

C.SCHOOL

THE LITTLE BOOK OF CREATIVITY

JAMES TAYLOR M.B.A. F.R.S.A >

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

JAMES TAYLOR

This 'Little Guide To Creativity' is an unapologetic assault on the unimaginative, uninspired and closed-minded thinking that goes against the natural creativity you were born with. It will show you the potential that lies within you when you tap into your own innate talents, it will challenge you to live a more inspired, joyful and creative life.

In the pages ahead you will find a simple, often counterintuitive guide that cuts through years of well-intentioned but bad advice, over half a century of academic research, and provides a middle way, a direct path to one destination: a new life where you are able to unlock your full creative potential.

The truth is, in a world where the need for new ideas and insights has never been greater, too many people don't consider themselves creative. If you look around you, everything that you see stems from a creative insight by someone just like you; the phone in your pocket, the seat you are sitting on, the last restaurant meal you ate, this very guide you are reading. Yet when you ask most people if they consider themselves creative you get responses like "I'm not talented enough", "I don't have the self-confidence" or "I don't think I can make a living from my creativity".

Why is it that so many people today have levels of self-doubt and self-criticism that stop them even pursuing their creative aspirations never mind excelling in them? Never in our history have we had greater access to information on how to harness and monetize our creative potential at just the click of a button. Yet, despite all of this, most people still have no idea how the creative process works and how they can use it to be happier, healthier and wealthier.

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My guess is, you can relate. Like everyone else, you remember that time before adulthood when creativity came naturally, where you could come up with ideas, designed imaginary worlds in your head, and enjoyed the process of just daydreaming. At some point however, you may have sensed that the ideas weren't flowing quite as easily, that voice in your head started to criticize and self-doubt crept in, and where work, family, and the day to day slowly started to silence that creative part of you. As time went on you felt that longing to express yourself again, to draw or paint, write or play music, to create your own business or to travel for new inspiration. You want to get back to what you knew you were all along: a creative person.

Well, I'm here to tell you that you can discover (or rediscover) your unlimited creative potential. But there's a catch: you see creativity is like a muscle, and like any muscle you need to exercise it otherwise you run the risk of it wasting away. The idea of exercise might discourage you or even stop you from reading on. You're already overwhelmed with work, family commitments, household chores and just trying to get enough sleep. Probably the last thing you want to hear is that you've now got to start investing in your creative health as well.

The truth is, you do. And like a personal trainer at a gym, I'm going to challenge you in this little guide, because I know you are more creative than even you believe. I think you've experienced that exciting sensation when you create something new, something original and that you are willing to do what it takes to enjoy more of that feeling.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

JAMES TAYLOR

It could have been when you wrote the first tentative lines of that poem, painted the first dabs on a blank canvas, made up a melody on a piano, or came up with an idea for a new invention, service or business. You've already peaked through the door of what a creative life could hold - an inspired existence that makes you feel happier, more energized and more positive about life.

This 'Little Guide to Creativity' is both a quick-start exercise manual for your creative muscle, and a simple guide so you can start on the journey of better understanding how to develop your own creative potential.

Let's get started.

James Taylor



THE WORLD IT IS A CHANGING

JAMES TAYLOR

You see the world is changing. Creativity was once considered the preserve of a select few, an inspired elite, those working in the 'creative industries', or toiling away in the creative departments in organizations.

In the past people believed that some were born creative, the truth is, as science has discovered, that while some children may be born with 'creative genes', creativity is something hard-wired in all humans and creative thinking is a skill that can be taught like any other learned skill. Only the failure to develop your own creative aptitude and attitude, and encourage it in your home and work environment, holds you back from unlocking your full potential.

I'm pretty sure you have felt that kind of creative spark in your life before, one that reverberated within you for days. But this little book isn't about trying to recapture sensations you may have felt in the past. No, the following pages are about how to develop an entirely new way of thinking and acting creatively today to produce a more joyful, more exciting, more inspired and prosperous tomorrow.

In the past, self-help gurus and academics would respond by, at one end, promoting mantras, positive-thinking and faddish pseudo-science, or at the other producing dull essays and unreadable research. If all else failed they would just tell you to adopt the diets or daily rituals of famous creative individuals and hope for the best. These solutions, are of course, inadequate at best and downright useless at worst. In fact, one of the reasons that most executives and companies use the word 'innovation' instead of 'creativity' is to distance themselves from a lot of the unscientific claptrap that is spoken about creativity.

