

Lateral Thinking for Idea Generation

How is a circus like a murder?

Potential answers:

It isn't

They are both words

They are both in the same sentence

They both have six letters


They both involve people

They both are somewhat rare occurrences

...

How is a circus like a murder?
They are both intense.



“Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better, but it dies in the process.” 

E.B. White

Why are jokes funny?

How is a circus like a murder? They are both intense.

Not funny answers

It isn't

They are both words

They are both in the same sentence

They both have six letters

They both involve people

They both are somewhat rare occurrences

Funny answers

They are both intense

In both, you can go straight to the juggler

They're all about Ringling their necks

They can happen when you clown around

Why are jokes funny?

How is a circus like a murder? They are both intense.

Not funny answers

- It isn't
- They are both words
- They are both in the same sentence
- They both have six letters
- They both involve people
- They both are somewhat rare occurrences

- **Accurate**
- **Logical**
- **Predictable**
- **Expected**
- **Obvious ahead of time**

Funny answers

- They are both intense
- In both, you can go straight to the juggler
- They're all about Ringling their necks
- They can happen when you clown around

- **Inaccurate (language-play)**
- **Illogical**
- **Unpredictable**
- **Unexpected**
- **Obvious after the fact**

Why are jokes funny?

Murder



A logical move

Intense

Circus



A logical move

In a tent



A lateral move

In tents

Lateral thinking

Lateral thinking is a way of looking at a problem space in a new and unexpected way.

Typically, we look at a problem in a linear, or predictable way: we use logic, based on our previous experiences and our critical thinking, in order to see an idea or concept through to its natural conclusion.

Lateral thinking purposefully rejects predictable ways of thinking in order to arrive at a new, non-obvious solution.

Lateral thinking is driven by a provocation or prompt.

For example...

I need glasses.

LENSCRAFTERS



For example...

I want to watch a DVD.

NETFLIX



For example...

**What if we mail you glasses and you return them
if you don't like them?**

WARBY PARKER

Let's get this Home Try-On started!



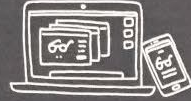
Ask around

See what friends and family think of your frames. (And your followers, too. Share snaps of yourself using #warbyometryon.)



We can help

Send pics to help@warbyparker.com or 646.233.2186, and one of our personal stylists can weigh in.



Order

Find what you were looking for? Order a pair with your prescription from warbyparker.com or at any of our stores or showrooms.



Send 'em back

Once you've spent 5 business days with your frames, pack all 5 back in this box. Tape it up, stick on that return label, and drop it in the mail.



Kick up your feet

Now all you have to do is wait for your brand-new pair to arrive. (The hardest part!) We'll keep you posted as your frames make their way to you.



(this is gonna be great)

For example...

Eyeglasses



Are bought in a store

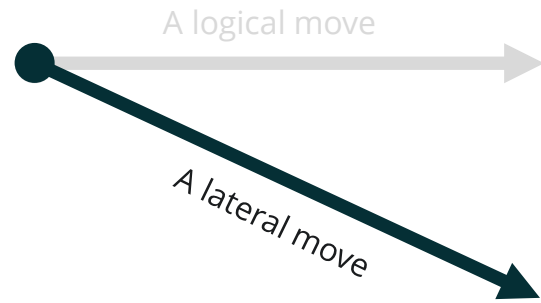
DVDs



Come in the mail

For example...

Eyeglasses



Are bought in a store

DVDs



Come in the mail

For example...

I'm hungry and want a greasy hamburger.

McDonald's



For example...

I want a fridge but I can't afford it.

**GET A REFRIGERATOR
TODAY**
WITH SMALL PAYMENTS

MAYTAG



For example...

What if you can pay for your hamburger in small, monthly payments?



EAT NOW
PAY LATER

.04¢
FOR 36 MTHS



EAT NOW
PAY LATER

.04¢
FOR 36 MTHS



For example...

Burgers



Are paid for once

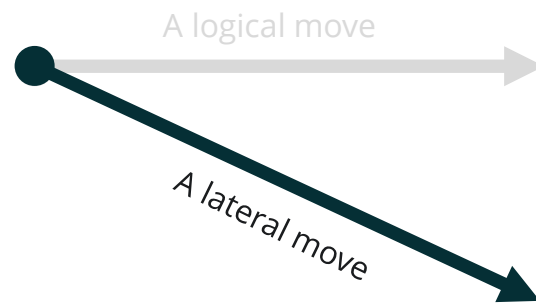
A fridge



**Can be paid for over
time**

For example...

Burgers



Are paid for once

A fridge



Can be paid for over time

Generating ideas through lateral thinking

To force lateral thinking, we're going to smush the attributes of something random into our design problem space.

Imagine you are trying to change the way we think about teaching and learning.

For example...

Teaching &
Learning



Butts in seats

Something
random



Attributes

For example...

Teaching &
Learning



Butts in seats

Disneyland



Attributes

For example...

