

Ten Uses

Name ten things you could do with
a paper cup that are not drinking.

Brain note: early ideas come from memory;
later ones are truly new.

Ten Uses

Hold up a spoon. Ask what else it
could be. Keep going past the first
answer.

Brain note: seeing an object only for its usual
job is a mental habit.

Ten Uses

Sixty seconds. Name every round
thing you can think of. Go for
quantity.

Brain note: going for quantity first brings out
more original ideas.

Ten Uses

Invent one silly rule for your house today. Then invent a sillier one.

Brain note: low-stakes play calms the brain so it explores more.

Ten Uses

Pick a chair and an umbrella.

Invent the thing you get by
combining them.

Brain note: most inventions join two familiar
things in a new way.

Ten Uses

Choose the most boring object in
the room. Redraw it so people
want to use it.

Brain note: redesigning uses imagination and
planning together.

Ten Uses

Mix two animals. Give the new creature a name, a home, and a favorite food.

Brain note: making up names strengthens the brain's word networks.

Ten Uses

Invent a holiday. What is it called,
what do people eat, and what do
they wear?

Brain note: inventing details builds the skill
used in planning.

Ten Uses

One shoe, no feet. List every other
job that shoe could do.

Brain note: reusing an object a new way
loosens fixed thinking habits.

Ten Uses

Draw ten circles. Turn each one
into something different.

Brain note: drawing pairs picture thinking with
word thinking.

Ten Uses

Draw a squiggle. Hand it over. Ask
them to finish it into a picture.

Brain note: the brain loves filling gaps; a gap
invites an idea.

Ten Uses

Name the worst way to carry water. Now fix it into a good idea.

Brain note: flipping to the worst idea breaks the pull of the obvious.

Ten Uses

Retell a story you know, but
change the last page completely.

Brain note: changing a known story makes the
brain rebuild, not replay.

Ten Uses

A brick is not just for building.

Name twenty other uses. Time
yourself.

Brain note: a target number keeps ideas
coming after the easy ones end.

Ten Uses

Give a child an empty box and say nothing. Watch what it becomes.

Brain note: open play lets children set their own goals and test them.

Ten Uses

Show one photo. Ask ten questions about it. No answers allowed, only questions.

Brain note: asking and answering are two different thinking skills.

Ten Uses

Turn an everyday object upside down. What could it be now?

Brain note: a small shift in view changes
which memories come up.

Ten Uses

Invent a new color. Name it. Say
what it smells like and where it is
found.

Brain note: linking senses to words builds
richer memories.

Ten Uses

One rubber band. Name every job
it could do around the house.

Brain note: everyday objects are the easiest
practice for new ideas.

Ten Uses

Design a machine with lots of parts
that does absolutely nothing
useful.

Brain note: removing the goal removes the
pressure, and ideas flow.

Ten Uses

Put a dragon into a story that never
had one. What changes?

Brain note: imagining a change and its effects
builds reasoning.

Ten Uses

You must cross a river. Name ten
ways. Magic is allowed.

Brain note: allowing impossible answers stops
early self-editing.

Ten Uses

Invent a sport. What is the ball,
and how do you win?

Brain note: making rules asks the brain to
hold several ideas at once.

Ten Uses

Make a sound. Ask what could
have made it. Collect five answers.

Brain note: one clue with many causes keeps
the brain open to options.

Ten Uses

If gravity switched off for one hour,
what would you do first?

Brain note: what-if questions build the power
to picture the unseen.

Ten Uses

An umbrella with no fabric. Give it
three new lives.

Brain note: broken things invite repair, reuse,
and reinvention.

Ten Uses

Name a use for a stick starting with
A, then B, then C. Keep going.

Brain note: a rule to work from gives the brain
a place to start.

Ten Uses

Close your eyes and draw a cat.

Open them. Turn the mess into art.

Brain note: an unexpected result gives the
brain something new to use.

Ten Uses

If your backpack could talk, what
would it complain about today?

Brain note: taking another view uses the
brain's perspective network.

Ten Uses

Look at one drawing. Give it ten
different titles.

Brain note: many names for one thing show
there is no one right answer.

Ten Uses

Take a bicycle. Make it tiny. Now
make it huge. What is each one
good for?

Brain note: change the size and you change
the problem to be solved.

Ten Uses

What if a spoon did the job of a
hammer? Try it and see.

Brain note: trying an idea, not just saying it,
wires learning deeper.

Ten Uses

Pick three random words. Make a
story that uses all three.

Brain note: unrelated words force the brain to
build a new link.

Ten Uses

Name every use for water you can
think of. Beat your last count.

Brain note: beating your own score keeps
effort on the task.

Ten Uses

Take a game you know. Reverse
one rule. Play it that way.

Brain note: breaking a familiar pattern keeps
thinking fresh.

Ten Uses

Invent a word for the feeling of a
cold pillow. Use it all day.

Brain note: new words for feelings make
feelings easier to handle.

Ten Uses

Design a house for a beetle.

Where is the door, and what is
inside?

Brain note: small concrete tasks are easy to
start and still creative.

Ten Uses

Start with the last line: and then the
cat laughed. Build the story
backward.

Brain note: working backward blocks the
usual path and opens new ones.

Ten Uses

Invent ten new ways to greet someone. No words allowed.

Brain note: moving the body adds another route to new ideas.

Ten Uses

Cover half a picture. Ask what
might be on the hidden side.

Collect guesses.

Brain note: guessing from missing pieces is
how the brain predicts.

Ten Uses

How could we make bedtime worse? Now use those ideas to make it better.

Brain note: naming what fails often reveals what would work.

Ten Uses

Design a chair for someone ten
times your size. Draw it.

Brain note: a made-up user gives limits, and
limits sharpen ideas.

Ten Uses

Two minutes. Every idea goes
down, even the bad ones. No
judging yet.

Brain note: making ideas and judging ideas
are best kept apart.

Ten Uses

Play a piece of music. Draw what it looks like. Compare drawings.

Brain note: there is no correct picture of a sound, so all answers fit.

Ten Uses

Invent a vehicle that travels on
something other than roads, water,
or air.

Brain note: an odd starting point leaves fewer
old paths to follow.

Ten Uses

Also try: What If Reasoning Cards,
Design Challenges, and Open-
Ended Story Prompts.

Brain note: Find every set at
NextGenLearners.com.