



# Creativity Calisthenics

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Perhaps by offering students mind-stretching exercises we can help them gain the creative confidence that will allow for better thinking habits. These exercises can help students move from the predictable to the innovative. Most of the activities are designed to open up student thinking. Hopefully, all students benefit from doing them.

## Directions in a Series

Read a series of directions out loud to the class. For example, ask students to make a curved line, then add three short swirls. Connect the ends of the swirls with radiating lines, etc. Establish that students may not ask for interpretation from you. Students should interpret each new direction.

Once all students have finished, instruct them to share their "doo-

dles" with other students. Comment how unique and different they are. Their problem is to use their invented image as the subject of a new artwork. They may choose any media (or you might specify). Some choose to make it into something representational; others will go with an abstract solution. You may establish parameters such as erasing, adding lines, connecting shapes, adding color, background, other objects, etc. Display the finished exercises and discuss the uniqueness of each artwork and each student's feelings when creating it (risk, failure, unknown expectations, etc.).

## Negative Spaces

From construction or other colored paper, students cut out the letters of their name. Use only the scraps to create a visually balanced design. Save the letters for another time. This will astound students, because it is the unexpected. You may set the criteria or give none (must have a focal point, must show movement, must fill the page, etc.). Display and discuss.

## Transforming the Object

Give every student one of the same object, such as extra brochures from a museum, pink colored pencils, old fashioned thermal overheads, paper from the recycle bin, a piece of ribbon, a pipe cleaner, etc. With this item they must create an artwork using only this object and two other art media. The objects may not remain in the same condition as received. Use your own criteria in regards to what defines "artwork" (i.e. aesthetically pleasing, has good composition, is functional, is decorative).

## A New Skin

Depending on your students' level and the curriculum, briefly discuss texture. Have students trace around their hand and forearm. Using only one art tool, create a "new skin." This can be either visual texture or actual texture. This is not a tattoo; it is a surface-texture-drawing.

### **Super Doodle**

Make a scribble drawing that fills an entire sheet of paper. Look at the shapes created by the overlapping lines. By adding lines, erasing lines, dividing, and/or combining shapes, try to make each shape into something. The goal is to fill every shape by drawing to make it resemble an actual object. Add color, shading, or texture if appropriate.

### **Color, Shape, and Line**

Make an artwork that uses the color green, a yellow shape, and a black line. Define the criteria, or not. This is just an example. Of course, you can vary the requirements (two red lines, a black dot and a silver circle, etc.).

### **Feel It, Taste It, Draw It**

Give each student a piece of candy and ask him or her to quietly unwrap the candy. Using lines, describe the experience (sound, feelings, taste arousal). Next, ask students to place the candy in their mouths. Instruct them to draw the sense of taste (texture, sweet, sour). The final problem will be for students to create an abstract study of the piece of candy.

### **Out of the Box**

Take a large box that looks like it came from the post office into your classroom. Tell students to imagine that the box is for them. It was sent from a special person. Ask students to imagine and draw what might be in the box. Have students create a representation of themselves using the objects using any media.


### **Deconstruct-Reconstruct**

Give each student a small cardboard box. Tell students to take the box

apart. They may do this in whatever fashion they desire (cut, tear, fold, etc). Next, they will reassemble all of the pieces into the form of a container that is not a cube.

### **Flatten that Image**

Display an image of a well-known sculpture. Tell students to imagine the sculpture flattened. If they are having difficulty seeing it flattened, ask them what would happen to the surfaces of the sculpture if a giant hand pressed it flat. Create a two-dimensional representation of the sculpture.

Trying just one or two of these creativity sparks in your classroom could induce the anxious response that we all long to hear: "Wait! Wait! I have an idea!" If you have other ideas for practicing creativity with your students, please share them with us. 

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