

# 52 WAYS TO UNLOCK YOUR CREATIVITY



Tools, Tips & Strategies  
to Be Creative Every Day

**KENT SANDERS**

# Welcome!

I'm so thankful you've downloaded this resource and are taking positive action to fulfill your creative potential!

Creativity is a vital topic today. Without creative thinking, we have no hope of growing as individuals or leading our organizations and businesses to greater success. Creativity isn't just about painting, music, dance, or other forms of art. Creativity is about being a person who is growing and learning in order to lead and bless other people.

I've put together this resource of practical ideas to help you unlock your creative potential TODAY. There's no special formula or magic elixir that will make you become more creative. It's all about taking small, daily steps to reach your potential.

Why 52 tips? So you can have a complete year's worth of creative ideas to help you fulfill your potential. Try putting one tip a week into practice and see how your life will begin to change, week by week. This guide has lots of great ideas, but everyone has their own unique path. Find what works for you and never settle for living life by someone else's playbook.

I'm passionate about helping people unlock their creative potential. If there's a way I can serve you or your organization, I would love to hear from you. You can also check out [my website](http://KentSanders.net) for lots more resources for creatives.

Blessings,

Kent Sanders

<http://KentSanders.net>

## 1. Watch a great movie.

Movies blend storytelling, moving images, and music to transport us into other worlds. Movies can also speak to your heart and mind while sharpening your creativity. There are, of course, thousands upon thousands of movies available, but why not choose a great one? I recommend something from the [American Film Institute's 100 Greatest American Films of All Time](#). I've also compiled a list of [ten movies that will blow your creative mind](#).

## 2. Watch a TV show you haven't seen.

Television is rivaling movies these days in terms of quality. There are so many high-quality shows on TV today that it's hard to choose. But a well-written and well-produced show allows you to follow a storyline for a length of time and go deep into the world of its characters.

## 3. Read a great fiction book.

I recommend reading fiction for many of the same reasons I recommend movies and television: because of the power of a great story. A good book, however, lets you go much deeper into a character's world than a movie or TV show ever could. You should never feel guilty about reading fiction because we're wired as humans to connect with other people's stories. One of the best novels I've read recently is Andy Weir's [The Martian](#).

## 4. Read a great biography.

Biographies are wonderful because they allow you to experience the highs and lows of a person's life in condensed form. A great biography can inspire you to excellence and show you mistakes to avoid. A couple of biographies I've recently read are [Steve Jobs](#) by Walter Isaacson and [Leonardo da Vinci: Flights of the Mind](#) by Charles Nicholl.

## 5. Read a great business book.

Many people from the 48 Days community are engaged in some type of business. Even if you don't work for a "business" but are involved in some other type of organization, you can benefit from the wisdom of business books. A couple of favorites of mine are [The 4-Hour Workweek](#) by Tim Ferriss and [Tribes](#) by Seth Godin. For more great book ideas, visit the [Resources](#) pages on my website.

## 6. Read a great personal growth book.

Life is more than just operating a business or being a leader. It's also about growing and learning in all areas of your life. Don't neglect great books that can help you in areas of spirituality, relationships, family, health, and finances. Here's a [list of fifteen books I recommend for artists](#). For more great book ideas, visit the [Resources](#) pages on my website.

## 7. Listen to a great audiobook.

About a year ago, I began subscribing to [Audible.com](#). I can't tell you how much I love listening to audiobooks. I spend about an hour in the car each day on my commute, and I can listen to an average-sized book within a couple of weeks. I've recently listened to [Never Eat Alone](#) by Keith Ferrazzi and [Killing Reagan](#) by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard.

## 8. Subscribe to a new magazine.

I subscribe to a few magazines related to business and creativity, but the danger of periodicals is that the content quickly goes out of date. I have moved almost exclusively to reading content online (rather than print magazines), but the print magazines I still read, including [East Company](#) and [Success](#), have a lot of value.

## 9. Read a screenplay.

Watching a movie can be a great experience, but reading a screenplay is a whole different way to experience a story. If you've never read a screenplay before, check out [The Script Lab](#) for lots of free ones.

## 10. Visit your local library.

We're all used to getting our books on Amazon these days, but there is still something to be said for libraries. When you physically go to the stacks, you will almost always find something new, something that piques your interest, or a book you've never heard of.

## 11. Follow someone interesting on Twitter.

Social media can be a great tool or a great time-waster, depending on how you use it. One of the best ways to use Twitter in a way that sparks your creativity is to follow someone interesting. You will almost always come across something new or even useful. [Jimmy Fallon](#) and [Steve Martin](#) are pretty entertaining and provide lots of laughs.

