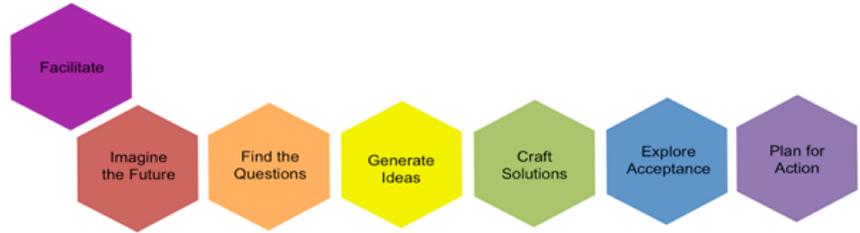


# Creative Problem Solving (CPS): The 5-Minute Guide

## What is Creative Problem Solving?

CPS is a structured process for solving problems or finding opportunities, used when you want to go beyond conventional thinking and arrive at creative (novel and useful) solutions.

A key point: although the process is depicted as linear, in practice it is more organic. Depending on the situation, you may not use all the stages, and may not use them in the order shown.



### Facilitate

- ❖ **Goal of this stage: at the beginning of the process, to determine the problem space you are working in; throughout the process, to make process decisions.**
- ❖ Description: a meta-process step used throughout CPS to make process-related decisions: where to enter, which tools to use, and when to move to the next step. This oversight is the responsibility of the problem's owner and the CPS facilitator, who is usually a neutral third party.
- ❖ Useful tools: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Strengths), or any diagnostic tool.

### Imagine the Future

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have created a broad, brief, beneficial statement beginning with "I wish..." or "Wouldn't it be great if..."**
- ❖ Description: this stage defines a desired future condition, and sets the stage for "clarifying the problem."
- ❖ Useful tools: Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Web of Abstraction, and Excursions for divergent thinking; Hits, Clustering, and Restating Clusters for convergent thinking.

### Find the Questions

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have identified one or more problems you wish to work on, in the form of concise problem statements that begin with "How to...", "How might...", "In what ways might...", and "What might be all the...."**
- ❖ Description: identify the problems that must be solved if you are to realize the goal/wish/challenge identified in previous stage.
- ❖ Useful tools: Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Web of Abstraction, and Word Dance for divergent thinking; Hits, Clustering, and Restating Clusters for convergent thinking.

### Generate Ideas

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have generated many ideas that would solve the problems identified in the previous stage, and you would have selected those that are worth carrying forward.**
- ❖ Description: imagine many solutions, alternatives, and opportunities for the problem statement you selected in the previous step. Then, evaluate, judge, strengthen, and finally decide which to carry forward.
- ❖ Useful tools: Idea Box, Brainwriting, Brainstorming, SCAMPER, Forced Connections, Visual Connections, and Excursions for divergent thinking; Hits, Clustering, and Restating Clusters for convergent thinking.

### Craft Solutions

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have refined and decided on the solution(s) you will implement. One way: create a solution statement, an extended description of what you plan to do, that begins with: "What I see myself (us) doing is..."**
- ❖ Description: After generating ideas in the previous step, you will have one or more ideas that you wish to pursue. In this step, you select the ones you have the time and resources to pursue, and you strengthen them - you make them better.
- ❖ Useful tools: when strengthening, any divergent thinking tools (see Generating Ideas); when evaluating, POINT, Card Sort, Evaluation Matrix, and Paired Comparison Analysis for convergent thinking.

### Explore Acceptance

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have identified those who will assist your solution, those who will resist, and what to do with each.**
- ❖ Description: Make a list of people and groups who will assist you, then generate ideas for how they can help you advance your solution. Make a list of people and groups who will resist your solution, then generate ideas for how you can overcome or mitigate the resistance.

### Plan for Action

- ❖ **At the end of this stage: you will have created an action plan that identifies what is to be done, by when, and by whom.**
- ❖ Description: create an action plan that identifies the discrete and concrete steps you will follow, and who is involved in the implementation.
- ❖ Useful tool: RACI chart, which lists the action steps and, for each step, the person Responsible to do it; the person who is Accountable for it being done; the person(s) who can be Consulted for help and guidance; and the person(s) who need to be Informed when done.