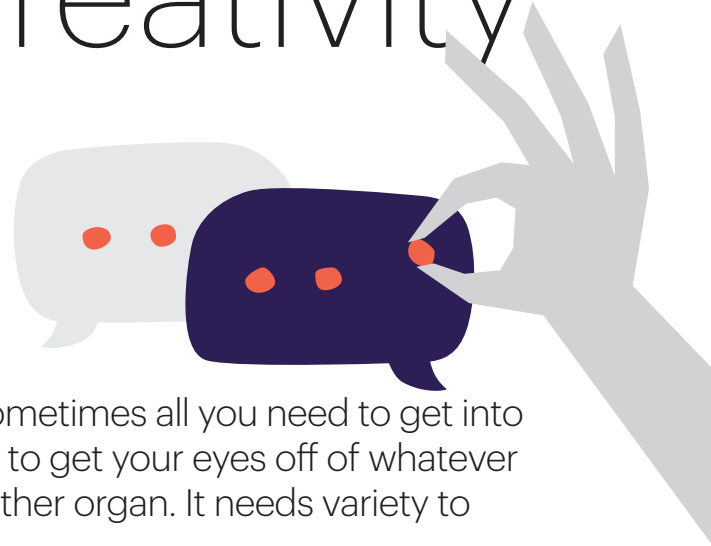


Practical Ideas for Sparking Creativity

15-MINUTE CREATIVE RETREATS:



Staying creative doesn't have to mean hours of looking for inspiration. Fifteen minutes is sometimes all you need to get into a new frame of mind. The only requirement is to get your eyes off of whatever you've been looking at. Your brain is like any other organ. It needs variety to avoid repetitive stress injury and fatigue.

Here are some 15-minute creativity boosts:

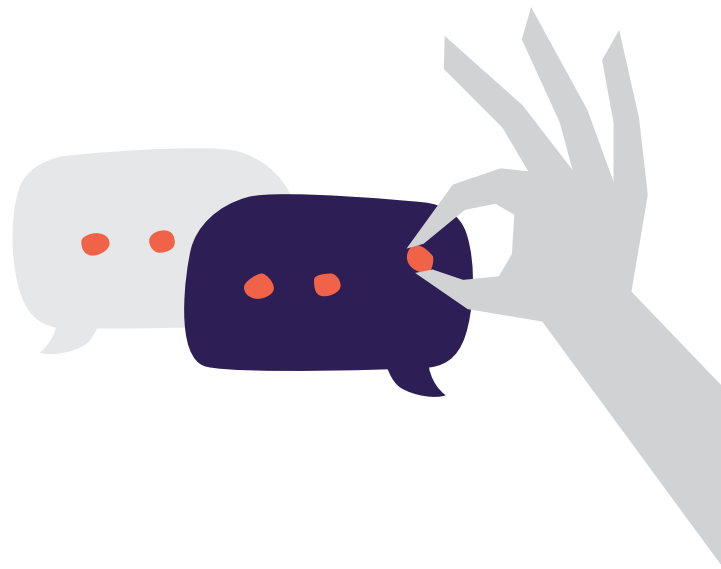
- **OVERDO IT.** Overwrite. Overact. Overreact. Use a color that's too bright or a phrase that's too flowery. You can always tone it down or make it better. But you might just find that you don't need to.
- **STEAL.** Go back to the last thing that inspired you and imitate it. Pick a subject that's your own and try to do something in the same style. Chances are, nobody will notice your theft—and you'll get unstuck and learn something in the process.



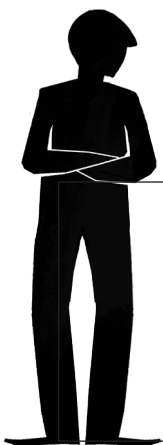
CUT UPS. Get a pair of scissors and some old magazines and newspapers. Cut out images and words that look interesting, and pick three at random. Make up a story or an idea that explains why the three of them are connected.

Practical Ideas for Sparking Creativity

15-MINUTE CREATIVE RETREATS



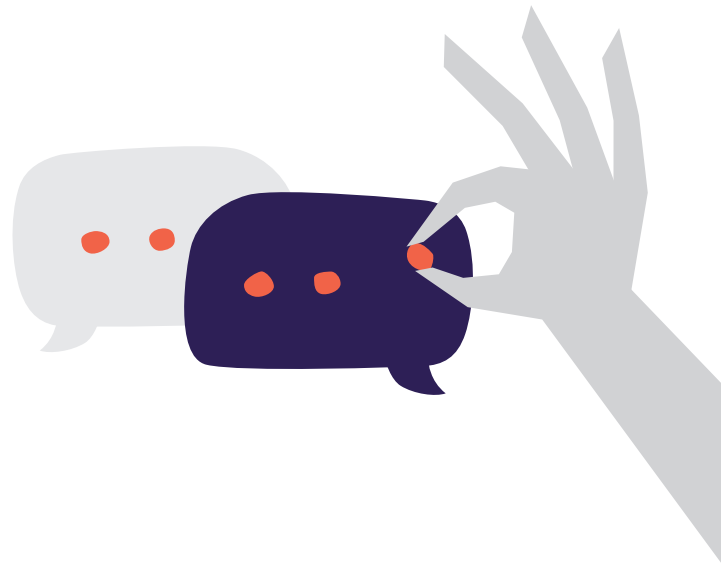
- **STRAND YOURSELF.** Sometimes the best aid to creativity isn't inspiration. It's boredom. Spend 15 minutes without external input, and write down whatever thoughts come to you.
- **MEMORIZE SOMETHING.** Find some words you like: lyrics, a beautiful piece of prose, a speech. Memorize them. The words are now yours. Not only can nobody take them away from you, but they are now somewhere deep inside your brain, imprinting their structure and beauty on you. You'll find them cropping up in your own work in ways you could never have imagined.
- **MAKE A LIST.** Make a list of: things that scare you, things that make you jealous, things that annoy you, things you regret, things you wish you could forget, people you wish you could meet, and so on.



SOMEBODY ELSE'S PROBLEM. Your creative problem can wait. Go find somebody else with a project and offer to help. You'll come back to your own project with a fresh set of eyes and at least one new idea to keep you moving.

Practical Ideas for Sparking Creativity

15-MINUTE CREATIVE RETREATS



- **DO YOUR WORST.** If you're a writer, draw. If you're a designer, write. Try to get your message across in the way that makes you most uncomfortable. Don't worry about being any good. Just try to make others understand you.
- **TIME TRAVEL.** Imagine that you've traveled back in time to ask for advice. You can talk to a famous person (Queen Victoria, Nikola Tesla, Elvis) or just somebody on the street. How do you explain your problem? What questions might they have? What assumptions are you making?
- **AMUSE YOURSELF.** Write (or draw) a few lines, or find a photo online that represents who your muse is. Post it in view. When in need, ask for inspiration.



X MARKS THE SPOT. When we set out to do creative work, we're on a hunt for treasure. So make a map of your problem. Start with a big X, your destination. Now draw the pathway there, but be sure to put in all the obstacles on the way: the forest of vaguely defined goals, the desert of bad data, the jungle of office politics. Is there a path around any of your obstacles? Were there obstacles you weren't aware of? Is there more than one X?