

# OSBORN'S CHECKLIST

One of the basic rules of brainstorming is that you should *build on* ideas that have already been suggested, and this checklist devised by Osborn, the originator of classical brainstorming, is a collection of ways in which you might transform an existing idea in order to create new ones from it. You can also apply it to an existing product to help you imagine ways in which new products might be developed from the old one. As with any checklist like this, it should be used in a flexible, drop-in-drop-out, trial-and-error, spirit, rather than worked through rigorously.

A well-known mnemonic variant is R. Eberle's SCAMPER: **S**ubstitute, **C**ombine, **A**dapt, **M**agnify/minify, **P**ut to other uses, **E**liminate/elaborate, **R**earrange/reverse. See also: *Exaggeration*, *Reversals* and *Paraphrasing key words* which offer more detailed treatment of three very widely used derivations from the checklist.

## The checklist

- *Put to other uses?* ... as it is? ... if modified?
- *Adapt?* What else is like this? What other idea does this suggest? Does the past offer a parallel? What or whom could I copy?
- *Modify?* New twist? Change meaning, colour, motion, sound, odour, form, shape? Other changes?
- *Magnify?* What to add? Time? Frequency? Strength? Height? Length? Thickness? Value? Plus ingredient? Duplicate? Multiply? Exaggerate?
- *Minify?* What to subtract? Smaller? Condensed? Miniature? Lower? Shorter? Lighter? Omit? Streamline? Split up? Understate?
- *Substitute?* Who else instead? What else instead? Other ingredient? Other material? Other process? Other power? Other place? Other approach? Other tone of voice?
- *Rearrange?* Interchange components? Change pattern, layout or sequence? Transpose cause and effect? Change pace or schedule?
- *Reverse?* Transpose '+/-'? Opposites? Backwards? Invert? Reverse roles? Change shoes? Turn tables? Turn other cheek?
- *Combine?* How about a blend, an alloy, an assortment, an ensemble? Combine units, purposes, appeals or ideas?

Adapted from: Osborn, A. (1988) *Applied Imagination*, 3rd ed., New York, Scribners, pp. 286–7

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### FUNCTION

Exploring  
Defining  
Gathering  
**Generating**  
Grouping  
Screening  
Prioritising  
Planning  
Full process

### RESOURCES

**1(–2) people**  
Large group  
**Brief**  
Extended  
Facilitation skills  
Special setting  
Computing

### PROBLEM

Personal  
Multiple issues  
Stakeholders  
**New product**  
Futures/plans

### ANALYTIC MODE

Categorising  
Causality  
**Checklist/table**  
**Combinatorial**  
Mapping  
Numerical  
**Questioning**  
**Reframing**  
Scanning  
Scenarios/views  
Surveys, etc.  
Uses experts  
Voting

### INTUITIVE MODE

**Analogy**  
**Distortion**  
Excursion  
**Hitch-hiking**  
Imagery  
Kinaesthetic  
Listening  
Pictures  
Relaxation  
Role-play/empathy  
Subconscious  
Values  
Verbal  
Wishing

### SOCIAL MODE

**Ad hoc/covert**  
Anything goes!  
Debate/dialogue  
Game  
Interactive events  
Moving about  
Networking  
Nominal  
**Starter's kit**