THE WORLD IT IS A CHANGING

JAMES TAYLOR

So it is easy to understand why many people are hesitant at labeling themselves as creative, even when it is an innate talent we are all born with but fail to nurture throughout our adult lives.

Indeed much of what has been written about creativity and the creative process for the past fifty years has either been wrong or at best, a partial truth. However recent discoveries in neuroscience and psychology has meant we have learned more about creativity in the past three years than in the previous three thousand. We're finally understanding a new model for what it takes to tap into our greatest asset: our creativity.



THE NEW MODEL

JAMES TAYLOR

In this book, I propose a new model for understanding your Creative Life - one that moves us away from thinking that we are not talented enough and into mindset that makes us feel inspired and energized to follow our own creative path. On this journey, we'll discover how your creative mind actually works, and we're going to provide you with the mental toolkit to supercharge you innate talents.

The Creative Life is a consciously designed way of living that taps into your creative core to enable you to generate, assess and implement new ideas that have the potential to change the world. I'll fully describe this life in the next chapter, but for now you should remember the operative phrase in my definition: a consciously designed way of living.

The answer involves a controversial argument: We feel uncreative because it is seen as the preserve of the select few instead of as the birth right of us all. What makes us creative is to ensure that we nurture our internal creative talents through reflection and training, while at the same time designing our external environment so that it supports us in this task.

Such straightforward language upsets a lot of academics and elitists, who argue strongly that only a small number of people are born with 'creative genes' and will go on to be the future Leonardo da Vinci's, J.K. Rowling's, or Albert Einstein's. Even if that is true - and the science is extremely shaky as I will show - what is clear is that anyone can learn some basic creative thinking skills to make the most of whatever talents they have or those they wish to develop. These techniques cost nothing, take very little time to learn, and without them even the most creative individuals will fail to fully tap into their potential.

MY QUICK STORY

JAMES TAYLOR

To help you reach this level of creative confidence, I've spent the past twenty years working with and studying the most creative individuals and organizations in our society. I've travelled from the UK to Italy, Silicon Valley to Shanghai to learn everything I could about the psychology, neuroscience, habits and environments that lead to peak creative performance.

I've helped both aspiring and award-winning individuals develop and harness their creative abilities. I've advised executives and politicians on how to ignite the creative spark within themselves, their companies, and their countries. As a result, I've become one of the best-paid creativity coaches and trainers in the world, and my world-renowned online course, [C.School](#), sets the standard in the creativity and innovation training business. But here is what is important. This book isn't about me, it's about you. In this book I'll share with you the strategies and exercises to enable you to reach your peak creative potential.

It doesn't matter whether you are already a successful author, artist, musician, entrepreneur or creative professional, or someone that is just thinking about starting on a more creative path, we all need to understand how this creativity thing works. We need you have direct access to that part of your mind that is generative and brings forth new ideas into this world.

MY QUICK STORY

JAMES TAYLOR

Although I've built a name as a highly paid advisor to award-winning musicians, authors, artists and executives, I recently lost my own creative mojo for a while. It caused me to reflect and go in search of the source of creativity and the conditions that lead to a Creative Life. In undertaking this journey of discovery, I learned that we only tap into a fraction of our creative capacity, but that there is a framework that allows us to access our full potential.

I'm glad to report I'm back, fully restored to creative health, living The Creative Life. Today my levels of creative confidence, output, inspiration and flow have never been higher. Rather than describing these feelings, I'll let you discover them for yourself in the pages ahead.



With two of my clients as they collect awards

YOU CAN DO IT

JAMES TAYLOR

All I will say for now is that I'm thankful that in undergoing this quest I was able to learn about creativity and the principles that underpin it. My hope is that by learning and adopting these simple principles you too will awaken the creative giant within. You too can:

- Learn to unlock your creative potential.
- Discover how the creative process works.
- Break down the barriers holding you back from living a Creative Life.

I say this as someone who has spent the past three years of his life traveling the world to learn about the creative process. I've spoken with Silicon Valley technologists, bestselling authors in London, Italian artists, successful Mompreneurs in Florida, and even Buddhist monks in Thai temples.

Thankfully you don't need to go on a three year worldwide quest or pour over the latest research in dry academic journals like I did. You can just choose, in this moment, to begin to realize your potential by reading the pages in this little book.

