



# SCAMPER

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Scamper is a tool to help creative thinking. Originally developed by an educational administrator called Bob Eberle, SCAMPER is a simple aid to exploring possible solutions to a problem. It can be used in the context of a brainstorming session or as a stand-alone technique.

The idea is easy – SCAMPER is a mnemonic (a word to help remember) for some verbs which can nudge our thinking in new directions. For example when thinking about developing a new product or service idea can we:

- Substitute – is there another way we can do this, or a different thing we could put in place? Could we take some of the underlying assumptions about the problem and change them?
- Combine – add elements from somewhere or something else? Can we combine some of the problem elements we have with others to give us a redefined problem? Can we bring together different people or skills to help solve it?
- Adapt – take an existing idea and shape it to help with our context? Are there related worlds with a problem like this? Is there a different context where our ideas could be usefully applied?
- Modify – rework the idea? Are there dimensions of our idea we can expand/ reduce? How might we change the way our idea is perceived – shape, story, look, feel? Can we apply other verbs – magnify, minimize, manipulate, etc.?
- Put to another use – use our original idea in a new context? Who else might be interested in a version of our idea? Could we recycle our product and use it for something else at the end of its life?
- Eliminate – get rid of unnecessary elements, streamline the core idea? What would happen if we took away parts of the idea, what would that look like, how would people react?
- Reverse – turn our idea around, make it do the opposite of our original intention? Can we change the sequence or direction in which things work?

It's a simple checklist for working with ideas and makes use of many of other creativity tools (metaphor, attribute listing, lateral thinking) as springboards to help enhance the flow of ideas [1]. And it uses a few simple verbs – you can add your own to the checklist. The essence is well summed-up in a quote from Bob Eberle [2] who used the metaphor of children scampering to provide a tool which enables us “to run playfully about in one's mind in search of ideas”.

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1. Michalko, M., *Thinker Toys. A handbook of creative - thinking techniques.* . 2006, Berkely, California: Ten Speed Press.
  2. Eberle, B., *Help! In solving problems creatively at home and school.* . 1984, Carthage: Good Apple.