



**100
Activities
to**

Spark

Your

Creative

Practice

**SPARK
& FIRE
PODCAST**

**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

Building a foundation

sharpening the tools
in your tool kit



1. Take your favorite song and completely rewrite the lyrics to the chorus.
2. Draw the same object every day for 5 days. Observe what changes and what doesn't with each day.
3. Pick your favorite celebrity or cultural figure and write a short story in their voice.

4. **“The act of art, in a sense, is almost this beautiful filter that happens. It’s a distillation of all your life experiences. If you want to become a better artist, become a more interesting person.”
— Stephen Wilkes, photographer**



5. Look up your favorite artist’s work — soak it in. Then ask yourself: what’s the opposite of what I’ve just seen? Then make that in your medium.
6. Pick a song and sing it in the style of Elvis. Then Whitney Houston. Then Frank Sinatra. Then blend all 3.

7. **Designer Chip Kidd found the inspiration for the book cover of Jurassic Park on a random visit to the Museum of Natural History. Channel that serendipity and take your sketchbook to your favorite museum, and copy from the masters.**



8. Choreograph a dance sequence over a week — adding one new move each day.
9. For the musically inclined, play your favorite song in a minor key.

**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

Getting out of your routine

Finding inspiration
where you least
expect it



10. Find a material in your house you have never used to make art before. Make art with it, right here, right now.
11. Set a timer for 3 minutes and make a found sculpture of objects only in your room or studio. Then — expand your work to a different medium. Draw it, write a short story or poem inspired by it, hum a melody for something it evokes, turn it into movement.

12. **“When my team and I sit down at the beginning of a project...we start by deciding what we don’t want to do...Often, you have no idea what you are going to do or what you might want to do, but you can be clear what you really feel is the wrong thing to do. And that jumps you forward. That negativity is phenomenally positive.”**
— Thomas Heatherwick, designer

Channel Thomas & his team — take out your journal and write down what you don’t want to do in your next creative project.



13. How does your favorite song become a drawing? Your favorite painting become a dance? Open your mind by translating your favorite pieces into new forms.
14. Quick: what’s the least inspiring place you can think of? Go there, in your mind or in person, and force yourself to select 5 things that inspire you there. Write them down, then, create something from it — a dance, a painting, a collage, anything that you can quickly create.

15. Grab a book, flip to a random page, and quickly choose a sentence that catches your eye. Rewrite it in your own words, or create a story that starts from this sentence. If your medium is visual — draw it. Get out of your chair and express it through movement.
16. Draw 5 objects in your eyesight — don't overthink it, don't change anything, do it right now.

17. **Author Susan Orlean** found her inspiration to write *The Orchid Thief* in a newspaper she found in the seat pocket of the plane. Channel that same spirit of discovery — go buy (or find!) an unexpected newspaper or magazine and see what sparks your creativity.



18. Meditate for 10 mins, and set a creative goal/intention at the beginning of your meditation.
19. Turn on a nature documentary and mimic the movements of the animals to create your own nature-inspired choreography.
20. Open Twitter and write a poem about the first Tweet you see.
21. Pick a random podcast and try to draw what you think the hosts look like.

- 22.** “Being away from home in a hotel room, I read it in one night, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me*. Just the quiet of being alone with these words and with these very big ideas... That’s when the idea started and the wheels began to really turn.”
— **Kamilah Forbes, executive producer**

Plan a week off in a new environment — give yourself permission to recharge and let inspiration find you.



- 23.** Set a timer for 60 seconds and draw first 10 things that come to mind.

- 24.** “I love to do crossword puzzles because it helps me to think conceptually...I love to do crossword puzzles because it helps me to think conceptually.”
— **Chip Kidd, designer**



- 25.** Think of 3 people you haven’t talked to recently. Call them today.
- 26.** Write a one-verse about a song about your favorite person.
- 27.** What’s your favorite outfit? Put it on right now, and notice how it makes you feel.
- 28.** Think of an experience in your daily life that could be improved. What invention would you create?

29. “I don’t work by myself. I’m energized and inspired by dialogue with others.”

