# WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CREATIVITY?

Creativity means different things to different people. Many of us think that a creative person is someone with a good imagination and a particular talent – usually artistic, for example a writer, painter, musician or an engineer. We also tend to think that
5 creativity is something we are born with. It turns out, though, that these common beliefs are often wrong. Psychologists believe that anyone can develop their creativity and become good at coming up with new ideas. Here are some surprising insights from research on creativity.
10 It turns out that in order to be creative you need confidence and determination. We all often have some valuable new ideas, but do not have the courage to share them with others. This is because we are afraid of being judged or making mistakes. How many times have you not raised your hand in class because you didn't think
15 your idea was good enough? However, failure is actually necessary for eventual success. Some people say that Thomas Edison made around 1,000 failed trials before he invented the light bulb! To be creative, you need to take risks and be prepared to fail.
We also tend to think that creativity involves a moment of sudden
20 inspiration. However, creativity rarely comes from one brilliant idea. Professor Keith Sawyer describes the creative process as a 'zig-zag' path in which one smaller idea that we have leads to another one with some unexpected changes of direction. A great invention can begin with one idea, which is not necessarily very good, but which
25 then sparks another idea that is amazing.
Research also suggests that creativity is a skill that can be trained. For example, being open to new ideas and experiences is quite important. Creative people are very curious about the world and keep asking lots of questions. They always go beyond what they've
30 learned from teachers and books. The enemy of creativity, on the other hand, is to continue in our old routines and use the same logic as we have always done. We need to develop what psychologist Edward De Bono calls 'lateral thinking' and learn to look at problems in different ways. For example, think about a student drama society
35 that has problems with funding. A logical solution to the problem might be to try to cut costs. However, if you use lateral thinking, you might think of various solutions: a new idea to raise money, finding a company to sponsor the society or an unusual way to attract new members.
40 Finally, it's not enough just to have some good ideas, you need to put them into practice, too. The best way to boost your creativity is to make things. If you enjoy writing, start writing a regular blog. If you're into music, play or create a piece of music every week. In this way, you can reflect on your ideas to make them even better.
45 It's important to enjoy doing what you do as it takes a lot of time and preparation before you'll be ready to come up with something truly innovative.
So, don't think you're not a creative person; you can learn to be one! Don't wait for a sudden flash of inspiration, though. Creativity
50 is for everyone, but it's not easy!

**7** Read the article and check your answers to Exercise 6. Explain why some of the statements are incorrect.

**8** ✎ Study the Life Skills box and match the tips for developing creativity 1–5 with examples a–e.

## LIFE SKILLS | How to be more creative

**1** Learn new things.

**2** Notice more things.

**3** Share ideas with others.

**4** Make something out of your ideas.

**5** Try approaching problems in a different way.

**a** When you're working on a school essay, ask others what they think of your ideas.

**b** Take a language or music course.

**c** When you have a new idea, write it down, draw a picture, or build a model.

**d** When you go to school, switch off your phone and look around. Try to observe as much as you can.

**e** Think of a new way of doing things. For example, for a school project, instead of just researching information online, conduct some interviews.

**9** DEBATE How far do you agree with the opinion that technology is improving young people's creativity? Discuss in groups. Think about the points below:
• amount of time spent in front of computers,
• using new programmes and applications,
• interacting with others,
• using imagination.

**10** Do the task below.

## LIFE SKILLS | Project

• Work in pairs. Think of as many different uses for an umbrella as you can (apart from protecting you from the rain).
• Choose your best idea and present it to the class.
• Prepare a presentation, poster, draw a diagram or build a real-life model.
• Compare ideas and vote for the most innovative solution.