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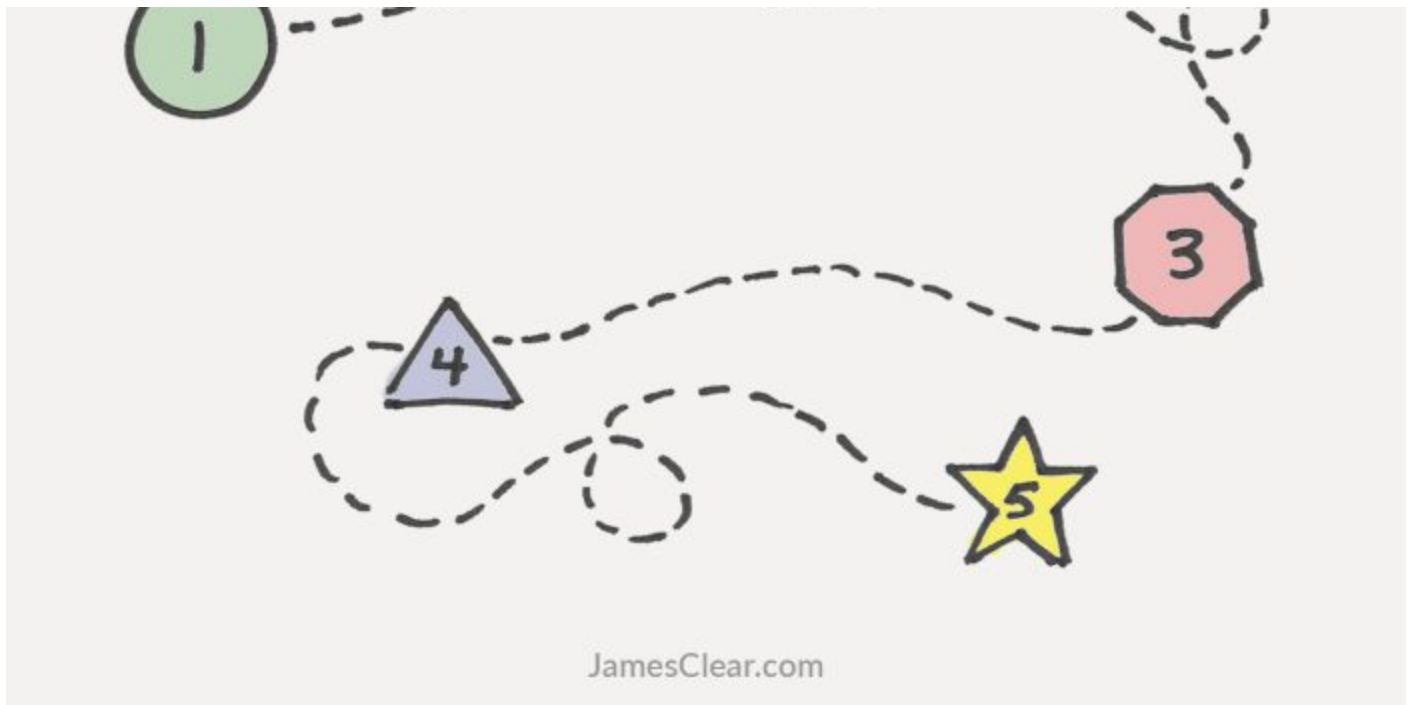
Creativity:

How to Unlock Your Hidden Creative Genius

This page pulls together my most essential information about creativity. I'll share how creativity works, how to find your hidden creative genius, and how to create meaningful work by learning how to make creative thinking a habit. I've tried to present the basics of everything you need to know to start mastering creativity, even if you don't have much time.

At the end of this page, you'll find a complete list of all the articles I have written on creativity.





What is Creativity?

Let's define creativity.

The creative process is the act of making new connections between old ideas or recognizing relationships between concepts. Creative thinking is not about generating something new from a blank slate, but rather about taking what is already present and combining those bits and pieces in a way that has not been done previously.

While being creative isn't easy, nearly all great ideas follow a similar creative process. In 1940, an advertising executive named James Webb Young published a short guide titled, *A Technique for Producing Ideas*

(<https://jamesclear.com/book/a-technique-for-producing-ideas>).

Young believed the process of creative connection always occurred in five steps.

The Creative Process

1. **Gather new material.** At first, you learn. During this stage you focus on 1) learning specific material directly related to your task and 2) learning general material by becoming fascinated with a wide range of concepts.
2. **Thoroughly work over the materials in your mind.** During this stage, you examine what you have learned by looking at the facts from different angles and experimenting with fitting various ideas together.
3. **Step away from the problem.** Next, you put the problem completely out of your mind and go do something else that excites you and energizes you.
4. **Let your idea return to you.** At some point, but only after you have stopped thinking about it, your idea will come back to you with a flash of insight and renewed energy.
5. **Shape and develop your idea based on feedback.** For any idea to succeed, you must release it out into the world, submit it to criticism, and adapt it as needed.