## 12. Subscribe to a new blog.

There are so many great blogs today that it's hard to recommend just one or two. The important thing is to find a few influencers in your area of business or work and keep up with what they're doing. (See the [Resources section on my website](#) for recommendations.) I subscribe to a few dozen newsletters and use the online service [unroll.me](#) to “roll them up” into one daily email digest. That way, I can skim through the content without having dozens of emails clog my inbox.

## 13. Take a class.

Classes are a great way to increase your knowledge and skills in a specific area. Over the last couple of years I have taken courses on writing for large websites, self-publishing, online teaching, and business. Some of these were free but others were not. (I don't think of training as an expense. It's an investment.) Classes are a great way to get specialized knowledge and stay relevant in your field.

## 14. Invest in coaching.

Paid coaching is one of the best investments you can make in yourself and your creativity. When you make a financial commitment to something, you tend to take it more seriously. Find a coach in your area of work who can help you reach the next level of excellence and influence.

## 15. Visit a new restaurant.

When you visit a new restaurant, it takes you out of the normal routine and gives you a new experience. Learning to be more creative doesn't have to be difficult, and should definitely be enjoyable!

## 16. Drive a different route to work.

I have been working at the same college for 11 years, and there are some days when I pull into the parking lot and think, “I don’t remember driving here.” It’s because my mind went on autopilot the moment I left home. When you take a different route to a familiar location, you’ll see different sites and shake up your normal routine.

## 17. Try a new flavor of your favorite drink.

Visit any convenience store and you’ll see all kinds of variations on your favorite drink, whether it’s tea, a soft drink, or something else. If you’re like me, you normally choose the same thing despite the hundreds of choices available. But choose a new flavor or variation of something you love and give it a shot. You may find you like it better than your usual choice!

## 18. Start a conversation with someone new.

In your workplace, church, organization, or other place where you interact with others, it’s easy to talk to the same people. Our human nature is to remain in the same social circle. But this week, step out of your comfort zone and speak to a new person. You’ll not only meet someone new, you’ll also give them the opportunity to meet *you*.

## 19. Take and share pictures.

Nearly everyone has a smartphone these days, and we have an endless variety of creative and fun photo apps. I use [Word Swag](#) to take or find pics and add text and other elements. I’ve had a blast learning to use this app and sharing the pics online.

## 20. Visit an art museum.

If you have an art museum in your neck of the woods, take some time to pay a visit and be inspired by the creativity and artistry of different cultures and time periods. I live in St. Louis and we not only have a [fabulous art museum](#), we also have several other notable museums. But even if you live in a smaller community, I'll be you're not too far from some type of museum or gallery that can expand your horizons. Here's a [list of art museums around the world](#).

## 21. Listen to podcasts.

Podcasts are free and don't necessarily require extra time. You can listen to them while you're driving, exercising, or doing other activities. I listen to a variety of podcasts, including some just for fun. As a creative person, don't limit yourself to content focused on business or productivity. I definitely recommend checking out my weekly [Born to Create podcast](#), which is focused on creativity. In addition, here's a [list of ten great podcasts that will inspire your creativity](#).

## 22. Get out of bed earlier.

I know that many creative people are night owls, so why would I recommend being an early riser? Because morning people tend to be more productive, healthier, and [more satisfied](#). I've found that when I go to bed earlier and get up earlier, I am more well-rested and have a better attitude. Here are [tips on how to become a morning person](#).



## **23. Listen to new music.**

As a worship leader and guitar teacher, I understand that music is very personal. (Trust me: when you lead worship at a church and someone doesn't like it, they will let you know!) We all have music styles that we like and dislike. That being said, hop on Spotify or iTunes and test-drive new music. Or, ask a family member or friend to recommend something you haven't heard. How will you know if you like something unless you try it?

## **24. Build or draw something with a kid.**

As adults, we tend to get set in our ways. But when you're around kids, you rediscover the wonder of life and see the world from a different perspective. I love sitting with my 11-year-old son Ben and drawing pictures or building with Legos. Having fun with kids can definitely get your creative juices flowing.

## **25. Buy a toy for yourself.**

Toys aren't just for kids. When is the last time you played with Hot Wheels, filled in a coloring book, transformed a Transformer, or made something with duct tape? Hopefully, not too long ago. Toys can help re-establish that childlike wonder that we so desperately need to stay creative.

## **26. Visit a bookstore.**

Many of us do our shopping primarily online these days, but there is still something magical about a brick-and-mortar bookstore. You'll not only discover great books you haven't heard of, you'll also be supporting authors and local businesses.

## 27. Do some backyard astronomy.

When you begin to study astronomy you truly realize how small you are in the vast scope of the universe. You also stand in awe of God's creativity. See if you can spot Jupiter, Saturn, or (if you've got an eagle eye) Mercury with the help of the [StarWalk app](#) or the [Sky and Telescope website](#). If you use good binoculars or a small telescope you can see Saturn's rings and Jupiter's Galilean moons.

