

DOMAINS

SUPPLEMENT FOR ORGANIZING CREATIVITY (3RD ED.)

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MECHANISM

A domain defines the recurring constraint pattern under which creative work happens. Thus, they have particular affordances:

- how they treat time,
- who is involved and when,
- what materials and tools are required,
- how ideas can be expressed, stored, or manipulated,
- how quickly you get feedback,
- how safe it is to be wrong,
- whom the creativity is for,
- what rules or limits are built-in, and
- what the role of emotions is.

This makes certain ideation modes more or less suited to these domains (see □ Creativity Methods).

This is a supplement to «*Organizing Creativity*» (3rd edition). It is not included in the book because it is more specific and focused, and therefore not relevant to all readers. If the topic is relevant to you, it provides additional information. It was developed with AI input.

More Information: <https://www.organizingcreativity.com/oc3>

APPLICABILITY

This worksheet provides a short domain description and gives you criteria by which to classify a domain. By showing the ideation modes that fit, you can check whether your preferred modes fit to the domain.

Use this sheet when a mode that works well in one area fails in another, or when your preferred way of generating ideas does not fit the constraints of the domain.

INTERVENTION VARIABLES

What follows are domain descriptions, domain affordances, and domain-mode matches.

Domain Affordances

Domains differ in their affordances, for example:

- science, law, engineering: high-constraint / slow feedback
- improv, live music, teaching: live / embodied / social
- fiction, non-fiction, software: externalizable / revisable
- crisis negotiation, pastoral sermons, parenting or therapy: emotionally loaded / interpersonal
- painting, journaling: ambiguous / low-stakes / expressive
- startup early vs scaling: organizational / scaling

Below is a selection of relevant affordances.

A. Temporal Affordances

How the domain treats time, including time pressure.

- Latency: Can you pause? (writing: yes / improv: no)
- Revision: Can you revise endlessly or only once? (science vs. live performance)
- Pacing: Fast, slow, episodic, continuous?
- Shelf Life: Ideas need months? Years? Seconds?
- Decay: Does the idea evaporate if not executed immediately?

B. Social Affordances

Who is involved, and when.

- Audience presence (none, delayed, live; see also Audience Affordances)
- Peer Review (science: intense; engineering: structured; improv: none)
- Collaboration Requirements (solo writing vs. ensemble improv)
- Evaluation Norms (is accuracy prized? novelty? entertainment?)
- Risk Sensitivity (embarrassment, failure tolerance, etc.)

C. Material Affordances

What materials and tools the domain requires.

- **Low:** Can work with almost nothing.
- **Medium:** Some tools or frameworks required.
- **High:** Highly technical or tool-heavy.

Examples

- **Writing:** low material dependence
- **Engineering:** high dependence, tools matter
- **Visual Art:** tools shape possible moves
- **Music:** instrument affordances dramatically shape creativity
- **Improv:** the body and voice are the material

D. Representational Affordances

How ideas can be expressed, stored, or manipulated.

This directly shapes which modes work best. You can iterate/revise on a novel, but not on a live scene.

- **Low:** Representations don't help; the work happens live.
- **Medium:** Sketches and prototypes help somewhat.
- **High:** Drafts, notes, diagrams, recordings — all essential.

Examples:

- **Writing:** externalizable, revisable.
- **Mathematics:** symbolic, formal, compressible.
- **Engineering:** diagrams, simulations, prototypes.
- **Improv:** ephemeral, embodied, cannot be «*saved*» for later.

E. Feedback Affordances

How quickly and from whom you get information.

Feedback speed determines how reactive you must be, which errors you can correct, and how tightly you can couple ideation with execution.

- **Immediate Feedback** (improv, music performance)
- **Delayed Feedback** (books, research papers)
- **Empirical Feedback** (science experiments)

- Market Feedback (startup ideas)
- No Feedback at all (personal art, private journaling)

F. Risk Affordances

How «safe» it is to be wrong.

Risk shape determines how bold or conservative creativity can be.

- High-stakes domains: penalize error (engineering design, surgery)
- Mid-stakes domains: tolerate iteration (writing, design)
- Low-stakes domains: encourage wildness (sketching, improv rehearsal)

G. Audience Affordances

Who is the creativity for?

Audience size affects pressure, required clarity, ethical constraints, and quality thresholds.

