



Exploring Leadership

ADAPTABILITY: INNOVATION

Innovation isn't just about inventing new gadgets—it's about seeing something in a new way. Big changes in history, like the electric light or the steam engine, happened when people looked at old materials with fresh eyes. Even the simple act of taming a horse was an innovation! Innovation means asking, "What else could this be?" or "How else could this work?" It's a new way of thinking that leads to powerful ideas.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Choose an optical illusion from <https://michaelbach.de/ot/> to display. Follow the directions, then discuss the illusion. Say: "This shows how changing how we look at something can change what we see. That's innovation."

The word innovation comes from the Latin word *novus*, which means "new." It's about more than creativity—it's also about being open-minded and flexible. Innovation helps us look at problems differently so we can solve them in new ways. That's why so many leaders and companies want people who think creatively and can imagine possibilities others might not see.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this activity, you'll use your imagination to turn ordinary dots into something original—just like innovators do.

- Start by showing the video: "[What is Innovation?](#)" by [David Brier](#) (2:19 minutes). This video introduces innovation using the idea of "dots."
- Say: "Today you're going to practice innovation by creating some dots of your own."
 - Pass out the 30 Circles Worksheet (see Appendix) and pens or pencils. Then explain the instructions:
 - You have 3 minutes to turn as many circles as you can into something unique and recognizable.
 - Try not to repeat the same idea. Think outside the box and see the circles in a new way.
 - Remember: innovation isn't just about coming up with ideas—it's about seeing differently.
 - When time is up, compare results in small groups or with the whole group. Look for common ideas, like balls, wheels, rings, the sun, etc. Then, look for original and innovative ideas.
 - Invite a few volunteers to share the most creative circles they made with the group.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Watch the video and visit the website ahead of time so you are prepared to share.
- With the "30 Circles" activity, don't give too many instructions. Let them think outside the circle.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Learn what innovation means and why it matters.
- Practice thinking in creative and new ways.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Computer with internet to show [YouTube video](#) and [website](#)
- Printed 30 Circles Worksheet (see Appendix)
- Pens or pencils
- Timer or stopwatch
- Printed or digital copy of the optical illusion image



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How many circles were you able to turn into something recognizable?
- Did anyone combine circles, fold the paper, or do something unexpected? Were those rules clear or just assumed?
- Which designs showed the most innovation? What made them stand out?
- What part of the activity was the most challenging—coming up with ideas, running out of time, or something else?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What are some real-world problems that don't have easy answers and need creative thinking to solve?
- How can talking with others who see things differently help spark new ideas?
- Can you think of a situation in your life where you might need an innovative solution? Can you come up with a new way to try to resolve it?



CONCLUSION:

Innovation isn't just about building the next big thing—it's about training your brain to think differently. When we think in new ways, we unlock better solutions, stronger teamwork, and more exciting ideas. The world is always changing, and innovation helps us keep up. Whether you're solving a real-world problem or rethinking a daily routine, innovative thinking gives you the tools to adapt and thrive. Keep asking questions, exploring options, and challenging what's possible!

Utah State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution and is committed to a learning and working environment free from discrimination. For USU's non-discrimination notice, see equity.usu.edu/non-discrimination.

REFERENCES

- What is Innovation? By David Brier: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liyMkOfycOg> (2:19 minutes)
- Hubspot.com: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/creative-exercises-better-than-brainstorming>
- 10 Creativity Challenges to Exercise Your Creative Confidence by James Le: <https://medium.com/constraint-drives-creativity/10-creativity-challenges-to-exercise-your-creative-confidence-ff6f19ba4241>
- Why Innovation is Crucial to Your Organization's Long Term Success by Theodore Henderson: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/05/08/why-innovation-is-crucial-to-your-organizations-long-term-success/?sh=2f8df37a3098>
- 152 Visual Phenomena & Optical Illusions with explanations by Michael Bach: <https://michaelbach.de/ot/>



APPENDIX:

30 CIRCLES WORKSHEET

Directions: Using a pencil or pen, turn as many circles as you can into something unique and recognizable. You have 3 minutes—get creative and have fun.