— **Thomas Heatherwick, designer**

Have a studio day with another creator. Make time in the middle of your day to talk about your work, and bounce ideas off one another.



30. Draw 3 of your earliest memories.

31. Write down 10 things you’re passionate about. What do they have in common? Look for where you can connect the dots.

32. Call another creator and go for a walk.

33. Combine surprising types of paper – wrapping paper, construction paper, scrap paper, and other materials around your house – to make a new journal.

34. Look at 100 images. Yes, it has to be 100. Choose anything, mix it up.



**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

Getting started

Finding your flow state



35. Get out of your comfort zone, artistically: do an exercise in the medium that you're least practiced in.
36. Notice whenever you feel stuck today. Instead of thinking your way out, try some sort of movement – jumping jacks, stretches, or a walk around the block.
37. Document each stage of your process. Save versions and drafts of what you're doing and spend time organizing them. This way you can always go back and see your process & progress. Reflect on this regularly.

38. “All these stories would come to me like waves, and I had to put them down immediately. I wrote like in a trance, without organizing it in my mind, without a structure, without a plan.”
— **Isabel Allende, author**



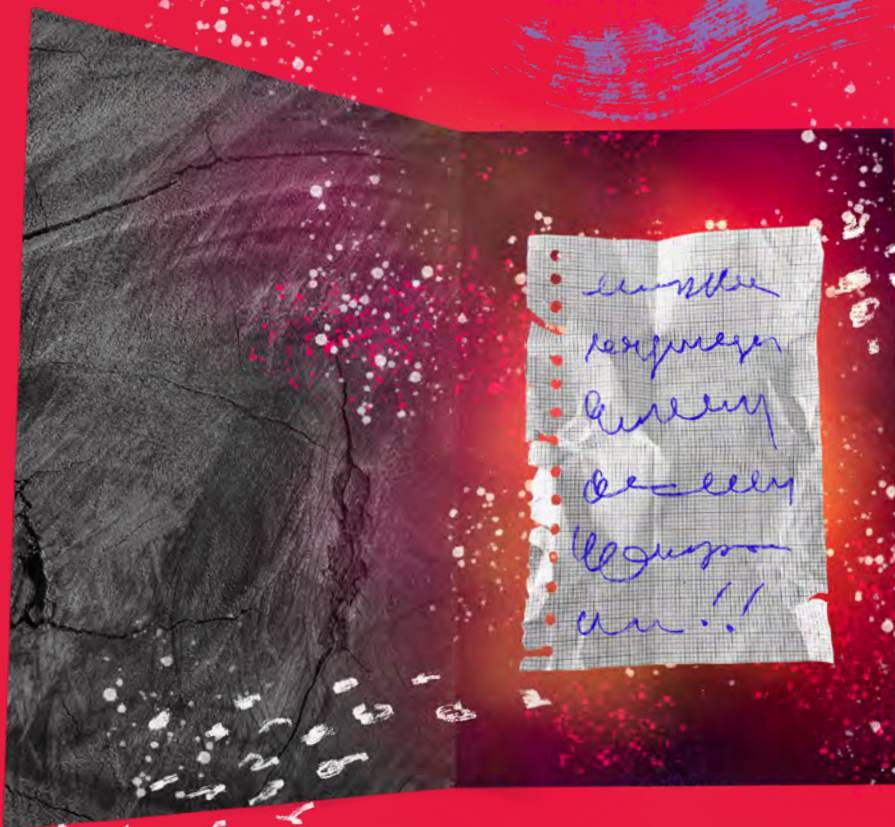
39. Go on an old media diet: only consume works that are in the public domain.
40. Put your phone in a different room while you work. You'll be fine.
41. Have a friend draw a bunch of random dots — complete the picture by connecting those dots.

42. “I do something physical, I run, or I walk, or I garden. I do something where I can put my brain on hold, and just be absorbed in the physical moment and I actually feel like it's the best way to give yourself a break, a breather, and a refueling.”
— **Susan Orlean, journalist**



Writer's block

Hitting your head
against the wall



43. Go for a meditation walk. Listen to the sound of your own breath.
44. Go for a color walk: pick a color and see how many places you can see it.
45. Dance break: lights off, shoes off, favorite playlist or mix on, go until you can't go anymore.
46. Shock your body and shake up your process with a polar plunge, ice bath or cold shower.

