

## What does the creative process look like

First gather as much data as you can. Then process that data. Then generate ideas. When you feel you have given it everything you have, take a break and let your ideas mature inside your subconscious. And eventually, at some unexpected and unforeseen moment, the flash of insight, the moment of *Eureka!* will strike and the perfect solution will present itself.

This checklist will help you at every step of the creative process to achieve the best possible results. It's primarily been made for designers, but most of the tips are universal and can be used by anybody. I use this checklist practically every day and it brings me more ideas than I could have ever imagined. And I'm absolutely confident it will help you too. So let's get started!

# Creative Checklist

## map to the *Eureka!* moment

Made by [Tomáš Vachuda](#) for blog [logotvurce.cz](#)

## A few motivational words about creative fear

[Von Glitschka](#) – veteran illustrator, designer and tutor, who has been in the creative field around 30 years and has collaborated with thousands of clients, says that creativity can't exist without fear. That if you're not scared of your project, you're not trying hard enough. He claims he still gets scared even after all these years and recommends us to embrace that fear. Just don't let the fear blind you and use it as your fuel.

I completely agree with Von. Fear of failure or fear of not finding the right idea (or any idea for that matter) is natural, we all experience it. Don't panic and trust the creative process.

## Universal tips

### Your first idea is never the best one

If you find an interesting solution, don't get too excited & comfortable. Instead keep looking for another one.

### Someone's already thought of that...

Remind yourself about this with every decision you make and find a way to make your idea really unique.

### Listen to your gut

Try to work even with ideas that deviate from the creative brief. If something strikes you, there must be some kind of connection.

### Obvious-solution syndrome

Aren't my solutions kind of obvious? Or conversely: am I overlooking some obvious but really good solutions?

### Keep looking for another way

If you follow *the normal* path, you'll discover only what the others have already found. Look for *new* paths.

### Beware of fetishizing an idea

Regularly make sure you're not in love with some idea. If you are, you'll subconsciously sabotage other promising ideas.

### Am I solving the right problem?

Have I strayed too far from the brief? What's really important for my client? What should I focus on the most?

### Keep it simple or enhance

Keep telling yourself: what can I simplify? What part of the concept can I take away and make the idea better? Or... is something missing? Should I add something to make the idea more interesting?

## Priority: realistic deadline

Less time = more stress = less creativity, more mistakes and mostly shallow and obvious ideas.

## Getting info

### Demand a quality brief

Understand your client, what he does and for whom, and what problem you've been hired to solve.

### Preferences

Discern what your client's looking for. Don't waste time creating something likely to be rejected.

## Let's start

### Processing the brief

Go through the brief, extract info and write its essence down on another paper. Feel free to use colors, icons.. just get your creative juices flowing.

### Mood board

Create a collage of images, colors, fonts, patterns or quotes that convey the mood, values and style you wish to pursue.

### Sketch before research

You'll come up with naive, but also bolder ideas.

## Research

### General research

Immerse yourself in your client's field, its history, its rules and understand its whole context. Get a feel of what solution would be appropriate.

### Competitive research

Look for differences between *them* and your client. See how others solved similar problems so you can differentiate from them.

### Target audience research

Which topics are they interested in? How do they act online and offline? Understand your audience and find a solution that will suit them.

## New associations

New ideas are just a new combination of old ideas. In graphic design we usually work with a set of keywords that we try to visualize and combine in new and interesting ways. The more keywords we have, the more ideas we get.

### Mind maps

Create mind maps based on the project's main keywords and generate new associations.

### Synonym dictionary

Find more associations with a [thesaurus](#) or some other type of synonym dictionary.

### Before, during and after

Rain: before = cloud, during = rain, after = puddle.

### Name analysis

Find out what the client's company name means and how it originated. It may inspire you somehow.

## Think different

Unorthodox thinking = creative ideas. These tips will help you disrupt the traditional ways of thinking.

### Nine-dot problem

Can you join these dots with only 4 straight lines? No? There is also 3-lines and even 1-line solution. You just need to think outside the box.



### Different board

Assemble a collage of interesting solutions which remind you that it can be done differently.

### Change the starting point

Open a dictionary, choose a random word and think about how it relates to your problem. Or look around, choose an object and do the same. This will help you to discover new connections.

### From WHAT to HOW & WHY

Rather than thinking about what your client does, think of his *how* (approach) and *why* (values, vision).

### Change its name

When you rename a *door* to a *gate*, *passageway* or *entrance* it may lead you in different direction.

## Creative state

### Ignore fear

Fear is natural. Don't let it paralyze you. Learn to accept it and use it as your fuel.

### Keep a positive mood

It widens the scope of thinking and increases the chances of finding unorthodox solutions.

### Reduce distractions

Put on a headphones, close your eyes...

### Listen to music

It [helps to activate](#) parts of brain that supports creative thinking. And if the music relates to your project, it can inspire you in some way.

