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HND / BA COMPUTER GAMES DESIGN / ANIMATION & VFX

EVOLVING YOUR CREATIVE CRAFT

Idea Generation



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Original ideas are considered to be the ultimate goal of the designer – to ‘borrow’ from other sources is often frowned upon by creatives. There seems to be huge importance placed on not being derivative.

However, this may be **overstated and misunderstood** as research informed work is often far better than something that is completely original, as it can contain valuable elements of **relatable or plausible content** that helps an audience accept what they see on the page or screen.



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There is nothing wrong with **being inspired by the work of others**. In fact, this is a very useful part of a creative process.

Not only do you see what is well-received by demographics but you can also find elements **beyond your worldview or understanding** that spark your own imagination, helping to fuel your own creativity.

Often an 'original' idea can be achieved by taking **two existing ideas** and combining them.



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Derivative Ideas



Derivative Content

When popular movies come out, their themes start to show up in games.



(Rogers, 2010)



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Derivative Content

When popular games come out, you find their mechanics being used in *other* games.



(Rogers, 2010)



Derivative Content

This leads to many games feeling **derivative**: Their content feels derived from existing work.





Derivative Content

As long as your ideas contain a **mix of inspirations**, you should not have to worry about derivative content too much.

If you take inspiration from **reality, culture, movies, personal experiences**, etc. and mix this with existing game ideas you have a chance to form a unique take on existing ideas.

If you just design a zombie game by looking at other zombie games then the work will always feel like a copy of your source material.



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Curiosity

Curiosity is important to **learning and being creative**.

Whatever the subject, the importance of curiosity can impact your understanding in many ways.





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Curiosity

Curiosity can:

- Promote creative thinking
- Promote Experimentation
- Promote Team-building skills.





Curiosity

There are many ways in which curiosity can be promoted.



Questions

Asking questions such as “why” aren’t ever a bad thing. Asking these questions promotes a **deeper understanding for your subject**.

It is also part of personal reflection.



Curiosity

There are many ways in which curiosity can be promoted.



Structure

Sitting in different seats in the learning spaces you attend, or studying in different places promotes curiosity.

You may gain new ideas from a different perspective or people around you.



Curiosity

There are many ways in which curiosity can be promoted.



Reflection

By reflecting upon a situation, you can consider the “**what ifs**”. What if you did something differently? What if you got an earlier bus to class?

Being curious about the “what ifs” may allow you to **act differently** in the future.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Become an expert across different disciplines and sectors

Seek a **wide range of sources from different areas**, such as educational texts to scientific journals and social media. This allows you to **gain awareness of developments across different fields** and how this may affect your own sector, also known as 'horizon scanning'.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Do not always remain in the same place around the same people

It can be extremely useful to **learn from others in a different physical environment**, which may bring a different perspective and allow you to look deeper into things.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Change your perspective

Try **observing and experiencing things in a different way** with regards to your environment and competitors.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Network more effectively with others

Try to do this both to **widen your circle** and **gather more information**. Networking does not need to be purely physical – it can also be virtual, using online and social media platforms to expand your contacts and connections.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Listen more and ask questions

Consider a famous quote from Albert Einstein: *“The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing”*.



Curiosity: Seeing Things Differently

One way in which you can start to see things differently is to be **deliberately** curious. Some ways of doing this are as follows:

Bear in mind different attitudes and behaviours or people

This could be **cultural, political, geographical or even generational** – outlooks and opinions differ depending on where someone is from, how they were raised and when they were born.



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Breaking Writer's Block



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Game Designer **Scott Rogers** provides a few tips to try when dealing with writer's block:

- **Narrow your focus**
- **Take a walk or exercise**
- **Deal with something that may be causing a distraction**
- **Jump ahead to the good stuff**
- **Change your environment**



Narrow your focus

Tackle your problems one by one by making an outline or **breaking tasks down into components**.

Give yourself a **timeline** to complete each task but **don't take days** – try to get jobs done in **hours**.



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Take a walk or exercise

Get the brain working and blood circulating by moving around.

Additionally, when the active part of your brain is being occupied by a familiar activity like walking, your **subconscious is free to start wandering** and making connections it would normally never make.





Deal with something that may be causing a distraction

Sometimes when you are stuck it is due to worrying about something else.

Take a break and deal with whatever is bothering you to stop it being a concern.



Deal with something that may be causing a distraction

Sometimes when you are stuck it is due to worrying about something else.

Take a break and deal with whatever is bothering you to stop it being a concern.

NOTE: Be wary that this does *not* lead to endless procrastination!



Jump ahead to the good stuff

Some ideas you have to generate **may not be as exciting** as other parts of the overall game idea.

If these are slowing you down, **move on to something that does** to keep your motivation and interest up.



Jump ahead to the good stuff

This action should really only be considered a **last resort**, as games are built on tight schedules, deadlines and budgets.

Misuse of this approach can lead to **procrastination and failed milestones**. Time management is extremely important – so be responsible!



Change your environment

You may find your work space is **full of distractions**. Internet, email, games consoles, toys, books, etc.

If you find yourself distracted, **go somewhere else to work for a while** that minimises these distractions!



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Change your environment





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Inspiration Using Visuals



Inspiration Using Visuals

Visual stimuli can be extremely helpful in kick-starting ideas.

- What **comes to mind** when looking at the following images?
- What **words do you associate** with the images?
- Can you imagine some **context** (realistic or otherwise) for what you are seeing?

















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Inspiration Using Audio



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Listen to the following audio clips.

What do you think of when you hear them?

What images, scenarios, feelings or thoughts enter your mind while they are playing?





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Any Questions?



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