



# Is There Another Way? Learning Exercise

**Learning & Skills:** Creative Thinking  
Problem Solving  
Decision Making

## Time & Tools

Total Time: 20 minutes  
Necessary Tools: Items for partners to use during the exercise  
Pencils or pens and blank paper  
Optional Tools: Flip chart or writing board

**Note:** The room needs to be large enough so that partners or groups are not sitting directly beside each other. A classroom setting is ideal.

## Step 1

1. Tell everyone they will be performing an exercise on creative thinking.
2. Tell each person to select a partner to work with (they will work in pairs of 2). Have the partners move throughout the room so they are not too close to each other.
3. After the partners are in their location, tell them they will have to identify as many ways as possible to use *the chair* they are sitting on. They must think “outside the box” and go beyond the typical uses (e.g., sitting).
4. Tell the partners they will write down their uses on the paper they received.
5. Tell everyone they will have **5 minutes** to complete the exercise.

## Step 2

1. After 5 minutes, everyone faces the person leading the exercise. Can have everyone return to their original location, if the room is large and it would be difficult to hear the exercise leader or others.
2. Have a representative from each pair share their **list of uses**.

### **Step 3**

**Note:** For this Step, if a flip chart or writing board is available, capture this information for viewing by everyone.

1. After all pairs have shared their information, ask the following general “take away” question:

What can be the value of thinking “outside the box”?

#### *Take Away Examples*

**Note:** Below are some “take away” examples from the exercise. If the attendees do not mention these, the exercise leader could mention them.

1. Sometimes we might need to look for alternative ways to resolve an issue.
2. Sometimes we might need to look for alternative ways to use what we have.
3. By considering other options, we might find a better solution.
4. If we look beyond typical approaches, we might come up with better approaches.
5. Sometimes we might need to accept a “less than perfect” way of using something, fixing something, or doing something.

#### *Optional Additional Question:*

How could you use the ideas from this exercise in your personal life or your work life?

#### **Adjustments to Is There Another Way? Exercise:**

1. You could use something readily available other than “chairs” as an item. For example, you might consider items like paper clips, pens, or paper.
2. You could purchase something for use, such as bouncing balls, whistles, rulers, etc. To make the exercise especially relevant, purchase toy construction items such as hammers, saws, etc.
3. Change the Time or Grouping: The time for this exercise is based on 6 – 10 people. Make adjustments based on the number of attendees at your meeting. If the number of attendees is larger, you could have them work in groups (e.g., 3 – 4 people) rather than pairs (2 people).