



The 4 Phases of Creative Problem Solving

Creativity isn't chaos - it's a process. Whether you're lesson planning, leading a team, or navigating change, these four phases can help you move from stuck to solution with clarity and confidence.

CLARIFY



Define the real challenge.

What's the actual problem we're trying to solve?

What do we know... and what's missing?

Where are we now, and where do we want to be?

Tip: Try asking "Why?" five times to uncover the root issue. Reframe the problem as a challenge or a wish.

IDEATE

Generate a wide range of ideas - without judgment.

Use "Wouldn't it be great if..." to spark divergent thinking.

Quantity over quality at this stage... get messy!

Build on others' ideas and embrace the unexpected.

Tip: Defer judgment. Every idea is a stepping stone (even the wild ones!).

DEVELOP



Shape raw ideas into real, workable solutions.

Combine and refine ideas into prototypes or plans.

Ask: Is this feasible? Desirable? Aligned with our goals?

Get feedback and iterate as needed.

Tip: Use "Hits, Highlights, Hurdles" to assess and improve ideas collaboratively.

IMPLEMENT

Take action... and learn as you go.

Create a plan with clear steps, roles, and checkpoints.

Pilot your solution on a small scale if needed.

Reflect on what worked, what didn't, and what's next.

Tip: Creativity doesn't end here! Use reflection to spark your next cycle.

You don't have to be "artsy" to be creative. You just need the right process and the right people around you. Lean into your strengths... and bring others in to fill the gaps.