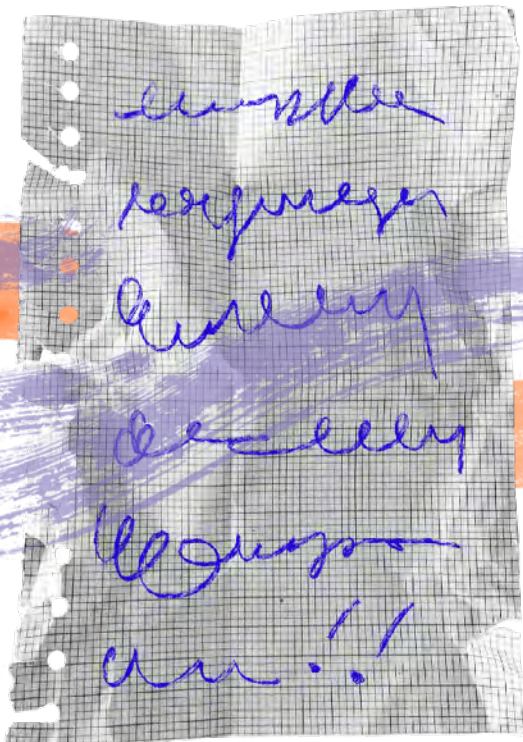
47. **“If you get stuck, if you’re hitting your head against the wall, you’ve been working on this particular project too long and too concentrating on it, give yourself a break from it and go do something else, because your subconscious is still going to be working on whatever it was that was giving you trouble.”**

— Chip Kidd, designer



48. Text 5 people from different parts of your life and ask them the question you're stuck on (keep it simple).
49. Think of every possible solution to your creative problem — no matter how out of this world. Take those solutions and funnel them into real actions you can take right now.
50. Stimulate your vagus nerve: keeping your head and neck completely still, look to the right, to the left and then to center for 30 seconds.

- 51.** Breathe in for 8 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 9 counts. No more, no less.
- 52.** Take a shower or bath in the dark. Let your mind wander.
- 53.** Stretch your body into the letter X. Move around your space taking up as much space as you can.
- 54.** Close your eyes: what colors are dancing on your eyelids?

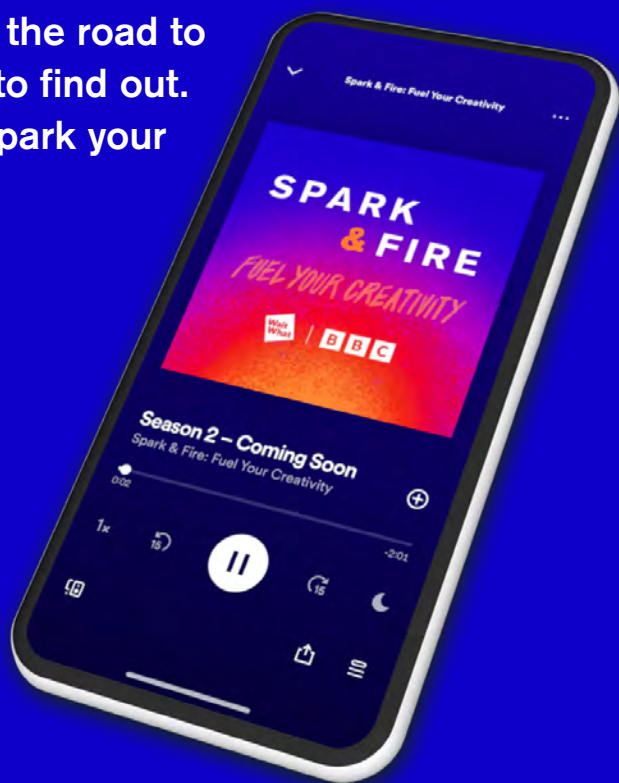


Creativity. It's as mysterious and elusive to humans as love. We stalk it. We crave it. We try to bring it out in ourselves.

