

BE *S-I-L-L-I-E-R* AND BOOST YOUR CREATIVITY

Social Conventions – Break them!

- a. Write or imagine a scene in which a child enters a sophisticated restaurant with her parents. How does she eat? What does she eat? What does she say? How do her parents react? How do the other patrons react?
- b. You are a child visiting a museum for the first time, and voila! Before you is a replica of Michelangelo's David. A tour guide is taking a group through, and they are gawking at the beautiful sculpture. "Any questions?" she asks. You raise your hand and say, "xxxxx"
- c. You have entered a contest called "Rush." If you're brave (or crazy) enough to complete an assignment just short of Greek hazing, you could win a million dollars. You draw the task. You shake your head, but you really need the money. What did you draw and what did you do? (We promise not to tell your mother).

Incongruity -- Introduce the round peg to the square hole.

- a. Make a metaphor. Compare unrelated concepts and find similarities between them. For example, what do a cat and a refrigerator have in common? (They both have a place to put fish; they both have tails; they purr; they come in a variety of colors; and they both have a lifetime of about 15 years). What similarities does your idea (project)/plot (book) have in common with cooking a meal? Conducting an orchestra? Building a house? Raising a child? Waging a war?
- b. Re-write a fairy tale or myth in a contemporary setting.
- c. Imagine a character who has a secret, unexpected life (the professional wrestler who raises orchids, the librarian who races cars on the weekend). Spend 15 minutes writing a scene where this person is caught in the act of doing the unexpected.
- d. Take a situation you know well and turn it on its head. E.g., your boss writes a memo ordering everyone to do something ridiculous.

Link random things and forced connections

- a. Write 12 random words. Arrange them into four even groups of three. Be completely arbitrary. Now say, these three things are going to happen and I'm going to connect them somehow. The brain will make associations. Some funny because they're going to be far-fetched. You have to leap toward them.
- b. Select a problem you are trying to solve. Force a connection between that problem and something selected entirely at random.

Learn to play with language

- a. Draw a Scrabble letter and start as many words with it as you can. (Dr. Seuss-isms are allowed and encouraged!)
- b. Make up some spoonerisms (snow and sleet/ slow and sneet)
- c. Play with malapropisms (Saving Soviet Jewelry, Sax and Violins on TV).

Imagine

- a. Draw a dot in the middle of a sheet of paper. What is it?
- b. You find a package on the side of the road. What's in it?
- c. You are backing up your car and something goes thump. What?

Exaggerate

- a. Write ten words on a sheet of paper, then using similes and metaphors (and no clichés), compare each to something way more grand and something less grand (e.g., the paper is as strong as a cup of bad coffee, weak as a tulip stem after a rainstorm).
- b. Go back to the neighborhood where you grew up as a child. Pick one larger than life character who lived there, and using exaggeration, describe him for a friend as you saw him at that time.
- c. Go back to the neighborhood where you grew up as a child. beginning with the phrase *Sometimes the food was not quite up to Julia Childs' standards....*, use understatement to describe your childhood meals.

Reverse-think

- a. Reverse order for meetings at work, your writing routine, or other routine that's become boring.
- b. Play the George Costanza game. Do the opposite of what you usually do.
- c. Reverse-think. Spend a minute describing a current problem. If you're a man, look at it from the female point of view. If you're a woman, look at it from the male point of view.