## 28. Send a handwritten note to someone.

I often send handwritten notes to people as a way to stand out in a world where everyone communicates via email, text, and social media. I even [make my own stationery](#) (it's not difficult). You can be incredibly creative with handwritten notes, and your thoughtfulness can also help encourage creativity and generosity in others.

## 29. Learn to draw or paint.

I'll be the first to admit that I'm not gifted in the area of drawing. However, I'm trying to learn by going through [Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain](#) by Betty Edwards. Drawing, painting, and many other types of art are learned skills. There is an intimate connection between the mind and hand, and learning to draw will have a positive impact on other areas of your creative life.

## 30. Get to know your neighbors.

One of the hallmarks of modern life is that we can easily become insulated. We can easily go years without any meaningful interaction with the people in the home or apartment next door. But we were created for relationship, and not just with people on Facebook or our workplace. When we reach out and get to know our geographical neighbors, it opens our hearts and reminds us that all people matter.

## 31. Spend some time in nature.

There's something about being among the trees and grass, and breathing fresh air, that feeds the soul. Depending on where you live, this might be a challenge. But if you have the opportunity, spend some time in nature and let it refresh your spirit and mind.

## 32. Learn to play an instrument.

As a guitar teacher, I've taught all ages, including adults who have grown children and even grandkids. You're never too old to stop learning, and taking up an instrument (or a second one, if you already play one) can unlock a new spirit of creativity you never knew existed.

## 33. Set a big goal.

When I published my second book, [\*The Artist's Suitcase: 26 Essentials for the Creative Journey\*](#), I was intimidated by all the processes required to self-publish. However, when I announced a launch date, I know I had to kick it into high gear. There's nothing like setting a big goal for yourself to get you moving and force you to find creative ways to accomplish it.

## 34. Cultivate a positive attitude.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that "attitude" begins with the letter "A." It makes complete sense because A is the first letter of the alphabet, and your ATTITUDE is the most important quality you possess. It's up to you to choose a positive attitude every day. You can't be negative and creative at the same time.

## 35. Join a mastermind group.

The concept of a mastermind group was popularized by Napoleon Hill in his influential book *Think and Grow Rich*. A mastermind is simply a group of people who meet regularly to help each other grow in their business and personal lives. I have been a part of several masterminds, and each one has been invaluable to my personal and professional growth. Be sure to check out [Dan Miller's fantastic course on creating your own mastermind group](#).

## 36. Keep your energy level up.

If you feel tired and sluggish all the time, you can't operate at your creative best. Make sure to get enough rest each night, exercise several times per week, and cut down on junk food. It's so much easier said than done, and I've had my share of struggles in this area. But I also know that when I feel energized because I'm taking care of myself, my creative powers seem to multiply. (I also take a nap in the afternoon almost every day, which is a big help.)

## 37. Take action despite your fears.

We're all afraid sometimes. True courage doesn't mean you don't have fear. It means that you're [willing to take action in spite of your fear](#). Do you have dreams for your life that aren't becoming reality because you're afraid of what others might think, or that you might fail? Those things could happen, of course, but so what? At least you tried and learned something. You are guaranteed to fail at 100% of the things you never try.

## 38. Eliminate computer distractions.

When you're working, some of the biggest sources of distraction are notifications from social media, email, and other apps. You can shut these off in your settings. Very few of these messages need an instant response. In addition, I will often turn my phone on silent and place it face down on my desk so I literally don't see or hear anything. If you do a lot of your work on computer and have trouble staying focused, use the [Stay Focused extension](#) (available for Chrome), which blocks access to websites for specified periods of time.

## 39. Use Evernote to capture creative ideas.

One of the biggest ways we waste time is by looking for lost ideas and information. [Evernote](#) is by far the best solution to this problem. Evernote is a desktop and mobile app that allows you to store any type of information and sync it across all your devices. I have used Evernote on a daily basis for several years, and it's my go-to solution for capturing ideas, taking notes, clipping web pages, and storing a nearly endless array of personal and business information. It is the single greatest organizational tool I use.

## 40. Limit your entertainment.

I enjoy movies, video games, surfing the web, and lots of other diversions. (I still love to break out my original Nintendo system and play Super Mario Bros. once in a while. What can I say? I'm a child of the 80's.) But it's easy to lose a couple of hours watching viral videos on Youtube or playing games on your phone. Set a limit on how much time you will spend doing things that don't give you a return of some kind. You need to give your mind a break from work, but don't give it *too* much of a break.