I won't pretend that the path of creative rediscovery is an easy one. In consciously deciding to live a more creative life, you are going to find yourself having to learn some new skills and challenge some previously held assumptions. Any big journey you embark upon brings with it feelings of excitement and fear.

But what I can tell you is that the Creative Life is possible for anyone if they will take the time to learn and implement the principles within this book.

THE REASON TO KEEP READING

JAMES TAYLOR

The Creative Life can provide you with more self-fulfillment, joy and vitality than you ever thought possible.

For some this rekindling of their creative spark brings with it a spiritual awakening, while for others it opens up a whole new career path and turns a dream a dream into a reality.

This little book will begin your journey of creative transformation by:

- Demistifying the Creative Process
- Developing your Creative Confidence
- Helping You Generate New Ideas

I have seen first hand how the lessons in this book have allowed my clients to fashion a more Creative Life for themselves.

I want the same for you, to help you flourish creatively, to provide fuel for your own creative sparks, and to guide you along a path of creative self-discovery. We need your talents. We need you to follow a more creative path and to achieve your potential.

This is your time. Your greatest creative successes are ahead of you. Get ready. Let's go on this journey together.

YOUR CREATIVE POTENTIAL

JAMES TAYLOR

In Luc Besson's film 'Lucy', the main character, played by Scarlett Johansson, is given an experimental drug which allows her to access 100% of her brain's capacity. The idea behind this movie is that most of us only ever use ten percent of our brains and if we could only tap into our full potential then we would acquire superhuman mental and physical powers.

In reality science and brain scan studies have shown us that the 10% myth, first mistakenly ascribed to Albert Einstein, is in fact false, and we use virtually every part of the brain during our average day. These same studies show however that even on our best days we are only using a tiny fraction of our mental, physical and emotional potential.

Now imagine for a second if you could use 100% of your creative talent. What could you achieve if you could unlock the most important talent we have as humans, a skill we were all born with although many have never fully tapped, a capacity that separates humans from most other things living on this small blue planet? What books, poems, songs, or symphonies could you write? What drawings, paintings, sculptures or artworks could you create? Which innovative products, services and businesses could you invent? Which solutions could you devise for the world's most pressing problems?

This book is about how you can rediscover and unlock your own creativity and build a happier and more creative life.

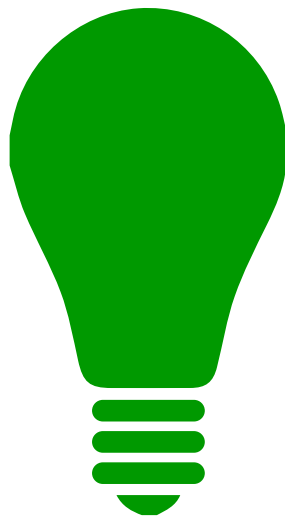
YOUR CREATIVE POTENTIAL

JAMES TAYLOR

The problem is today far too many people don't think of themselves as creative. For many, who remember a time in their past when they experienced that feeling of being actively creative, that sensation has taken a back seat while they build a career, a family, a home and all the routine of daily life.

Usually when you hit a big birthday (those ending with a zero) you start to long to be able to draw or paint, write or compose music, start a business or invent something new. You realize that time is our most important resource and it is slowly slipping away.

Whether for self-fulfillment reasons or because you want to begin a new career or chapter in your life, you recognize that it is time to reawaken that creative core to your personality that has perhaps been lying dormant waiting for the moment when you are going get back to what makes you really happy.



WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

JAMES TAYLOR

Frankly a lot of nonsense it talked about creativity and the creative process. At one end you have creativity 'gurus' who propose you look in a mirror each day and recite mantras or positive affirmations, while at the other end you have academics who are very good at diagnosing the problem but useless and providing any solutions.

Creativity, the ability to generate and refine ideas, is our greatest asset. However too many people lack a basic understanding of how creativity works, how it can be developed, and in the case of those who feel they now lack creative abilities, how you can actually rediscover a part of you that you may have lost as a child.

Creativity is like a muscle, and like any muscle you need to work it otherwise you run the risk of it wasting away.

If the old elitist view of creativity was once unhelpful, today it is downright dangerous to your health, wealth and happiness. The problem is that many of our established ways of doing things, in schools, homes and workplaces, are rooted in old ways of thinking. What once worked in an era of gradual change no longer applies in our 21st Century of rapid innovation, hyper-connectivity and global competition.



WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

JAMES TAYLOR

In the past it was thought that only special, highly-talented people were creative. In much the same way that historians once wrote exclusively about the big names (Gandhi, Lincoln, Churchill), those who covered creativity focused on famous Big C creatives such as Pablo Picasso, Thomas Edison and Michaelangelo. Today historians are shining a light on the lives and achievements of those people, who although never 'famous', did something extraordinary and can provide a deeper insight into the creative process.

From the Industrial Revolution onwards it was thought that creativity was a specialist activity, like music, or the arts, or advertising, or marketing. Indeed we see with TV shows like Mad Men the idea of the workforce being divided into two groups: the 'creatives' and the 'suits'. Along with smoking in offices and casual sexism the 'creative department' is an idea not fit for the modern world. Today you are likely to find the creativity in science, teaching, the running a sports team, a non-profit or a technology startup. Today being creative and innovative is part of everyones job description, from trainee to CEO.

A recent study by The Economist Group discovered that 51% of employers think that creative problem-solving is the top skill needed in the workplace. Meanwhile a survey by Boston Consulting Group of 2,500 senior executives ranked creativity among the top their strategic priorities for their companies. Today employers want workers who can think creatively, who can generate ideas and innovate. Creativity can be encouraged, enhanced and enabled by managers.

WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

JAMES TAYLOR

Even the sciences, that bastion of empirical evidence and rationality, now recognize the importance of creative thinking in the discovery of new ideas. The acclaimed scientist Carl Sagan noted that “mere critical thinking without creative and intuitive insights, without the search for new patterns is sterile and doomed. To solve complex problems in changing circumstances requires the active of both cerebral hemispheres”.

Perhaps it is our education system that is undergoing the greatest revolution in the flourishing of creativity by attempting to equip the next generation for our new knowledge-based economy. We are moving from schools teaching a model suited for an industrial age based on standardization, conformity and division of labor, to one that develops the whole child with creativity, self-expression and innovation at its center. Proof of this is Sir Ken Robinson’s excellent TED Talk on the importance of creativity in schools, which has now been watched by nearly 10 million people.



THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

JAMES TAYLOR

A recent UN report showed that even during the most recent economic downturn exports from creative products and services actually increased by 14% to \$592 billion. In the UK alone the Creative Industries is now worth £71.4 billion per year, accounts for 1.68 million jobs and a growth rate of 10% in 2012, outperformed all other sectors of UK industry.

Countries are changing their education systems to teach creative thinking skills to their students. Companies are redesigning workspaces to promote more innovative ways to collaborate. Even national governments are waking up to the potential of a whole new economy that was first described by American writer Richard Florida in his book 'The Rise of The Creative Class'.

Part of this extraordinary growth can be put down to the digital era unlocking new marketing and distribution channels for creators. Today it is common to find writers in London, graphic designers in Singapore, editors in New York and marketers in San Francisco all working together on the same project. Websites like Craftsy, Etsy and Udemy teach everything from knitting and music to design and novel writing to hobbyists and creative professionals alike. In short we are undergoing a new Renaissance for creative pursuits.



THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

JAMES TAYLOR

The 1950's and 1960's were the Age of Efficiency both at home and in the workplace. In the 1970's and 1980's we entered the Age of Quality with the rise of Japanese manufacturing and concepts like Kaizen. Then in the 1990's and 2000's we moved into the Age of Flexibility which witnessed greater cross functionality of teams and different approaches to work such as outsourcing and more people working from home.

During my travels I met with Jared, a musician who built a multi-million dollar businesses from his home teaching music online, as well as Helene, a former executive that escaped the rat race and now travels the world writing, volunteering and learning new languages.

All of them have one thing in common. They have learned to harness their creative abilities to create rewarding lifestyles for themselves and their families.



HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

JAMES TAYLOR

Our understanding of how creativity works has come a long way in just the last fifty years or so. Where once the subject was mysterious today we have learned about creative types. It seems like every day we are discovering more about the creative mind and how to unlock it's seemingly limitless potential.

You see much of the latest findings in terms of how the creative brain works has been stuck in the laboratories or buried in obscure research papers by academics. Now its time to make these fascinating discoveries available to the rest of us so we can harness them to create better lives and societies.

We've just come through the Great Recession, a time of incredible hardship for many people in the world. Perhaps the most negative consequence of this is the high levels of unemployment amongst young people in many of our towns and cities.

