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# introduction

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Creative thinking is a necessary tool for survival and success. A person who can problem solve in a creative way has the potential to become a successful asset in this world. Any teacher or a parent who would like practical and user-friendly activities to help children think creatively will love this book of trigger questions! There is so much to learn, and so little time. With this book, I have provided a fun way to learn how to think creatively and solve problems with activities that require no preparation and very little time, through exciting creative games that I call Crames®.

When I teach, I see kids whose creativity is blocked. The first time I give a class a Crame®, most of them stare at me dumbfounded. For example, if I said 'How many things can you think of that a pen and a finger have in common?' at first I might get a few responses such as: 'They are shaped the same' or 'they are both about the same size.' Not the most creative answers, but after practising Crames® for a very short length of time I have seen dramatic improvement. Instead of only two or three responses, I will get more than 50! The quality of answers improves and they become more creative, with responses like: 'They can both be used to write' or 'they both have liquid inside them.'

The other problem is that children are afraid to make any mistakes. By allowing every answer to be a correct one, you will encourage them to be fluid and more creative in their ideas. Therefore, as the parent or teacher, you must always give positive feedback to ALL of the responses.

I often tell my pupils this story about a group of bankers:

*A long time ago some bankers were having a think tank. Their problem was that people hated having to stand in long queues to get money out of the bank. They wanted to solve this and please their customers.*

*One of the bankers raised his hand with his 'silly answer' intended to make everyone laugh and said 'Why don't we just let the customers get money out of the wall?'*

Then I pause and let the meaning sink in.

Telling this story will enable the child to understand that just because you think the idea is too 'outside the box' or too strange does not mean that it is a bad one! Did everyone 50 years ago think the technology we take for granted today was even possible? Of course they didn't! We can't be quick to judge the unconditioned minds of our children.

One reason we are not more creative is our unwillingness to break the rules we set for ourselves and our tendency to do things the same way all of the time. With these Crames<sup>®</sup>, I am providing you with the tools and opportunities to look at things in different ways. Playing Crames<sup>®</sup> will add variety to your day and help you and your child/pupil break out of your usual mind-set and lead you down the path of looking at the world through creative-coloured glasses!

This book focuses on many aspects of creative thinking, all of which can be exercised by playing the Crames®.

- fluency
- flexibility
- originality
- elaboration
- lateral thinking
- synthetics
- imagination
- problem solving
- evaluation

The Crames® are broken down into categories to ensure a variety of these aspects are explored. Here are the different kinds of Crames® you will find in this book:

## **what if...?**

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**imagine...**

**envisage...**

**picture this...**

For this Crame®, you will be presented with a hypothetical situation and then the children can speculate what various outcomes might be. The focus is on fluency, flexibility, originality, imagination, and risk-taking. By allowing children to express ideas without judgement, they will become more confident creative thinkers.

# give me five

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## how can you make these 5 words into a sentence?

Once you get used to playing this one, you can ask your child or pupils to provide the words. I play this with my pupils and let them each choose one word to provides diversity. You can play this Crame® with fewer or more words, depending on the age and ability of the child. My children wake up asking for this one!

# flow

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## how many ways can you think of...? make a long list of... can you think of another use for...?

This Crame® focuses on fluency, flexibility, imagination, risk-taking, problem solving and critical thinking skills. It is so important to let the child go anywhere with their imagination! For example, if the activity states:

*“Make a long list of ways to get to school,”* and one of the (hopefully) many responses is: *“Shrink and ride on a butterfly’s wing”* that’s fabulous! This means that the child is successfully becoming a creative thinker! I’m sure that

many amazing stories could be written about some of the ideas that you get from this Crame®. Surely this is how great children's book authors come up with some of their unconventional ideas!

## link

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how are ..... and  
..... alike?

This Crame® focuses on a type of thinking called synectics. Synectics is the process of finding similarities between unrelated and seemingly disconnected ideas. It 'makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange' (William J J Gordon). In this way, new possibilities become apparent. You can begin to create your own when you think of two things yourself! Better yet, let your child or pupil think of them!

# stance perception balance

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describe ..... from different points of view.

which would you rather be...?

This Crame® focuses on fluency, imagination, creative problem solving, and flexibility. It also helps with risk taking because you are forced to see things from other perspectives and make ethical decisions. The child will learn to express 'outside the box' answers aloud without judgement. In my classroom I played a Crame® where we looked at the word 'charge' from many different points of view such as a ticket agent, a rock-star, and a teenager. My pupils had a great deal of fun doing this and then went on to write wonderful poems and songs about the topic. They were having so much fun that they didn't realize how much they were learning (**my point exactly!**) This Crame® encourages the highest level of thinking whilst producing an aware and caring creative thinker.

# **improve and invent**

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**invent a new way to...**

**improve a...**

I think this Crame® manages to target every single aspect of creative thinking found in this book. Any time you invent, you are producing an original idea. In thinking of ways to improve an already existing product or idea, you are also an inventor. Many products we use today are just improvements on existing inventions. For example: the mobile phone is just an improvement on a telephone.

Once you have used all the ideas in this book, you can keep playing this Crame® by looking around you for inspiration. If I am sitting in the car with the children waiting (something mothers spend a lot of time doing), I might say... 'How many ways can you think of to improve a steering wheel?' By the end of this Crame®, my steering wheel was putting on my make-up for me and providing me with a secret stash of chocolate! With practice, who knows what our future Cramers® will invent?