- $n = 1$ (yourself, your partner)
- $n =$ directly known people (team meeting, lab group)
- $n =$ unknown people (a book, a scientific field, public performance)

H. Constraint Affordances

What rules or limits are built-in.

Constraints aren't annoyances — they are shaping forces.

- Low: Can do almost anything.
- Medium: There are guidelines.
- High: There are strict requirements.

Examples:

- Improv: strict constraints on time, audience, responsiveness.
- Writing: very loose constraints.
- Science: methodological and empirical constraints.
- Music: genre, instrumentation, harmonic language.

I. Emotional Affordances

What is the role of emotions for finding creative solutions?

- **High-emotion domains:** Essential are high, either expressed or controlled (e.g., painting, improv, comedy vs. SpecOps, Search & Rescue, Crisis Negotiation)
- **Mid-emotion domains:** Emotions are relevant, but not central (e.g., teaching)
- **Low-emotion domains:** Emotions are low (e.g., engineering, science)

Domain-Mode Matches

Depending on its affordances, each domain has modes that fit well and modes that usually fit poorly. Look at the signature of a mode (see Table 1: Domain Mode Affordances), e.g.:

- **Science:** Internal Simulation + Externalization + Constraint-Driven Exploration
- **Improv:** Emotional-Motivational Ignition + Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation + Interpersonal Synchrony Ideation
- **Painting:** Associative Drift + Internal Simulation + Emotional-Motivational Ignition

People often struggle when they use a mode that does not fit the domain. They generate ideas in an inappropriate way that does not fit the domain.

For example:

- A scientist relying on untested Associative Drift fails in peer review.
- A designer avoiding Externalization gets lost — nobody can work with private ideas.
- An early-stage startup founder leading with heavy Constraint-Driven Exploration can kill the fragile shape before it meets the world.

Creativity failures are often mode-domain mismatches, not lack of ability. Take care to match your preferred modes to the right domain, or — if the idea is actually good — you need to translate your ideas into a mode the field of the domain can work with.

Switching between modes that work in a domain can stimulate ideation and is often needed when working on an idea. For example, in fiction writing, fragments of story ideas (via Associative Drift) can be visualized internally (Internal Simulation) before written down as draft (Externalization) and improved (e.g., via Deliberate Combinatorial Search when you come up with possible variants).

	Discovery			Structure					State		
	AD	SC	IR	DCS	IS	EX	CD	RS	EMI	KEI	ISI
Activism (local)	X	–	–	–	o	X	–	X	X	o	X
Activism (large-scale)	–	–	–	o	X	X	X	X	X	–	X
Cooking	–	o	–	o	o	o	o	o	o	X	o
Courtroom Law	–	–	–	–	X	X	X	o	–	–	–
Crisis Negotiation	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	X	X	X
Design / UX	o	o	–	o	X	X	X	X	o	–	X
Engineering	–	–	–	X	X	X	X	o	–	–	–
Filmmaking	o	–	–	–	X	X	X	o	o	–	X
Improv Theater	–	o	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	X
Live Music	–	–	–	–	o	–	–	–	X	X	X
Painting	X	X	X	o	X	o	o	o	X	X	–
Parenting	–	–	o	–	–	–	–	o	X	X	X
Partner (intimate)	X	o	o	–	o	–	o	o	X	X	X
Pastoral Sermons	X	X	X	o	X	X	o	o	X	o	o
Personal Journaling	X	X	X	–	X	o	–	X	X	–	–
Sex Work	o	o	–	–	o	–	X	–	X	X	X
Scientific Research	–	o	–	X	X	X	X	o	–	–	–
Search & Rescue	–	–	–	–	X	o	X	o	–	X	X
Software Dev.	o	–	–	o	X	X	X	o	–	–	–
SpecOps	–	–	–	–	X	o	X	o	–	X	o
Stand-Up Comedy	X	X	X	o	o	X	X	o	X	X	X
Startups (early stage)	X	X	–	o	X	o	o	X	X	–	X
Startups (scaling)	–	–	–	o	X	X	X	o	o	–	–
Teaching	–	–	–	–	o	X	o	–	o	o	X
Therapy / Coaching	–	–	–	–	o	o	o	X	X	X	X
Writing (fiction)	X	X	X	X	X	X	o	X	o	–	–
Writing (non-fiction)	o	–	–	o	X	X	X	o	o	–	–

Discovery: AD = Associative Drift, SC = Serendipitous Collision, IR = Inner Retrieval;

Structure: DCS = Deliberate Combinatorial Search, IS = Internal Simulation, EX = Externalization, CD = Constraint-Driven Exploration, RS = Representational Shift;

State: EMI = Emotional-Motivational Ignition, KEI = Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation, ISI = Interpersonal Synchrony Ideation

Table 1: Domain Mode Affordances

These are illustrative default patterns — other modes might be useful in a particular phase, so override with your actual affordance analysis.