However the answers to how we rebuild are already within us. We simply have to understand ourselves better so we can bring forth the new ideas that will solve the most challenging problems we face as individuals, families, communities and countries.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

JAMES TAYLOR

Now some people would take issue with my definition of creativity being “the ability to generate and refine ideas”. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his excellent 1996 book ‘Creativity’ says:

“Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one. And the definition of a creative person is: someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain, or establish a new domain. It is important to remember, however, that a domain cannot be changed without the explicit or implicit consent of a field responsible for it.”

In other words he is saying that you are only creative if gatekeepers and critics say so. The implications of this ‘systems model’ of creativity as he then goes on to state are that:

“According to the systems model, it makes perfect sense to say that Raphael was creative in the sixteenth century and in the nineteenth century but not in between or afterwards. Raphael is creative when the community is moved by his work, and discovers new possibilities in his paintings”.

So Csikszentmihalyi is telling you that you are only creative if your ideas are “validated by appropriate experts” and that your new book, song, painting, product or service may see you being described as a creative genius this month but next month the ‘experts’ will pronounce that it in fact wasn’t creative at all and your work is terrible.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

JAMES TAYLOR

Now I don't know about you but this definition of creativity seems deeply flawed. First of all he assumes that something is only creative if it changes the domain (i.e. you are only a creative writer if you invent a new form of novel or a new literary genre). It also means that we need a special elite (how and why they are chosen is unclear) who determine what is and what isn't creative.

Four years after Csikszentmihalyi's book was published two academics called Leonard and Swap put forward a new definition:

"Creativity is a process of developing and expressing novel ideas that are likely to be useful".

By this definition you are only being creative if your ideas are useful. By this standard most theoretical physicists, philosophers, authors, artists and musicians would fail the test because often these individuals are devising and playing with new ideas because they just enjoy the process of creating. The creative process for them is autotelic (an end in itself) and if the results end up being useful then so much the better, but that is not the primary aim.

Philosophers, poets and writers including Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Blake, Keats and Henry James all had something to say about the creative process but it wasn't until the 20th Century that the subject was explored in great depth.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

JAMES TAYLOR

Arguably the first book on the creative process was published in the 1950's by the Soviet inventor and science fiction writer Genrich Altschuler's. "Creative as an exact science" describes Altschuler's forty inventive principles distilled from the study of over 40,000 patents. His TRIZ method has been used by some of our most innovative companies including Boeing, Ford, Johnson & Johnson, Proctor and Gamble and Expedia.

Around the same time the concept of 'brainstorming' was first popularized by Alex Fiackney Osborn's 1953 book 'Applied Imagination'. His concepts of deferring judgement, generating lots of ideas, encouraging unusual ideas, and combining ideas can still be seen in practice in brainstorming meetings today.

If Altschuler and Osborn's books were for the business and scientific elite then Brewster Ghiselin's 1952 classic 'The Creative Process' took the subject into the mainstream. Where Ghiselin's book was different was that it showed us the creative rituals of leading writers, poets, composers, artists, sculptures, dancers and thinkers. The book was initially rejected by several publishers because 'creativity' was seen as too niche.

Like all book subjects, those on creativity come in waves. If the first wave was in the 1950's, then the second was in the 1990's and since the new millennium we have begun to see a resurgence in interest in the subject.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

JAMES TAYLOR

In 1994 Julia Cameron's seminal work 'The Artists Way' was published and was taken up enthusiastically by the creative community or those who aspired to making it as an artist, or who have art as a hobby. While to some this book may feel dated because of its writing in the spiritual self-help tone of the time, it none the less explained a common problem amongst all creatives: the creative block. With techniques such as 'morning pages' and the 'artist date' it gave permission for its avid readers to proclaim their creative nature and aspire to making a living from it.

Following the success of 'The Artists Way' a series of books aimed at this new aspiring creative class cropped up in the 90's. They ranged from the intellectual (David Bohm's 'On Creativity' and Cziksezentmihalyi's 'Creativity') to the instructive (Michael J. Gelb's 'How To Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci').