Read more: For a More Creative Brain, Follow These 5 Steps

(<https://jamesclear.com/five-step-creative-process>)

Is There Such a Thing as 'Naturally Creative'?

While we often think of creativity as an event or as a natural skill that some people have and some don't, research actually suggests that both creativity and non-

creativity are learned.

According to psychology professor Barbara Kerr, “approximately 22 percent of the variance [in creativity] is due to the influence of genes.” This discovery was made by studying the differences in creative thinking between sets of twins.

All of this to say, claiming that “*I’m just not the creative type*” is a pretty weak excuse for avoiding creative thinking. Certainly, some people are primed to be more creative than others. However, nearly every person is born with some level of creative skill and the majority of our creative thinking abilities are trainable.

Read more: Creativity Is a Process, Not an Event
(<https://jamesclear.com/creative-thinking>)

3 Lessons on Creativity from Famous Creators

- The 15-Minute Routine Anthony Trollope Used to Write 40+ Books
(<https://jamesclear.com/anthony-trollope>): Beginning with his first novel in 1847, Anthony Trollope wrote at an incredible pace. Over the next 38 years, he published 47 novels, 18 works of non-fiction, 12 short stories, 2 plays, and an assortment of articles and letters. Let’s break down why Trollope’s simple strategy allowed the author to be so productive and how we can use it in our own lives.
- The Weird Strategy Dr. Seuss Used to Create His Greatest Work
(<https://jamesclear.com/dr-seuss>): In 1960, the founder of Random House publishing firm challenged Dr. Seuss to write an entertaining children’s book

using only 50 different words. The result was a little book called Green Eggs and Ham. Here's what we can learn from Dr. Seuss...

- **How Creative Geniuses Come Up With Great Ideas**
(<https://jamesclear.com/markus-zusak>): Best-selling author Markus Zusak estimated that he rewrote the first part of his popular book “The Book Thief” 150 to 200 times. His work ethic and dedication tell us something crucial about how creative geniuses come up with great ideas.

You can also check out creativity articles about Albert Einstein (<https://jamesclear.com/albert-einstein-desk>), Martha Graham (<https://jamesclear.com/quality-comparison>), George R.R. Martin (<https://jamesclear.com/george-rr-martin>), and Maya Angelou (<https://jamesclear.com/maya-angelou>).

How to Be Creative

Step 1: Give yourself permission to create junk

In any creative endeavor, you have to give yourself permission to create junk. There is no way around it. Sometimes you have to write 4 terrible pages just to discover that you wrote one good sentence in the second paragraph of the third page.

Creating something useful and compelling is like being a gold miner. You have to sift through pounds of dirt and rock and silt just to find a speck of gold in the middle of it all. Bits and pieces of genius will find their way to you, if you give

yourself permission to let the muse flow.

Read more: What Every Successful Person Knows, But Never Says
(<https://jamesclear.com/ira-glass-failure>)

Step 2: Create on a schedule

No single act will uncover more creative genius than forcing yourself to create consistently. Practicing your craft over and over is the only way to become decent at it. The person who sits around theorizing about what a best-selling book looks like will never write it. Meanwhile, the writer who shows up every day and puts their butt in the chair and their hands on the keyboard — they are learning how to do the work.

If you want to do your best creative work, then don't leave it up to choice. Don't wake up in the morning and think, “I hope I feel inspired to create something today.” You need to take the decision-making out of it. Set a schedule for your work. Genius arrives when you show up enough times to get the average ideas out of the way.

Read more: The Difference Between Professionals and Amateurs
(<https://jamesclear.com/professionals-and-amateurs>)

Step 3: Finish something

Finish something. Anything. Stop researching, planning, and preparing to do the work and just do the work. It doesn't matter how good or how bad it is. You don't need to set the world on fire with your first try. You just need to prove to yourself

that you have what it takes to produce something.

There are no artists, athletes, entrepreneurs, or scientists who became great by half-finishing their work. Stop debating what you should make and just make something.

Read more: Why You Should Make Things (<https://jamesclear.com/make-things>)

Step 4: Stop judging your own work

Everyone struggles to create great art. Even great artists.

Anyone who creates something on a consistent basis will begin to judge their own work. I write new articles (<https://jamesclear.com/best-articles>) every Monday and Thursday. After sticking to that publishing schedule for three months, I began to judge everything I created. I was convinced that I had gone through every decent idea I had available. My most popular article (<https://jamesclear.com/goals-systems>) came 8 months later.