Domain Descriptions

The following descriptions illustrate likely default affordance patterns. Use them as comparisons, not verdicts — override them with your actual situation.

Activism (local): High emotional load, medium persistence, medium social density. Creativity often starts in anger, care, irritation, or hope, then has to become language, action, and coordination. Associative Drift helps generate frames; verbal externalization turns vague concern into slogans, demands, plans, and conversations; embodiment matters because local activism is done by people in rooms, streets, meetings, and tense encounters. Messaging needs emotional ignition. Strategy needs enough visualization to avoid becoming only noise.

Activism (large-scale): More structured than local activism. The emotional charge is still there, but scale adds sequencing, message discipline, coordination, and institutional constraints. Externalization becomes central: documents, briefs, campaign plans, scripts, visuals, timelines. Internal Simulation and Constraint-Driven Exploration help anticipate responses and failure points. Emotional ignition supplies force, but if it runs unchecked, it burns strategy.

Cooking: Medium constraints, medium persistence, medium emotional load — a balanced domain. Internal Simulation helps imagine flavor, texture, timing, and sequence; externalization helps preserve what worked; kinesthetic sense dominates in real time. Interpersonal Synchrony matters when cooking with or for others: timing, taste, expectations, mood. Creativity grows with sensory experience. Recipes help, but the hand, nose, and tongue eventually know things the page does not.

Courtroom Law: Highly structured, slow recognition, high standards. Creativity lives inside evidence, procedure, precedent, and narrative clarity. Constraint-Driven Exploration and Internal Simulation dominate: What can be argued? What will be challenged? What story can the facts bear? Drift can help find angles early, but unanchored drift is dangerous. Emotional force may matter in delivery, but it must serve the case, not replace it.

Crisis Negotiation: High emotional load, high stakes, live feedback. Creativity is not wild ideation; it is controlled adaptation. You read micro-signals, reframe without escalation, offer exits, and use emotional ignition in narrow doses. Interpersonal Synchrony and embodied empathy are central. Drift is too loose; over-visualization is too slow. The creative act is finding the next move that keeps contact alive.

Design / UX: A hybrid domain. Drift helps with early reframing; Internal Simulation helps model flows; Externalization catches ideas before they become private fantasies; Interpersonal Synchrony tests whether other people can actually use the thing; Constraint-Driven Exploration keeps usability from being sacrificed to

cleverness. Feedback is not an afterthought here. Designers get lost when they skip externalization, and they get sterile when they constrain too early.

Engineering: Engineering creativity is problem-shaping under constraint. You build internal models, run mental simulations, then externalize through sketches, prototypes, specifications, tests, and tools. Constraints are not the enemy; they are where elegance becomes visible. Drift can suggest directions, but drift alone produces fragility. Emotional attachment to a beautiful idea is often a liability. Creativity deepens with tool fluency and contact with reality.

Filmmaking: Highly collaborative, constraint-heavy, visualization-dependent. Creativity moves between internal story modeling, external visual planning, technical limits, actor interpretation, budget, location, time, and crew coordination. Drift may spark an image or scene, but realization belongs to Externalization, Constraint-Driven Exploration, and social negotiation. Film punishes purely private imagination; eventually the shot must exist.

Improv Theater: Live improv has no usable pause for external planning. Creativity is embodied, social, emotional, and immediate. Interpersonal Synchrony + Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation + Emotional-Motivational Ignition dominate. Internal visualization and externalization may help in training or post-show reflection, but during the scene they are mostly unavailable. Drift is too slow. Thinking ahead is how scenes die; presence keeps them alive.

Live Music Performance: Creativity is embodied, emotional, responsive. Internal Simulation can help with phrasing, structure, and anticipation, but it is subordinate to kinesthetic timing and auditory feedback. Social density is high: ensemble, room, audience, and instrument all push back. Externalization is limited during performance. Real-time choices often emerge from Emotional-Motivational Ignition, Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation, and Interpersonal Synchrony. You do not «have» the music; you ride it.