Teaching & Learning



Butts in seats

Disneyland

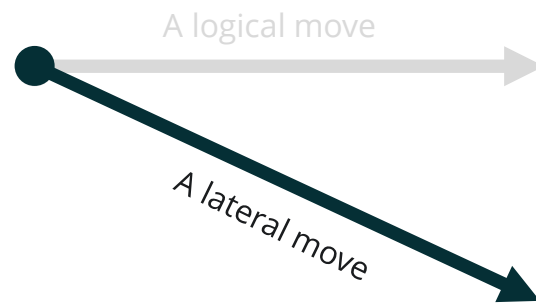


- Happiest place on Earth
- Whimsical fairy tale lands
- Rollercoasters
- Dreams come true
- Overpriced merchandise
- Immersive
- Photographs
- Uncomfortable weather
- Long lines on rides
- Exhaustion from walking
- Giant mice
- Fantasy becomes reality here
- Crowded pathways

For example...

Teaching & Learning

Disneyland



Butts in seats



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Start with your
problem space.

For ex

Teaching &
Learning



Butts in seats

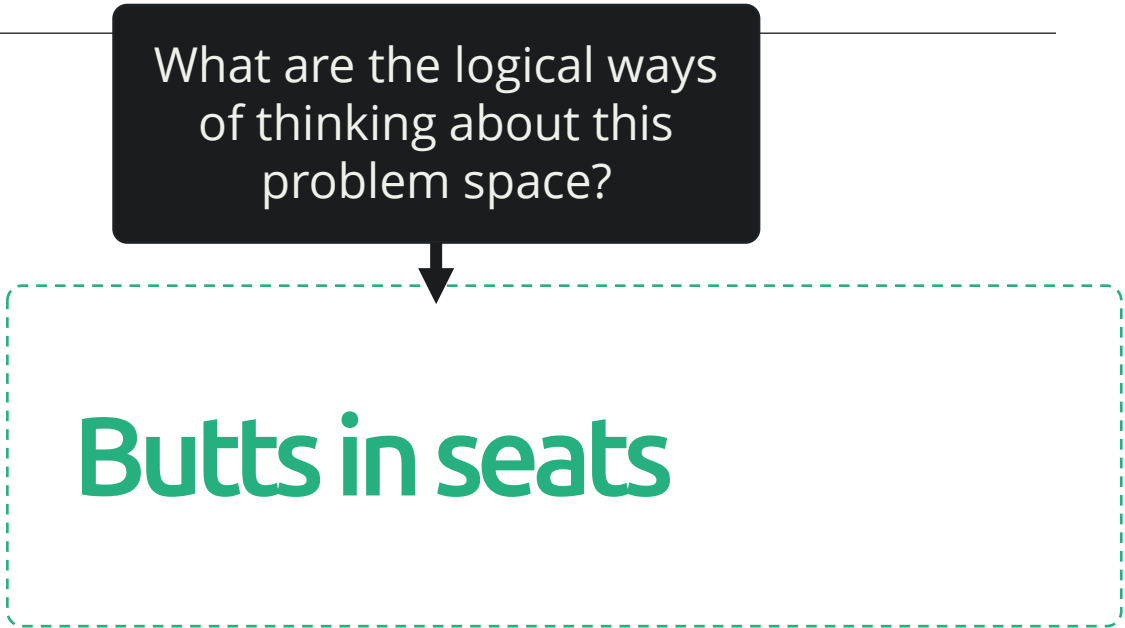
Disneyland



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For example...

Teaching & Learning



Disneyland



For example...

Teaching & Learning



Butts in seats

Disneyland



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Pick an idea that is unrelated to your problem space.

For example...

