



p-TIPS

Sweet inspiration

(Unleashing creativity for generating ideas)

How do creative people come up with ideas? James W. Young, author of *A Technique for Producing Ideas*, insists that the production of ideas follows a process as concrete as that for producing cars. According to Young, a “new” idea is a combination of old elements and being able to devise new combinations depends on the ability to discern relationships between seemingly disparate items. Advertising copywriters, poets, scientists, engineers, and a host of other professionals have used the technique successfully since the first publication of Young’s book in 1965. His five simple steps are:

1. Gather material. Be endlessly curious and collect specific and general information from as many sources as possible. Store your data in whatever form you wish: on a computer or electronic organizer, on file cards, in a series of notebooks. Putting accumulated information in your own words helps you remember, clarify thought processes, and disclose gaps. This step should become a lifelong quest.

2. When facing a specific problem, digest all your information. Turn the facts over in your mind, bringing different ones together to see how they relate — or don’t.
3. Stop thinking about the problem. Let your subconscious take over for a while, analogous to an incubation period.
4. While you are still not thinking about the specific issue, an idea will occur. It may come while you are in the shower, repairing a bicycle, or walking along the street.
5. Examine the idea in the harsh light of reality. Submit it to others for criticism and modification for practical use. You’ll be surprised at how often one good idea breeds another, either your own or someone else’s.