with the same cup, only the fly has been removed. The man sends it back again repeating that he wanted a fresh cup. How did he know it was the same cup of coffee?

- 6 A boy is born in 2015. He grows up, becomes a man and eventually dies in 2005. How is this possible?



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