

# 7 SCIENCE-BACKED TIPS FOR BREAKING THROUGH CREATIVE ROADBLOCKS

> That feeling. You're stuck. Nothing is coming out right, and you can't seem to figure out what to do. It happens to every creative professional, but it doesn't have to stop your work. Take the lead from top designers. Here are seven tips from them, backed by science, for you to implement next time you're grasping for the next step. – MARGARET KELSEY Content + Community at InVision.

[1]

## SEEK OUT INSPIRATION

"It's important for every designer to pull away from the screen & look for inspiration outside of their particular medium. Go to art galleries, spend time outside, spend time with friends, read. So much of that plays back into what we do because designing is ultimately about communication. If you look at different forms of communication it can really inform a design process."

– Jason Lang, Visual Designer at Yammer in San Francisco, CA.

Why It Works:

Lots of things can be socially contagious: loneliness, laughter, itching, stress, and according to Albert Einstein, creativity. When you're stuck, give yourself time to be inspired again – by the people around you, a mood board that you created ages ago, or a quiet place outdoors. Sometimes a few minutes away from your computer screen can work wonders.

[2]

## REVISIT PROJECT GOALS

"Clearly verbalizing the problem can shake loose assumptions, and if it doesn't, your mind now has a well-formed challenge to gnaw on subconsciously."

– Chad Thornton, Interaction Designer at Uber, formerly at Airbnb in San Francisco.

Why It Works:

When the path forward is unclear, often the best remedy is reminding yourself (and your team) about your initial goals. Be critical and honest as you reflect on what the problem is, how you are approaching the solution, and whether or not the current project is aligned with the objectives.

And, as an added bonus, taking a step back and looking at the big picture can engage both sides of your brain and literally create new connections.

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## CHANGE LOCATIONS

"I find that if I remove myself from the office and find fresh air and sunshine, I can clear my mind a little easier."

– Paul Liddelow, Senior Interaction Designer at Eventbrite in San Francisco.

Why It Works:

An article by Scientific American reported that spatial distance has a huge impact on creativity. Even hearing that a problem is happening further away from you can help you come up with a better solution for it. Don't be afraid to talk a walk and physically distance yourself from your work (even if just for a short while).

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## CAFFINATE

"Sometimes I'll go outside and walk around to clear my head. Other times I'll get a coffee; it's helpful to caffeinate every once in a while."

– Jerry Gordlinier, UX Designer at Atlassian in San Francisco, CA.

Why It Works:

Caffeine has been scientifically proven to enhance short-term memory, problem solving, decision making, and concentration, among a whole host of other factors associated with productivity, as mentioned in this article from the Atlantic. So, yes, now you have a great excuse to splurge on that afternoon coffee.

[5]

## TALK TO OTHERS

"A second perspective on a problem can show you possibilities that you alone couldn't have found– That can be very eye-opening and stimulating."

– Hannah Strobel, Principal User Experience Designer at Good Technology in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Why It Works:

A fresh set of eyes and a new perspective can help give your project a much-needed jump start. Product Hunt CEO Ryan Hoover has been known to crowdsource feedback on designs in progress—to the tune of receiving 50 pieces of feedback in one day. Talking to others, particularly those who have different backgrounds, might help you realize that there is more than one response to the same task, according to an article by Psychology Today about the psychological benefits of multicultural experiences.

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## TAKE A BREAK

"It's tough, because I want to keep moving my mouse until a great idea magically appears, but it doesn't work that way. That actually makes it worse, usually."

– Geoff Alday, Product Design Lead at Emma in Nashville, Tennessee.

Why It Works:

The article in Scientific American that touted the importance of spatial distance and creativity reported that increasing

"psychological distance" from a problem (imagining you are someone else with a different perspective rephrasing the question, and so on), can actually induce creative thinking.

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## SCRAP IT AND START FROM SCRATCH

"A clean canvas, without the distraction of visual noise, can help you find a better direction."

– Nir Yuz, UX Studio Manager at Wix in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Why It Works:

Anecdotally, creatives have heard time and time again to throw out their first draft,

but the core of this truth might be the blank slate itself.

Starting over doesn't mean you're giving up; it means you're willing to explore creative solutions, no matter what it takes. Even Thomas Edison said, "Many of life's failures are experienced by people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