Every creative work you've ever loved has a hero's journey behind it. Whether it's a book or a building. A movie, a mural, a musical. It starts with a spark. Then: Endless iteration. Inevitable setbacks. Magical people who appear to help. And the breakthrough idea — that takes on a life all its own.

On Spark & Fire, for the first time ever, you'll hear what was happening in the mind of a creator as they brought their iconic work to life. But this isn't an interview show. It's a story — told entirely in the artist's own words — against the backdrop of originally composed music of the prepared piano.

What really happens on the road to success? You're about to find out. Let these epic stories spark your own creative journey.



**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST



**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

Iteration

Reassess, reframe, redo



55. Draw something in pencil and then erase it. Repeat this 3 times.
56. Photocopy/duplicate your work, change it up, and make a few different versions.
57. Recreate an idea you brought to life years ago – but this time, in a different medium.

**58. “When things don’t go right, it forces you into a space where you actually have to think differently.”
— Stephen Wilkes, photographer**

Assess what you want to change about your work, where you can improve, where you can innovate.



59. Come back to the purpose of your work and write it down, simply. Challenge yourself to remove anything that doesn’t add to that purpose.
60. Find your favorite element of your work and create something new from just that.
61. Sit on the floor, the opposite side of your desk, or in a different room while you work today.
62. Walk away and come back to it — work on something else in the meantime.
63. Stick your work in process up on your wall and live with it for a week.

- 64.** No matter how far along your work is, pause to think about where else it could go. If you started from scratch, what are three different paths you could take?
- 65.** Bring your previous work into conversation with your current project. How would some of the other characters you've developed, songs you've written, or pieces you've created interact with it?
- 66.** Write an outline of your work, or the process of its creation, from end to beginning.
- 67.** If your style was a smell, how would you describe it? Paint or draw a picture based on that description.
- 68.** Describe your creative style in 5 adjectives. Got it? Now find the antonyms for those adjectives and make something based on those antonyms.



**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

Feedback

Re-invigorating your
critique cycle



- 69. Post a copy of your art on a community board at your local coffee shop or bookstore. Include your email address for feedback.
- 70. Join in on a creative social media challenge like #inktober or #tiktokduets.

71. **“Talk with people, have conversations, listen, be in groups, share problems, and solutions come from the quality of that exchange.”**
— **Thomas Heatherwick, designer**



- 72. Channel Socrates — give feedback to yourself only in the form of questions.
- 73. Sign up for a class at a local art studio in a new discipline. Introduce yourself to a stranger.
- 74. Try a “yes, and” version of a feedback session, either with yourself or with collaborators/friends.
- 75. Take a picture of your work and text it to 3 people. Don’t overthink it.

76. **“When you’re living with an artist — ask them about their art. Look across the table at those eyes and now say something. Connect.”**
— **Bill T. Jones, choreographer & dancer**



- 77. Architect. Ask a non-designer/artist/friend outside of your discipline to critique your work.

**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST



Getting ready

to release your work
into the world



- 78.** Find a successful creator whose work isn't your taste. Find one thing you admire about them.
- 79.** Visualize truly the worst thing that can happen. It might not be that bad. Ask yourself — how likely is it that this will actually happen? If your answers are severe, don't fear — art is meant to be provocative.
- 80.** Put your hands on your hip in super-person mode and stare into the mirror for a minute. Set a timer, and breathe.
- 81.** Do a guided visualization. Imagine the perfect version of your project. What can you do today, tomorrow, this week, this month to bring your goals to reality?
- 82.** Write a list of everything you've done so far and celebrate that.
- 83.** Your work is being shown at the Museum of Modern Art — write a press release, exhibition description or tweet to publicize it.
- 84.** Go for a walk with a friend and ask about a time they failed.
- 85.** Watch artist interviews — every artist has failed more than they've succeeded.
- 86.** Make up your own mantra. Close your eyes, set a timer and say it out loud over and over. Repeat when you doubt yourself.
- 87.** Who has never seen or experienced your work? Show them.