It is natural to judge your work. It is natural to feel disappointed that your creation isn't as wonderful as you hoped it would be, or that you're not getting any better at your craft. But the key is to not let your discontent prevent you from continuing to do the work.

You have to practice enough self-compassion to not let self-judgement take over. Sure, you care about your work, but don't get so serious about it that you can't laugh off your mistakes and continue to produce the thing you love. Don't let

judgment prevent delivery.

Read more: It's Not Your Job to Tell Yourself "No" (<https://jamesclear.com/your-job>)

Step 5: Hold yourself accountable

Share your work publicly. It will hold you accountable to creating your best work. It will provide feedback for doing better work. And when you see others connect with what you create, it will inspire you and make you care more.

Sometimes sharing your work means you have to deal with haters and critics. But more often than not, the only thing that happens is that you rally the people who believe the same things you believe, are excited about the same things you are excited about, or who support the work that you believe in — who wouldn't want that?

The world needs people who put creative work out into the world. What seems simple to you is often brilliant to someone else. But you'll never know that unless you choose to share.

Read more: Lessons on Sharing Your Gifts With the World From Someone Who Didn't (<https://jamesclear.com/vivian-maier>)

How to Find Your Creative Genius

Finding your creative genius is easy: do the work, finish something, get feedback, find ways to improve, show up again tomorrow. Repeat for ten years. Or twenty. Or thirty.

Inspiration only reveals itself after perspiration.

Read more: How to Find Your Hidden Creative Genius

(<https://jamesclear.com/creative-genius>)

Best Creativity Books

- The War of Art (<https://jamesclear.com/book/the-war-of-art>) by Steven Pressfield
- The Creative Habit (<https://jamesclear.com/book/the-creative-habit>) by Twyla Tharp
- The Art of Possibility (<https://jamesclear.com/book/the-art-of-possibility>) by Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander
- Ignore Everybody: And 39 Other Keys to Creativity (<https://jamesclear.com/book/ignore-everybody>) by Hugh MacLeod

Want more great books on creativity and business? Browse my full list of the best business books (<https://jamesclear.com/best-books/business>).

All Creativity Articles

This is a complete list of articles I have written on creativity. Enjoy!

- For a More Creative Brain Follow These 5 Steps (<https://jamesclear.com/five-step-creative-process>)
- The Proven Path to Doing Unique and Meaningful Work

(<https://jamesclear.com/stay-on-the-bus>)

- Creativity Is a Process, Not an Event (<https://jamesclear.com/creative-thinking>)
- The 15-Minute Routine Anthony Trollope Used to Write 40+ Books (<https://jamesclear.com/anthony-trollope>)
- Lessons From a Vexillonaire: Creativity, Simplicity, and the Carefully Constrained Life (<https://jamesclear.com/vexillology>)
- The More We Limit Ourselves, the More Resourceful We Become (<https://jamesclear.com/kierkegaard-limitations>)
- Albert Einstein's Incredible Work Ethic (<https://jamesclear.com/albert-einstein-desk>)
- 6 Famous Artists Talk About What It's Like to Overcome Fear and Create Beauty (<https://jamesclear.com/overcome-fear>)
- Never Check Email Before Noon (And Other Thoughts on Doing Your Best Work) (<https://jamesclear.com/mental-drag>)
- Martha Graham on the Hidden Danger of Comparing Yourself to Others (<https://jamesclear.com/quality-comparison>)
- Minimalism, Success, and the Curious Writing Habit of George R.R. Martin (<https://jamesclear.com/george-rr-martin>)
- How Smart Do You Have to Be to Succeed? (<https://jamesclear.com/threshold-theory>)
- Free Download: Mastering Creativity (1st Edition) (<https://jamesclear.com/mastering-creativity-1st-edition>)
- How to Uncover Your Creative Talent by Using the “Equal Odds Rule” (<https://jamesclear.com/equal-odds>)
- How Creative Geniuses Come Up With Great Ideas

(<https://jamesclear.com/markus-zusak>)