Painting: Painting is sensory, expressive, and material. Drift gives tone, atmosphere, and association; Internal Simulation shapes composition; the hand, brush, surface, pressure, and movement do real thinking. Constraint-Driven Exploration enters through color, medium, perspective, format, or self-imposed limits, but too much structure can flatten the work. Painting tolerates ambiguity. Over-structuring too early makes it obedient before it becomes alive.

Parenting: High emotional load, high social density, low situational persistence. Creativity is improvisational: Interpersonal Synchrony + Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation + Emotional-Motivational Ignition dominate. Visualization and externalization help mainly before or after the situation; in the moment, ideas must adapt quickly. Over-structuring can backfire, especially with strong-willed children, by triggering reactance: more testing, more strategic resistance, weaker inter-

nalization of rules. Structure is still necessary, but it has to be lightweight, flexible, and relationally delivered.

Partner (intimate event): Creativity is emotional, social, embodied. Drift can generate intuitive possibilities; emotional ignition shapes mood; Interpersonal Synchrony adapts in the moment. The constraints are interpersonal, not technical: consent, timing, attention, vulnerability, mutual rhythm. Planning can help set conditions, but presence matters more than executing a script. Too much control turns contact into performance.

Pastoral Sermons: High emotional load, high interpretive density, medium social pressure. Creativity moves through scripture, theology, memory, lived experience, current events, and the actual congregation in the room. Associative Drift and Serendipitous Collision supply unexpected connections; Internal Simulation tests how the message may land; Externalization stabilizes the sermon through notes, outlines, and spoken rehearsal. Emotional-Motivational Ignition is central, but undisciplined urgency becomes manipulation or self-display. Drift gives resonance; structure prevents fog.

Personal Journaling: Intuitive, expressive, low-field. Drift, Internal Simulation, Inner Retrieval, and Emotional-Motivational Ignition dominate. The goal is usually insight, contact, sorting, or release — not artifact quality. External standards are weak or absent. Some structure can help initiate writing, but too much turns journaling into self-administration. The danger is making the private page answer to a bureaucracy it never asked for.

Sex Work: High interpersonal attunement, boundary sensitivity, emotional reading, and embodied responsiveness. Drift may generate possibilities, but the core creativity is calibration: sensing pace, mood, distance, safety, and role. Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation and Emotional-Motivational Ignition matter, but they operate inside explicit boundaries. The constraints are not mainly formal; they are interpersonal, legal, emotional, and practical. Bad creativity here ignores limits. Good creativity reads them.

Scientific Research: Creativity lives between rare intuitive leaps, strict constraints, long timelines, and heavy externalization. You model systems, notice gaps, reconcile anomalies, and produce representations that others can inspect: notes, diagrams, proofs, code, data, arguments. Drift has limited utility unless it later survives method. Unanchored speculation falls apart in peer review. Constraint-Driven Exploration is the backbone. Breakthroughs may look sudden; the domain is slow.

Search & Rescue: High stakes, live constraints, physical uncertainty, and collaborative problem-solving. Creativity is practical adaptation under pressure: visualize terrain, bodies, tools, weather, risk, and team movement. Internal Simulation, Constraint-Driven Exploration, Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation, and Interper-

sonal Synchrony dominate. Drift is too slow; emotional overload is dangerous. The useful idea is the one that can be executed safely now.

Software Development: Idea generation moves between abstract mental models and concrete externalization. You imagine structures, flows, dependencies, interfaces, edge cases — then force them into code, diagrams, tests, and errors. Constraints guide creativity: performance, architecture, data models, maintainability, user behavior. Drift helps with naming, metaphors, and reframing, but it has to be tamed. Rubber ducking works because externalization makes hidden confusion audible.

SpecOps: Extreme constraints, real-time adaptation, high error cost. Creativity is narrow, precise, and embodied. Internal Simulation, Constraint-Driven Exploration, and Kinesthetic-Embodied Ideation dominate. Emotional ignition must be controlled; uncontrolled emotion is noise. Drift is dangerous because the domain does not forgive unanchored possibility. The creative move is not «think outside the box»; it is find the viable move inside a very small box.