Put down the pen

When to stop



88. Review your iterations & documentation of your progress to give yourself a holistic view of how far you've come.

89. “Our deadline was in three months, and that was the deadline we put on ourselves, right? Because we wanted to make this an urgent opportunity. Didn't want to wait a year. No.”

— **Kamilah Forbes, executive producer**

Deadlines (self-imposed or not) are your friend.



90. Speaking of deadlines, stop in advance of your deadline to breathe and prepare for its release. There will always be unexpected final hurdles to jump.

91. Trust your mentors and advisors to help you determine when something's done. Check in with your community.

92. Put your work away, take some space and give it a fresh look — tomorrow, next week, next year.

93. Mock up your work and put it in the context of where it'll live: a gallery, Instagram, a bookstore — wherever your medium thrives.



94. Don't compare your work to others — evaluate it against your original goals & objectives for the work.

**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST

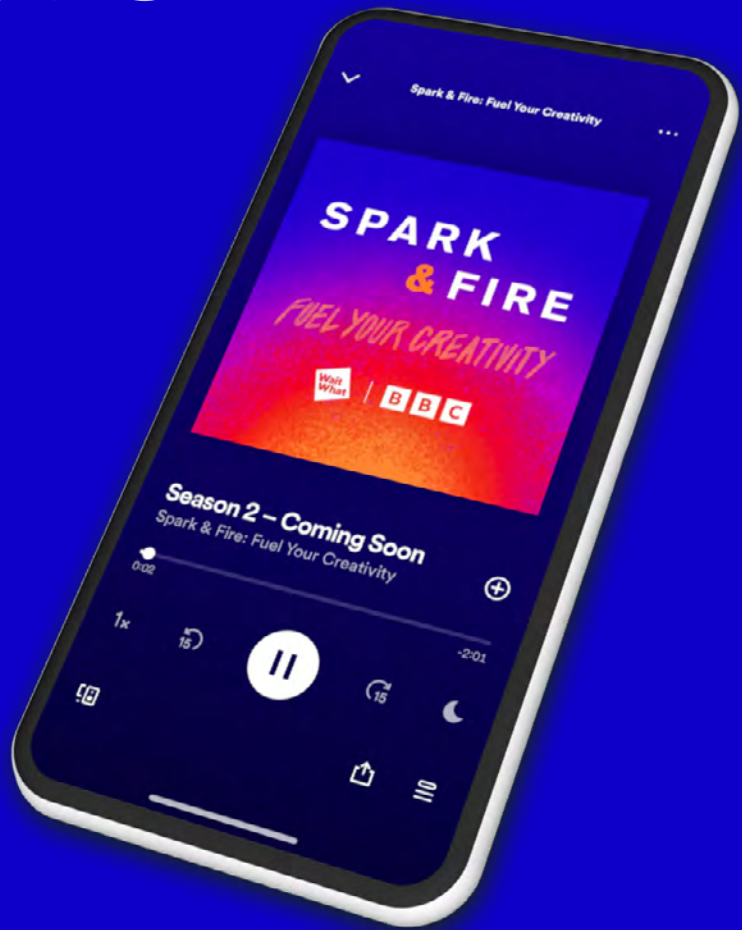
Press print

Celebrate your work



- 
- 95.** Press send. Turn your computer/phone off for the rest of the day.
 - 96.** Journal all your fears. What part of you do they address? Self-esteem, ego, security, relationships?
 - 97.** Write the worst-case scenario, write the best-case scenario, write the in-between middle path. Visualize your response to each. There's a pathway through anything (and it's probably not as dire as you think).
 - 98.** Wrap yourself in your favorite blanket/fabric. Ask someone to hug you while you're all wrapped up.
 - 99.** Organize a meetup with other artists and share recent work you've completed. No critique, just celebration.
 - 100.** Put on your favorite shoes and get something sweet from a local bakery.
- 

Listen & learn through the **Spark & Fire** podcast



**SPARK
& FIRE**
PODCAST