Then in as the we entered a new millennium the digital age combined with exciting findings in neuroscience brought forth new books, blogs and TedTalks on the subject. Sir Ken Robinson's 'Out of Our Minds' (2001) showed us why creativity matters, why so many people think they're not creative and what companies, schools and governments can do about it. Hugh MacLeod's 'Ignore Everybody' (2009) book suggested where inspiration comes from and what it takes to make a living as a creative person.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

JAMES TAYLOR

Tina Seelig's 'inGenius' (2012) showed that it is possible for an academic to write a book that is enjoyable read and her online course on creativity was taken up by thousands. Jonah Lehrer's somewhat discredited but none the less excellent book 'Imagine' (2012) shattered long held myths and provided counterintuitive arguments based on science. Finally Austin Kleon's 'Steal Like An Artist' (2012) produced the most inspiring guide to creativity in the digital age and was rewarded with a best-seller.

Today Buffalo State has an International Center for Studies of Creativity and offers an MSc in the subject. Stanford and Harvard offer courses on creativity and in the fast-developing countries of Asia and South America they are actively teaching creative thinking skills in schools, colleges and universities. Indeed my own C.School has seen rapid take-up of interest in our online creativity training. We are witnessing nothing less than a Creative awakening and it based on two key trends.

What we see with the development of this idea of 'being creative' is how it has gone from being an elite pursuit, something for artists or those working in 'creative departments', to becoming something that all of us can aspire to because the truth is we are born with it anyway. Picasso accurately summed it up by telling us that: "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."

This book is nothing if not a quick guide for how we can discover that creative soul within each of us and finding a way for it to flourish to make us healthier, happier and wealthier.

THE CREATIVITY FRAMEWORK

JAMES TAYLOR

After reading hundreds of books on creativity and innovation and traveling the world to meet with academics and highly creative individuals I was able to synthesize it all into what we call at [C.School](#) 'The Creativity Framework™'.

The Creativity Framework™ consists of six areas that we look to master:

Purpose - Understanding what our creative purpose is

Person - Identifying and developing our own personal creative style

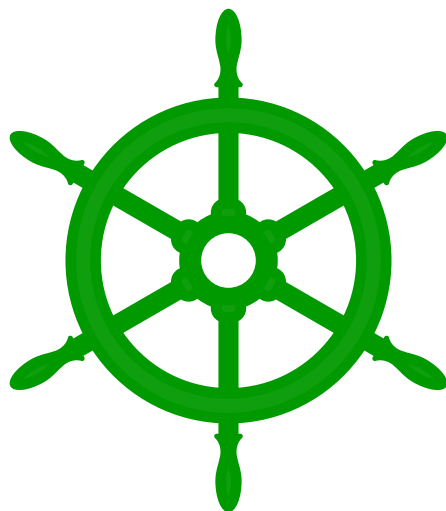
Process - Improving your creative process

Place - Building a creative environment

Products - Generating and developing ideas and inventions

Persuasion - Getting others to believe in your creative ideas

In this 'Little Guide To Creativity' we are going to focus on 'the creative process' as it is central to understanding and unlocking your creativity.



THE CREATIVE PROCESS

JAMES TAYLOR

One of the questions I'm asked a lot is about how the creative process works? The easiest way to explain the creative process is what through the use of what we call 'the five stages'.

I should preface this by saying, even though I break it down as a linear process, in reality it is actually an iterative process. So, you'll be going back and forth between these different stages.

Preparation

So having said that, the first stage in the creative process is the idea of preparation. This is a classic stage where you are absorbing a lot of information. You're thinking about an area in which you want to generate new ideas and solutions, and you're really trying to absorb as much information as possible.

So if you're an author, you're reading the writings or works of other authors, maybe around this area. If you're a musician and you're thinking of making an album in a certain style and with a certain sound, then you're researching or listening to a lot of records by artists to get inspiration.

If you're an entrepreneur, you're out there looking at finding really cool businesses and cool ideas other entrepreneurs have created as well.

This preparation stage is one of the areas where you'll probably devote a lot of your time. In the five stages of the creative process, you end up spending most of your time at the start, the first stage, and the fifth stage, the last stage.

With each of these stages, there tends to be an optimal environment in which to do them. In this first stage, what we tend to find through research, is that working in a quiet environment is really best for the research stage. That's perhaps no surprise, which is why we see academics or authors in libraries, that is why we see musicians, headphones on, listening to other artists.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

JAMES TAYLOR

Incubation

We then move to the next stage, which is the idea of incubation. And this is where you start to let your sub-consciousness do the heavy lifting. First stage will probably be absorbing lots of information, this second stage of incubation, you want to let it percolate. You want to put these things to the back of your mind, and you often hear of authors writing first drafts of manuscripts, or even starting to map out ideas for a manuscript which they then put in a drawer, leaving it for awhile and then coming back to it a couple of weeks later.