Stand-Up Comedy: A hybrid between writing and live performance. Drift generates raw material: observations, stories, images, grudges, absurdities. Emotional-Motivational Ignition gives tone and bite. Constraint-Driven Exploration shapes setups, callbacks, rhythm, and economy. Interpersonal Synchrony tests timing with actual audiences. You iterate live, but more slowly and with more persistence than improv. Overthinking ruins delivery; under-structuring leaves you with anecdotes instead of jokes.

Startups (early stage): High ambiguity, high emotional charge, unstable feedback. Drift, Emotional-Motivational Ignition, Internal Simulation, and Interpersonal Synchrony dominate early: What might exist? Who cares? What is the opening? Constraint-driven work enters, but too early it can kill the fragile shape before it has met the world. Early-stage creativity rewards imagination, contact, and fast learning. It also rewards founders who do not confuse excitement with evidence.

Startups (scaling stage): The domain flips. Scale brings coordination, systems, handoffs, externalization, metrics, constraints, and failure modes that no longer fit inside one person's head. Drift becomes expensive; emotional ignition must be disciplined. Internal models need documentation. Strategy becomes more engineering-like: dependencies, bottlenecks, sequencing, reliability. The creative challenge is no longer «what could this become?» but «how can this survive contact with size?»

Teaching: Social, verbal, partly embodied, and time-bounded. Creativity requires reading the room: confusion, attention, resistance, boredom, momentum. Visualization helps in planning; externalization helps sequence material; Emotional-Motivational Ignition helps engagement; Interpersonal Synchrony helps adjust in real time. Constraint-Driven Exploration matters through curriculum,

time, assessment, and institutional limits. A beautiful explanation that does not land is not yet teaching.

Therapy / Coaching: High interpersonal sensitivity, emotional load, and live feedback. Creativity emerges through Interpersonal Synchrony, embodied listening, timing, and the ability to offer a frame without forcing it. Internal Simulation can help map patterns, but if the map becomes more important than the person, the work goes dead. Constraint-driven thinking helps in structured approaches and ethical boundaries; it hinders when it replaces presence. Insight depends on calibration, not cleverness.

Writing (fiction): Fiction moves between drift and stabilization. Drift supplies voice, images, tone, metaphor, scene fragments, and strange connections. Internal Simulation lets you see worlds, people, motives, and sequences. Externalization catches material before it evaporates. Constraint-Driven Exploration enters later through plot, structure, genre, revision, and form. Writers who force structure too early choke the work; writers who drift too long drown in possibility.

Writing (non-fiction): This domain rewards structure, clarity, evidence, and iterative refinement. Internal Simulation helps map the argument's spine; Externalization through outlines, notes, tables, drafts, and diagrams is essential. Drift and Emotional-Motivational Ignition can produce original framings, but the main engine is analytical: What is the claim? What is the logic? What is the evidence? The field does not care how strongly the idea moved you if the argument cannot stand.

TRIAL DEFINITION

If you want to assess your domain, pick one current creative activity.

Rate the domain affordances: time pressure, revision, feedback speed, social density, risk, representational support, emotional load, constraints.

Classify the situation, not the label. The same domain can require different modes in different phases.

Identify your default ideation mode.

Ask: «Does this mode fit the affordances?»

Select one mode shift to test and transfer to the Integration Worksheet.

The following points can be helpful:

- Domain I am working in:
- Concrete creative activity:
- Current friction:
- Current ideation mode I rely on:
- Relevant domain affordances:
- Likely mismatch:
- Alternative mode to test:
- Observable behavior for trial:
- What would count as improvement:
- What would count as failure or non-fit:
- Transfer to Integration Worksheet: yes/no

For example, if you rely on Associative Drift for non-fiction writing but the domain needs Externalization, test this behavior: after each reading session, write one 150-word claim before reading further.

- **Domain:** non-fiction writing
- **Current friction:** lots of reading, little usable argument
- **Default mode:** Associative Drift
- **Likely mismatch:** ideas stay internal and untested
- **Alternative mode:** Externalization
- **Observable behavior:** after each reading session, write one 150-word claim before reading further
- **Improvement:** at least 10 claims after two weeks
- **Failure:** fewer than 4 claims, or claims become empty summaries

HAND-OFF

Domains have affordances, and ideation modes fit some affordance patterns better than others. Check your domain and whether the modes you usually use fit it. If not, choose one mismatch, but do not redesign your whole creative system. Transfer one behavior change into the □ Integration Worksheet and run it as a bounded trial.

