

## How to become a “genius” in 5 steps?

Are you a genius? I'm not and yet artists and inventors aren't really more ingenious than the rest of us.



Last weekend during a party, the guests had arrived early and the beer was warm. Try giving warm beer to a bunch of beer-thirsty teenagers and tell me the result. I was the one in charge of drinks and once again I'd forgotten to refrigerate it. The only options I felt at that time were to go buy cool ones.

“Don't worry,” replied my girlfriend. “I can chill it for you right away.”

Five minutes later, she emerged from the kitchen with the beer perfectly cooled. She was reluctant to reveal her secret, but when we threatened to report her for witchcraft, she relented.

“Easy,” she said. “I poured the beer in plastic bag and dipped them in ice water. After a few swishes, the beer was cold. The hard part was getting it back into the beer tank. I couldn’t find a funnel, so I made a cone with wax paper.”

My guests applauded.

“How wonderful if we could all be that clever,” one remarked.

As a medical student, this got me thinking. A decade of research has convinced me that we can be clever! What separates the average person from Einstein, Mozart or even Shakespeare isn’t the lack of creative capacity – it’s the ability to tap that capacity by encouraging creative impulses and tapping on them. Most of us seldom achieve our creative potential. I think I know why, and that I can help unlock this reservoir of ideas hiding within everyone of us.



## 1. Capture the fleeting

A good idea is like a very fast racing-horse. It runs by so fast that sometimes you do not even get a glimpse of its tail. To capture it, you must be ready. Creative people are always poised, and that may be the only difference between us and them.

I doubt J.K. Rowling would have been able to write the Harry Potter Series, hadn't she held fast on the "Wizardry School and her quidditch hero" idea, she got on one of her normal train trips.

When a good idea comes your way, jot it down – on your arm if necessary. Not every idea will have value, of course. The point is to capture first and evaluate later.

## 2. Tap the full power of your... freetime

A good friend of mine who is a surrealist painter taps his creative potential by lying on a sofa, holding a spoon. Just as he drifted off to sleep, he would drop the spoon onto a plate on the floor. The sound startled him awake, and he would immediately sketch the images he had envisioned in that fertile world of semi-sleep.

Everyone experiences this strange transitional state, and everyone can take advantage of it. Try my friend's trick, or just allow yourself to daydream. Bed, bath and anywhere else you can be with your thoughts undisturbed, you'll find that ideas bubble to the surface almost unbidden.



The bright Googlers get 20 percent time in which they're free to pursue projects of their choice. Some immensely popular projects from the Googleplex like Orkut, Google News, Google Suggest and even AdSense were conceptualized and developed by Google engineers during their "20% Time".

### **3. Seek Challenges**

When you're stuck behind a locked door, every behaviour that's ever got you free, turns up quickly: pushing or pulling the knob, banging the door – even shouting for help. Scientists call these behaviours in crisis resurgence. The more behaviours that resurge, the greater the number of possible interconnections, and the more likely that new ideas will occur.

Edwin Land, one of America's most prolific inventors, credited his three-year-old daughter with the idea that led to the Polaroid camera.

Try inviting friends and business associates from different spheres of life to a party. Bring people of two or three generations together. This will get you thinking in new ways. Put new and crazy items – like kids' toys – on your desk. Keep clay or plasticine in your top drawer, and mould it when you're working on a difficult problem. Turn pictures upside down or sideways. The more diverse the stimuli we receive, the more rapidly the mind spins out new ideas.

### **4. Expand your world.**

Many breakthroughs in science, engineering and the arts blend ideas from different fields. Take the case of my grandmother. She told me once how she got my father and her brother to divide exactly a pastry in half. "I tell them that one will do the cutting and the other will select whichever half he wants. The first child always cuts straight down the middle so he won't get cheated."

I asked her how she came up with this wonderful idea. “I saw a TV programme on international negotiations,” she said.

To enhance your creativity, learn something new. If you’re a banker, take up dancing. If you’re a nurse, try a course in mythology. Read a book on a subject you know little about. Change your daily newspaper. The new will often connect with the old in novel and potentially fascinating ways.

## 5. There is no 5th step

I know that the 5th step is like waiting to get a candy but instead receiving a slap on the face. This is meant to be so! Without provocations sometimes, creativity remains dormant. So be creative and tell us what you think steps should be.



Becoming more creative is really just a matter of paying attention to that endless flow of ideas you generate, and learning to capture and act upon the new that’s within you.