

SCAMPER

Improving Products and Services

It can often be difficult to come up with new ideas when you're trying to develop or improve a product or service.

This is where creative brainstorming techniques like SCAMPER can help. This tool helps you generate ideas for new products and services by encouraging you to think about how you could improve existing ones.

We'll look at SCAMPER in this article and infographic.

Are you making the most of the products already at your disposal?

About the Tool

SCAMPER is a mnemonic that stands for:

- Substitute.
- Combine.
- Adapt.
- Modify.

- Put to another use.
- Eliminate.
- Reverse.

You use the tool by asking questions about existing products, using each of the seven prompts above. These questions help you come up with creative ideas for developing new products, and for improving current ones.

Alex Osborn, credited by many as the originator of brainstorming, originally came up with many of the questions used in the technique. However, it was Bob Eberle, an education administrator and author, who organized these questions into the SCAMPER mnemonic.

Note:

Remember that the word "products" doesn't only refer to physical goods. Products can also include processes, services, and even people. You can therefore adapt this technique to a wide range of situations.

How to Use the Tool

SCAMPER is really easy to use.

First, take an existing product or service. This could be one that you want to improve, one that you're currently having problems with, or one that you think could be a good starting point for future development.

Then, ask questions about the product you identified, using the mnemonic to guide you. **Brainstorm** as many questions and answers as you can. (We've included some example questions, below.)

Finally, look at the answers that you came up with. Do any stand out as viable solutions? Could you use any of them to create a new product, or develop an existing one? If any of your ideas seem viable, then you can explore them further.

Example Questions

Let's look at some of the questions you could ask for each letter of the mnemonic:

Substitute

- What materials or resources can you substitute or swap to improve the product?
- What other product or process could you use?
- What rules could you substitute?
- Can you use this product somewhere else, or as a substitute for something else?
- What will happen if you change your feelings or attitude toward this product?

Combine

- What would happen if you combined this product with another, to create something new?
- What if you combined purposes or objectives?
- What could you combine to maximize the uses of this product?

- How could you combine talent and resources to create a new approach to this product?

Adapt

- How could you adapt or readjust this product to serve another purpose or use?
- What else is the product like?
- Who or what could you emulate to adapt this product?
- What else is like your product?
- What other context could you put your product into?
- What other products or ideas could you use for inspiration?

Modify

- How could you change the shape, look, or feel of your product?
- What could you add to modify this product?
- What could you emphasize or highlight to create more value?
- What element of this product could you strengthen to create something new?

Put to Another Use

- Can you use this product somewhere else, perhaps in another industry?
- Who else could use this product?
- How would this product behave differently in another setting?

- Could you recycle the waste from this product to make something new?

Eliminate

- How could you streamline or simplify this product?
- What features, parts, or rules could you eliminate?
- What could you understate or tone down?
- How could you make it smaller, faster, lighter, or more fun?
- What would happen if you took away part of this product? What would you have in its place?

Reverse

- What would happen if you reversed this process or sequenced things differently?
- What if you try to do the exact opposite of what you're trying to do now?
- What components could you substitute to change the order of this product?
- What roles could you reverse or swap?
- How could you reorganize this product?

Tip 1:

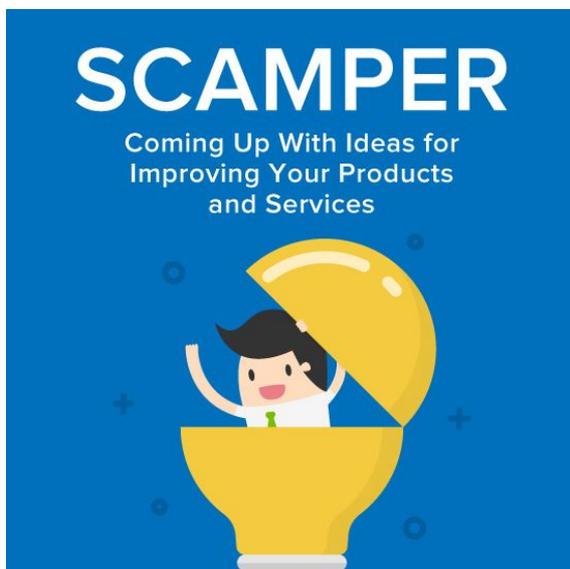
Some ideas that you generate using the tool may be impractical or may not suit your circumstances. Don't worry about this – the aim is to generate as many ideas as you can.

Tip 2:

To get the greatest benefit, use SCAMPER alongside other creative brainstorming and lateral thinking techniques such as [Random Input](#) , [Provocation](#) , [Reversal](#) , and [Metaphorical Thinking](#) .

Infographic

You can see our infographic on [SCAMPER here](#):



Key Points

SCAMPER helps you develop new products and services. Many of the questions it uses were created by Alex Osborn, but Bob Eberle developed the mnemonic.

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- Modify.
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- Eliminate.
- Reverse.

To use SCAMPER, you simply go down the list and ask questions regarding each element. Remember, not every idea you generate will be viable; however, you can take good ideas and explore them further.

This site teaches you the skills you need for a happy and successful career; and this is just one of many tools and resources that you'll find here at Mind Tools. Subscribe to our [free newsletter](#), or [join the Mind Tools Club](#) and really supercharge your career!