



Pablo Picasso: Bull's Head, 1942

# SCAMPER

**SCAMPER is a creativity method that can help with creating ideas through the application of seven heuristics: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate and Reverse.**

## When can the method be used?

The SCAMPER method can be used in a late stage of idea generation, when initial ideas or concepts already exist. The method is typically used after you have 'run out' of ideas. By creating possibilities with SCAMPER, without considering feasibility or relevance at first, you can create unexpected ideas or steppingstones to new ideas and concepts. SCAMPER is often used as part of a Brainstorming session, when it can elicit a new range of ideas based on what is already on the table. Individuals can also use this method.

## How to use the method?

When using the SCAMPER method, you will typically confront each product idea or concept with the seven heuristics by asking a number of questions per heuristic. After you have generated a satisfying number of new ideas, you can proceed by clustering the ideas, like in a Brainstorm session, and select the most promising ones for further detailing.

### STEP 1

- What can be substituted (S) in the idea/concept to improve it?
- What materials or resources can you substitute or swap?
- What other product or process could you use to achieve the same outcome?

### STEP 2

- What can be combined (C) to improve the idea/concept?
- What would happen if you combined a product with another to create something new?
- What if you combined the purposes or objectives of the ideas/concepts?

### STEP 3

- What aspects of the idea/concept can you adapt (A) to improve it?
- How could you adapt or adjust the product to serve another purpose or use?
- What else is like your product that you could adapt?

### STEP 4

- How could you modify (M) your idea or concept to improve it?
- How could you change the shape, look or feel of your idea or concept?
- What would happen if you magnify or minimise the size?

### STEP 5

- How can the idea or concept be put to another use (P)?
- Can you use the idea/concept somewhere else, perhaps in another industry?
- How would the product behave differently in another setting?
- Could you recycle the waste to make something new?

### STEP 6

- What aspects of the idea or concept can be eliminated (E)?
- How could you streamline or simplify the idea or concept?
- What features, parts or rules could you eliminate?

### STEP 7

- What about the idea or concept can be reversed (R)?
- What would happen if you reversed the use process? Or if you changed the sequence of use?
- What if you were to try to do the exact opposite of what you are trying to do now with the idea or concept?

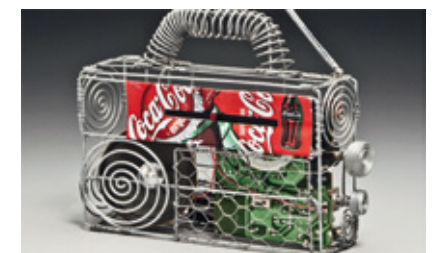
## Limitations of the method

- The SCAMPER method might suggest that by applying the seven heuristics, creativity is guaranteed. This is not the case, as a lot depends on the designer's

use of the heuristics. Therefore, the SCAMPER method is not very suitable to untrained designers.

## Tips & Concerns

- The heuristics of the SCAMPER method are at the core of creative thinking; these kinds of questions should occur again and again in the mind of a designer. The key to effective use of the method lies in asking challenging – and sometimes radical – questions. If you want to reap the greatest benefits from the SCAMPER method, you should be willing to challenge your own creativity. Sometimes you might want to go a little crazy and ask questions like 'what does this idea look like from the perspective of a fly?'
- Like in any creative process, avoid criticism or discarding seemingly unrealistic ideas. Evaluation should be done in a separate stage when you can evaluate ideas, cluster them, eliminate unfeasible or irrelevant ideas and proceed with detailing selected ideas or concepts. It might take a few rounds of SCAMPER until successful results can be achieved.



Ghana Radio, 1995/1996