There is no specific amount time that you need to give to the incubation stage. For some people, and for some ideas, you're going sleep on it. That's the incubation stage. You're thinking, you wake up in the morning then, boom, the idea is there.

For other people, and for other ideas – bigger problems, bigger creative concept invasions you're kinda coming up with – it could take days, or weeks, or months. To just let that stuff percolate in the the background.

There are ways to actually accelerating the incubation stage, and we cover those in-depth at C.School.

So, we then move to the third stage, and this is the stage that most of the public think is the “creative stage”. This the bit they think creative ideas are all about. Actually, in terms of time, is the smallest part – it's called, the insight stage.

Insight

With insight stage, it's the classic “aha” stage, it's the eureka moment. You're sitting in the bath, and coming up with that great idea. Something that research is showing us is if you want to increase these insights, they happen most often when you're doing some kind of low level activity. So it could be out walking, it could be in the shower – a number of people I speak with say they come up with their best ideas in the shower.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

JAMES TAYLOR

At C.School we go into the reasons behind this, in terms of what's going on in the brain, but if you want to get those levels of inspirations, just do a little bit of low level activity. If you are stuck in a rut, you're maybe in a creative block of some sort, then go out. Go walking. Go out into nature. This is where I talk about different environments having different effects at different stages.

So you've had that insight, or often, you've had a couple of insights around an area that you're thinking about. You need to move to the next stage, and this is a really critical stage. This is the evaluation stage.

Evaluation

The evaluation stage is where you put on a different hat, you actually have to be super critical of those ideas. Because for most creative people, coming up with idea is usually not the problem. When I speak to entrepreneurs, coming up with new business ideas, they're having ten a day, that's not the challenge for them. The challenge for them is this next stage which is evaluating.

So a couple of pointers here:

The first one is you probably want to get some feedback from outside, i.e., your peer group. You have to be very careful when you're selecting a group from which you get your feedback because it can easily crush your natural creativity if you go to someone with an idea and they just say, "that'll never work."

I come from a part of the world where often, if you go to people and say "I've come up with this idea, this concept..." the first thing out of their mouths is, "that'll never work." I was very fortunate that I then moved to California and worked in Silicon Valley, and usually if I have an idea and I spoke to my peers, they would say "that's interesting, but what about if you did this or that". And so they give useful feedback, they give valuable criticism to an idea.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

JAMES TAYLOR

So these are the kind of people you want to seek out in your area. It could be in your area of expertise or in the topic that you're researching.

Selecting those people is really important because you want to have lots of ideas, but you also want to take time to evaluate those ideas. And at this point, at this stage, the evaluation stage, at the end of it, you want to know "is this an idea worth pursuing?"

This is the point of the evaluation stage. You're gonna have a lot of ideas but to also know "is this worth doing? Is this worth spending my time, my energy, my resources, on pursuing this idea?"

So, that's the evaluation stage.

Elaboration

And then finally, we come to the final stage, the fifth stage. This is the elaboration stage. This is where if you've heard people talk about one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration, this is the ninety-nine perspiration bit. This is where you do the work. You just get on with it, you start to test and to micro test, and get more feedback on your ideas as well.

As I said before, a lot of the work happens at the preparation stage, and it also happens at this stage. There's no magic way of doing this, you just need to get in there, start testing your ideas, start doing the work, because a lot people think creativity is all about what I call the insight stage, the "aha" moment. It's not. It's about the whole length of the creative process.

And if you really want the creative life, you have to develop the ability to really be good at each of those stages. Or to find ways to set yourself up to be good in each of these five stages.

C.SCHOOL - AN INVITATION

JAMES TAYLOR

My goal with 'The Little Guide to Creativity' was to provide you with some initial insights into creativity and an overview of the creative process.

Creativity and creativity research is a rapidly growing area. However some of the best insights in this area lay languishing in dry academic journals. That's why we created [C.School](#).

[C.School](#) helps people become more creative through our online courses, books, events and coaching programs.

If this guide has sparked your interest in creativity then I'd love to continue the journey. Here's what to do next:

Go to WWW.C.SCHOOL and sign up for our free training series and we'll let you know when we next open registrations for our online course.

If you head over to www.jamestaylor.me you can also sign-up to receive my free weekly TV show and podcast on creativity.