Teaching & Learning



Butts in seats

Disneyland



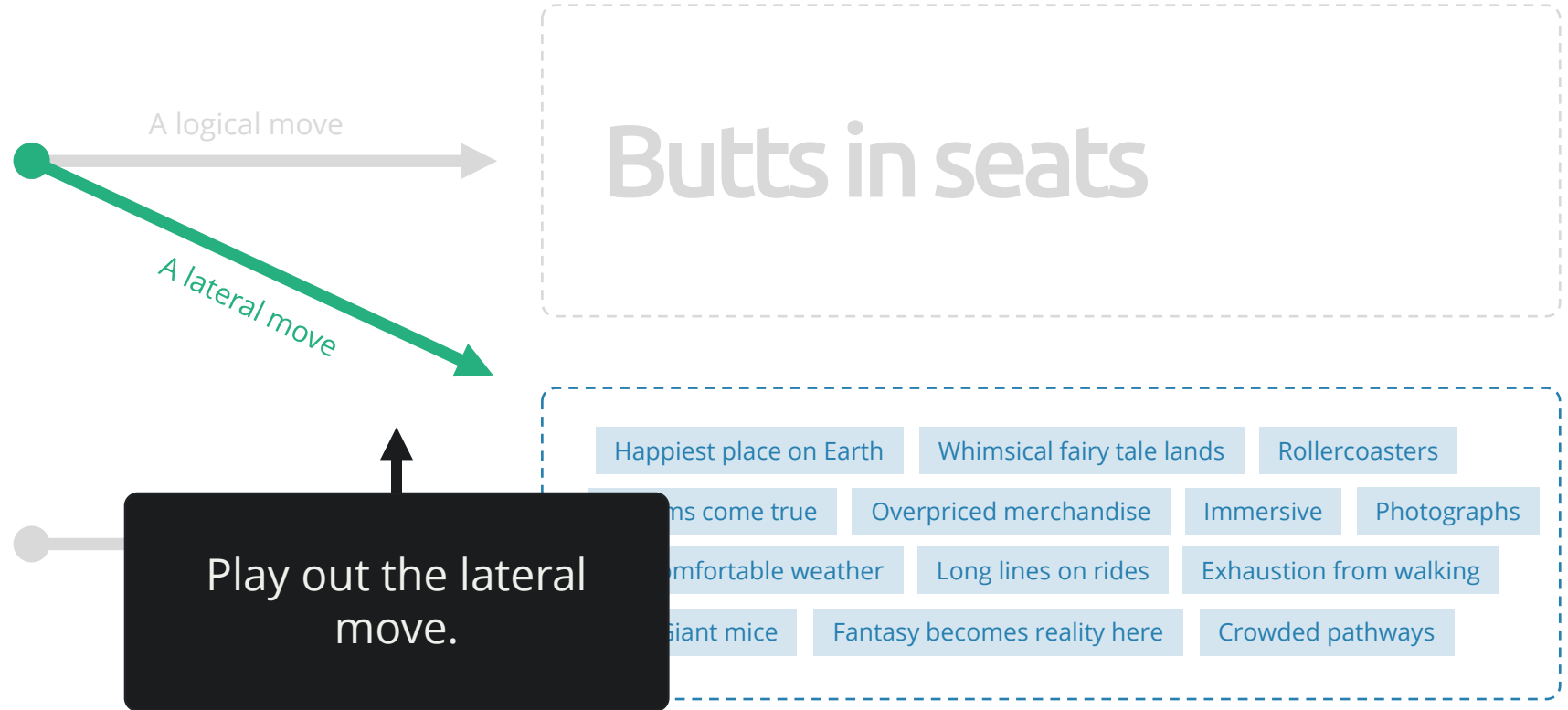
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Identify unique attributes about this unrelated idea.

For example...

Teaching & Learning

Disneyland

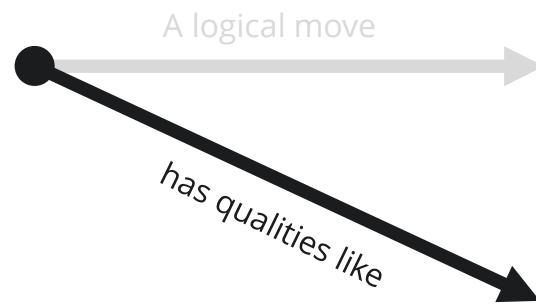


Let's try it together:

What happens if

Teaching & Learning

Disneyland



Butts in seats



- Happiest place on Earth
- Whimsical fairy tale lands
- Rollercoasters
- Dreams come true
- Overpriced merchandise
- Immersive**
- Photographs**
- Uncomfortable weather
- Long lines on rides
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For example...

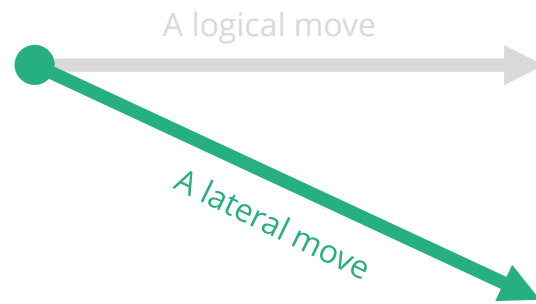
How to use lateral thinking for idea generation:

1. Identify your problem space (“Teaching & learning”)
2. List the logical ways of thinking about this problem space (“Butts in seats”)
3. Identify ideas that are unrelated to your problem space (“Disneyland”)
4. Identify unique attributes about this unrelated idea (“Child having meltdown”)
5. Play out the lateral move

Lets try it.

In groups of two, write down as many lateral moves as possible, based on our example:

Teaching & Learning



Butts in seats

Disneyland



- Happiest place on Earth
- Whimsical fairy tale lands
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- Dreams come true
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Summary

Innovations emerge through a process of lateral thinking – by looking at things sideways.

Innovations emerge from unexpected combinations of ideas. Lateral thinking forces these provocations, and grounds them in patterns people are familiar with.

This is a form of ideation, and helps us develop a large quantity of ideas in a short time.

By generating lots of ideas, rather than focusing on a single good idea, we move past conservative and traditional thinking in order to arrive at new and novel ideas.

Thank you!

jkolko@wonderfulnarrative.com