### Find a bigger room

Your thoughts fill up your surroundings. Your thinking will be much broader outside or at least in a bigger room or a room with high ceiling.

### Work out

Exercising releases endorphins, evoke a good mood, [generates new neurons](#) and reinforces neuron connections and [allows you access](#) to fresh ideas hidden in the subconscious. It's like creative caffeine. Just go hit the gym.

### Walk

Walking increases creative output by **60%** on average. It doesn't matter whether you walk outside or around the room. Whenever you feel stuck, start walking and the ideas will come.

### Get bored

Boredom [boosts creativity](#). Dedicate some time to dull tasks and uninterrupted idle time: look vacantly into space or out the window and don't think about anything.

### Alpha-waves stimulation

Try some mentally undemanding activity (walk through the park, housework, shower) and give your mind a rest. Closing your eyes helps too.

### The Ball

Put a few keywords in your head, and start throwing a ball against the wall. Meanwhile, let your thoughts freely flow. Dr. House approved.

## Inspiration

### Check your old sketches

Go through unused ideas and look for motifs or styles that are relevant to your current project.

### Somebody else's work

Don't steal, but think about why other people chose that particular path – try to understand their intentions and use them for inspiration.

### Dictionary of symbols

Read interpretations of thematic or even random symbols. Merely reading about metaphors will generate other metaphors and associations.

### Randomness

Find order inside the chaos – look for shapes in the clouds or at the bottom of the coffee mug.

### The world around us

Keep your eyes open, observe nature, the details, colors, emotions. Inspiration is all around.

## Looking for ideas

### Sketch, sketch, sketch

Sketching is essential for generating ideas.

### Embrace imperfection

Don't try to sketch only the perfect ideas. Evaluate ideas on paper, not in your head.

### Even if it's rubbish...

...sketch it out and you may realize it's not so rubbish after all or it may inspire other ideas.

### Change the angle

Literally. Rotate the paper with your sketches, use a mirror and look for hidden shapes.

### Check the dismissed

Go again through the ideas you threw away and you may find some new potential to work with.

### Just Doodle!

And you'll find something interesting. Trust me.

## Imagination

Store some keywords in your head, close your eyes and let your mind wander. If some interesting idea flashes through your mind, just play with it, move it, rotate it, zoom in, zoom out, play with the timeline, add something...

## Developing ideas

### What if?

Drop the assumptions. Try doing something the wrong way on purpose: What if I draw the ball angular? What if I paint the sea yellow instead of blue? How about turning the symbol upside down?

### Set some limits

You can't use more than 5 lines for your logo, or more than 1 color, or you can't work with any symbol relevant to your client's business.

### Exaggerate

What if I make the symbol 10 times bigger or smaller? What if I used 10 times more or fewer shapes? How can you exaggerate your ideas?

### Rearrange and replace

Can you somehow rearrange your concept or its parts? Move this part there or replace it with that?

### Find & change the pattern

What do all your ideas have in common? Find a pattern and replace it with something else.

### Ridicule your idea

There's a link between *haha* and *Eureka* moment. What funny things can you do with your idea?

### Change the context

A ball bearing reduces friction, but one lying on the street may look like some shiny trinket. Try to approach your idea from different angles.

### Different viewpoint

How would a 6-year-old tackle your problem? What would some creative person you respect do? And what about some animal, plant or an object, how would the problem look through their eyes?

### You are the idea

How would you feel, if you were the idea you are developing? What would you change?

## Breaking the rules

### Forget (parts of) the brief

Try to ignore part of the brief or some of the main keywords that you somehow feel limited by. Or maybe don't ignore them, but at least try to take them less seriously.

### Do something unexpected

Try the opposite of what your client is looking for. Is he looking for minimalistic & modern design? Try a detailed & conservative style. You won't deliver this solution, but the contrast will be refreshing and may inspire you in some way.

### Rules and dogma

Which field or personal rules limit your imagination? Is there any „*I should..*“ that is holding you back and that you can get rid of? Even though some method worked for you (or others) in the past, it doesn't mean you have to stick with it forever. Just ignore it and explore other methods.

## Incubation

Once you have plenty of rough ideas, let them ripen. Too much focus leads to tunnel vision and you become blind to connections that seem obvious to a rested mind. Besides, the best solutions tend to reveal themselves when you stop looking for them.

### Pause and stand back

Hit pause for 5 minutes, 5 hours, or the whole day. Clear your head and get a fresh look at things.

### Just relax

Rest supports creativity: watch an entertaining movie, read a piece of fiction, meditate..

### Sleep on it

Sleep allows you to solve difficult problems that you can't solve while being awake.

## X Eureka!

The *Eureka* moment you have longed for should have presented itself by now. At this point, you should have the perfect idea in your hands. Now go ahead and make it happen. :)