



## Individual skills for creativity

### *Reflection exercise*



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Research has shown that four skill sets are associated with creativity:<sup>1</sup>

- Problem exploration
- Openness
- Will power
- Self-awareness

and these skills can be developed through a variety of training inputs.

So how well do you stack up against this set of skills? Which ones are strengths – and which ones would you like to develop further? Below we offer you a skills self-check on problem exploration – take a few minutes to reflect on the way you handle problems requiring creativity and rate yourself. We suggest you use a simple five-point rating scale:

1= not like me at all

2= not much like me

3= I cannot decide if I am good or bad at it, just doing ok

4= describes me quite well (but not exactly)

5= describes me exactly

A short word about the design of this framework. People often have a hard time evaluating themselves and often think only in terms of *frequency* of behaviour – how often (or rarely) do I do this? But to get a good grasp on your current level of competence it's also important think about how easily this behaviour come to you - is it something you do naturally or do you have to force yourself into doing it? It's important to think about both of these elements when you are scoring yourself – and as a further aid to reflection, try and come up with some examples for the third column. That will help you avoid painting too rosy a picture, identifying the skills you aspire to rather than describing what you actually do. Try to give yourself some time and write in at least one

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<sup>1</sup> You can find out more about these skills and their importance for [creativity and innovation in our book – details here](#)

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example before you rate yourself.

Thinking about past behaviour eliminates two of the most common problems with self-check questionnaires: the central tendency and seeing oneself in a better or worse light than is true. As human beings we like the middle, the mellow landscapes, the beauty of OK. But for assessing and developing skills the middle is deceptive – it can lead us to believe that everything is ok and that we have no further need for development. As we’ll see throughout the book, creativity is strongly associated with not being complacent, but with striving and stretching for better ideas and their implementation. So aiming for a higher score – and recognising where we might not be so strong – is an important element. Our tip for filling in this self-check is to use the extremes in your ratings.

There are no prizes for getting the ‘right’ answer – the idea of the framework is to help you think about your creative skills in this area and to help prioritise skill areas which you'd like to develop further).

**Self-check: Exploring problems**

#	Core behavioural skills	Your score (1-5)	For instance... <i>write at least one example of your own</i>
1	I look at the problem from different angles		
2	I am able to reframe the problem		
3	I challenge given frameworks		
4	I combine differences and opposites		
5	I explore underlying patterns and “core problems”		
6	I take time out to be at my best		
7	I see differences easily		

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8	I separate between observation and interpretation		
9	I look out for invariant features of problems		
10	I interact with my environment for the sake of exploration.		

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## Openness

There are two main skill-areas of openness as a competence: divergent thinking and interpersonal openness skills. Divergent thinking skills are about producing new ideas. The more varied and the more original the ideas, the better. Interpersonal openness is concerned about how one reacts towards other people, differences in views, thoughts, and ways of thinking.

There is a strong link between openness in individuals and supporting ideas of others in teams.

Below we offer you a skill self-check on being open. Once again we suggest you rate yourself with a five-point rating scale:

1= not like me at all

2= not much like me

3= I cannot decide if I am good or bad at it, just doing ok

4= describes me to a good extent (but not exactly)

5= describes me exactly

### ***Self-check: Being open***

#	Core behavioural skills	Your score (1-5)	For instance <i>write at least one example of your own</i>
1	I am open for new ideas		
2	I question statements that are well-tried or taken for granted		
3	I have lots of original ideas		
4	I generate diverse ideas		

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5	I ask questions frequently		
6	I like to have "daydreams"		
7	I engage in a variety of activities		
8	I am interested in other people		
9	I give emotional support when needed		
10	I would rather look at another idea before coming to an to early conclusion		

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## Will power

Willpower is linked to being persistent. People with a lot of willpower seem to have a kind of extra energy that lets them go on, even if others are more than ready to give up. Willpower skills not only enhance our perseverance, but help us to not start things that we do not want to do. Willpower skills help us to control our impulses. Think about the famous marshmallow-task and how the kids tried to evade the impulse to just gulp this marshmallow down and not wait and in order to get a second one. The better you are at withstanding these impulses the more willpower you have. Another aspect of skills connected to willpower is being able to get a balance between speed and accuracy. Here the ability to concentrate and not let yourself be distracted is needed.

### ***Self-check: Willpower***

#	Core behavioural skills	Your score (1-5)	For instance..... <i>write at least one example of your own</i>
1	I pursue tasks with energy		
2	I seldom give up before I the task is finished		
3	I do not give up when confronted with resistance or setbacks		
4	I find ways to overcome obstacles when I get stuck		
5	I am able to focus my attention		
6	I focus on priorities and manage the important tasks		
7	I am good at motivating myself		

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8	I organize myself to keep a high energy level and focus on the task		
9	I can imagine a future state in such a desirable way that I make it impossible for myself not to do nothing		
10	I can get myself into a state of mind where I have the absolute will to reach the goal		



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## Self-awareness

Self-awareness is about taking stock of our strengths and weaknesses, about knowing what we can build in and what we need to develop further. It's been described as 'the ability to judge the self'. It's about taking on feedback and using it to understand oneself. But the competence goes beyond pure evaluation, it's about installing a learning cycle of reflection, reconceptualization and experimentation with new approaches.

### ***Self-check: Self-awareness***

#	Core behavioural skills	Your score (1-5)	For instance write at least one example of your own
1	I know my personal strengths and weaknesses		
2	I can talk about my shortcomings and explore them with others		
3	I actively seek ways of getting feedback to improve my behaviour		
4	I am open to (constructive) criticism		
5	I learn from my mistakes by reflecting my behaviours and their outcome		
6	I understand that different situations require different approaches and have developed flexibility to match my approach to them		
7	I keep trying new ways to improve my creative behaviour		
8	I know when and where my		

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	contributions is needed and will add value to the creative process		
9	I am able to learn and to improve		
10	I have a mental model of how I can be creative and I constantly review and revise this		