Method

SCAMPER

A list of seven questions for generating ideas from something that already exists: substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to another use, eliminate, and rearrange.



Origin

Eberle (1971), based on Osborn's questions (1953)

Output

Variations of something that already exists, one per question

What it's for

It helps you get new ideas out of something familiar when you don't know where to attack it: each letter is a different starting point.

Key elements

Start from something

A product, a service, or a specific step.

One question at a time

Answer one question before moving on to the next.

No discarding yet

First gather ideas; choose later.

How it's done

1

Choose what to transform: a product, a service, a step.

2

Go through the seven questions: what do I substitute, what do I combine, what do I remove...?

3

Choose the ideas worth testing.

Applications in design

When to use it

To improve something that already exists, not to start from scratch.

Avoid

Filling in the seven letters as a formality.

Don't fall for it

If a letter gives you nothing, move on; go back to the most fruitful ones before choosing.

Connections

Related to

- How might we...?
- Morphological analysis
- Design by analogy
- Brainstorming

Authors and works

1953	**Alex F. Osborn**	Proposed a list of questions to spark ideas, from which SCAMPER comes.
1971, 1972	**Bob Eberle**	Arranged the questions under the acronym SCAMPER to develop children's imagination.

Sources

Original sources

- Eberle, B. (1971). SCAMPER: Games for imagination development. D.O.K. Publishers.
- Eberle, B. (1972). Developing imagination through SCAMPER. Journal of Creative Behavior, 6(3), 199–203. View source (https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1972.tb00929.x)
- Osborn, A. F. (1953). Applied imagination: Principles and procedures of creative thinking. Scribner.

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