- How to Solve Big Problems (<https://jamesclear.com/narrow-focus>)
- Lessons on Sharing Your Gifts With the World From Someone Who Didn't (<https://jamesclear.com/vivian-maier>)
- Masters of Habit: The Wisdom and Writing of Maya Angelou (<https://jamesclear.com/maya-angelou>)
- How to Find Your Hidden Creative Genius (<https://jamesclear.com/creative-genius>)
- Smart People Should Create Things (<https://jamesclear.com/create-things>)
- Thoughts on Struggling to Finish My First Book (<https://jamesclear.com/big-project-syndrome>)
- Why I Write (<https://jamesclear.com/scale>)
- The Myth of Creative Inspiration (<https://jamesclear.com/schedule>)
- The Weird Strategy Dr. Seuss Used to Create His Greatest Work (<https://jamesclear.com/dr-seuss>)
- What Every Successful Person Knows, But Never Says (<https://jamesclear.com/ira-glass-failure>)
- How to Chase Your Dreams and Reinvent Yourself (<https://jamesclear.com/reinvent-yourself>)
- Haters and Critics: How to Deal with People Judging You and Your Work (<https://jamesclear.com/haters>)

- Be Honest: Are You Rejecting Yourself? (Why You Should Make Things) (<https://jamesclear.com/make-things>)
- The Daily Routines of 12 Famous Writers (<https://jamesclear.com/daily->

routines-writers)

- **Make More Art: The Health Benefits of Creativity**
(<https://jamesclear.com/make-more-art>)
 - **The Two Types of Inspiration** (<https://jamesclear.com/inspiration-types>)
 - **The Difference Between Professionals and Amateurs**
(<https://jamesclear.com/professionals-and-amateurs>)
 - **The Easiest Way to Live a Short, Unimportant Life**
(<https://jamesclear.com/short-unimportant-life>)
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FOOTNOTES

1. **Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today** (<https://jamesclear.com/book/breakpoint-and-beyond>) by George Land and Beth Jarman (1992). **The Creativity Crisis: The Decrease in Creative Thinking Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking.**
(<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10400419.2011.627805>) *Creativity Research Journal*, Volume 23, Issue 4, 2011.
2. **Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent** (<https://jamesclear.com/book/encyclopedia-of-giftedness-creativity-and-talent>) By Barbara Kerr
3. If you look for it, you will also find a huge hidden benefit of sharing your work publicly: the gut reaction. Whenever you share something with someone else — a business idea, an article you wrote, a painting, a picture — there will be a split second when they first process your work that you get their true response. In my experience, you will either have genuine excitement (which is an indication that you are onto something good) or any other emotion (which is an indication that it's average at best).



Thanks for reading. You helped save a life.

Whenever you buy one of [my books \(https://jamesclear.com/books\)](https://jamesclear.com/books), join the [Habits Academy \(https://habitsacademy.com\)](https://habitsacademy.com), or otherwise contribute to my work, 5 percent of the profits are donated to the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF).

With each donation, AMF distributes nets to protect children, pregnant mothers, and families from mosquitos carrying malaria. It is one of the most cost-effective ways to extend life and fulfills my bigger mission to spread healthy habits and help others realize their full potential.

17077

MALARIA NETS DISTRIBUTED

30739

PEOPLE PROTECTED

317

YEARS OF ADDITIONAL LIFE

9

LIVES SAVED

BETTER HABITS

[Behavioral Psychology](https://jamesclear.com/behavioral-psychology) (<https://jamesclear.com/behavioral-psychology>).

[Habits](https://jamesclear.com/habits) (<https://jamesclear.com/habits>).

[Motivation](https://jamesclear.com/motivation) (<https://jamesclear.com/motivation>).

[Procrastination](https://jamesclear.com/procrastination) (<https://jamesclear.com/procrastination>).

BETTER PERFORMANCE

[Constant Improvement](https://jamesclear.com/continuous-improvement) (<https://jamesclear.com/continuous-improvement>).

[Deliberate Practice](https://jamesclear.com/deliberate-practice-theory) (<https://jamesclear.com/deliberate-practice-theory>).

[Goal Setting](https://jamesclear.com/goal-setting) (<https://jamesclear.com/goal-setting>).

[Productivity](https://jamesclear.com/productivity) (<https://jamesclear.com/productivity>).

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([https://www.youtube.com/jamesclear/](https://www.youtube.com/jamesclear))

BETTER THINKING

[Creativity](https://jamesclear.com/creativity) (<https://jamesclear.com/creativity>)

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[Decision Making \(https://jamesclear.com/decision-making\)](https://jamesclear.com/decision-making/)

[Focus \(https://jamesclear.com/focus\)](https://jamesclear.com/focus/)

[Mental Toughness \(https://jamesclear.com/grit\)](https://jamesclear.com/grit/)

OPTIMAL HEALTH

[Better Sleep \(https://jamesclear.com/sleep\)](https://jamesclear.com/sleep/)

[Eating Healthy \(https://jamesclear.com/eat-healthy\)](https://jamesclear.com/eat-healthy/)

[Strength Training \(https://jamesclear.com/strength-training\)](https://jamesclear.com/strength-training/)

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