## 41. Watch a TED Talk.

The TED organization focuses on spreading great ideas and sparking conversation. (TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design.) TED is mainly known for the fascinating talks that are given at its conferences. These talks are given by all kinds of leaders, innovators, and artists, and feature a wide array of topics. The one thing they all have in common is that they are interesting. You can find the talks at [TED.com](https://www.ted.com) as well as its [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsXVkH3pWzUz3b1vY11111). I have never listened to a TED talk without learning something.

## 42. Use music to help you focus.

It's important to create the right kind of environment to help you do your best creative work. One of the most overlooked elements of your environment is the sound. The right mix of music or ambient noise can help focus your mind. I also love [Coffitivity](https://www.coffitivity.com/), a site that recreates the sounds of a café. I'm quite fond of this because it provides just the right amount of ambient noise. Instrumental music designed specifically for mental focus has a wonderful effect. [Check out this great Deep Focus playlist on Spotify that I've been using quite a bit.](#)

### **43. Focus on one thing at a time.**

When you constantly switch back and forth between different tasks, you lose a lot of mental momentum in the process. For example, writing a blog post and checking email are two very different types of activities. One is creative, and the other is administrative. Multi-tasking is a myth and does not help you save time.

### **44. Batch similar tasks together.**

For example, I do all the grading for my college classes in a single block of time each week. I prep all my class sessions for the week in one time block. I usually answer email only 1-2 times per day in small time blocks. I typically edit a couple of podcast episodes in the same time block. Lumping similar activities together helps create flow in your work and emotional state.

### **45. Check social media only during certain times of the day.**

I know, I know ... you feel like you have to constantly be on social media to keep up with the world. But the constant need to check social media is killing your creativity and productivity. On most days, I have been relegating my social media time to two small chunks of time--one in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. Since I've made this rule for myself, I have felt a lot of freedom in not having to check social media constantly.

## 46. Visit a historical site in your city.

You don't need to travel far to get a creative boost. Every city or town, no matter how small, has places of historical interest. It might be a park, landmark, museum, church, or some other notable place. Historical sites always have fascinating stories attached to them, and you can find these right in your back yard.

## 47. Join a Facebook group.

Facebook groups can be a wonderful way to meet new people, get feedback on new ideas, and generally get inspired. Many people dismiss Facebook groups (and online communities in general) as superficial, but I can tell you firsthand that some of my best friends are people whom I've met online. Choose 2-3 groups where you can get involved and make a meaningful contribution.

## 48. Buy new clothes.

I'll be the first to admit that I hate shopping for new clothes. However, I can't deny that when you look your best, your confidence goes up. And a confident person is a more creative person. (I will also admit that I occasionally go to the local Goodwill store and often find very nice, brand-new clothing for a fraction of the retail cost.)

## 49. Go geocaching.

[Geocaching](#) is a worldwide phenomenon that is like a giant treasure hunt. Millions of people participate by hiding and finding "caches" that can range from a tiny container to a good-sized box. You locate the cache by using GPS coordinates on your phone. My son and I have been geocaching for



several years, and it's a great way to bond with friends or family while doing something fun and getting outdoors.

## 50. Build something.

One summer a few years ago I decided to build a treehouse for my son Ben. I didn't have a clue what I was doing, but I was determined to learn. It took me a few years, but I finally finished it this past summer. The result was a very cool treehouse with windows, a trapdoor, skylight, bridge, and pulley system. ([Here's a video tour of the treehouse.](#)) Obviously, you don't have to build a treehouse to express your creativity, but I definitely encourage you to build or make something with your hands. If you do a lot of work on computer, it's a great way to recharge your creative batteries.

## 51. Go on a retreat

You don't need to rent an expensive cottage or go away for a week to enjoy the benefits of a retreat (although those things are certainly nice!). Depending on your situation, it may not be feasible to get away for any length of time. However, do what you can to find some space to think, reflect, and create. You should never feel guilty about taking time to exercise your creative muscles.

## 52. Visit a graveyard.

I know it sounds crazy, but take some time to visit a graveyard. When you walk among the tombstones, you have a very real sense of the brevity of life. You see the headstones of those who have gone before you in this life, and you realize you will join them one day. I know that sounds depressing, but it's a truth that should motivate and inspire us to use our time wisely. You only have one short life, so make it count!

# Action Steps

Thanks so much for taking the time to read this ebook. But don't stop there. Take a couple of minutes and write down 3 action steps you can put into practice in the next 24 hours.

## Action Step #1

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## Action Step #2

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## Action Step #3

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# The Artist's Suitcase: 26 Essentials for the Creative Journey

Do you feel like you've lost your way as an artist? Are you stuck in your creative life and need inspiration? Are you looking for practical advice on navigating doubt and fear, dealing with critics, and taking control of your time?

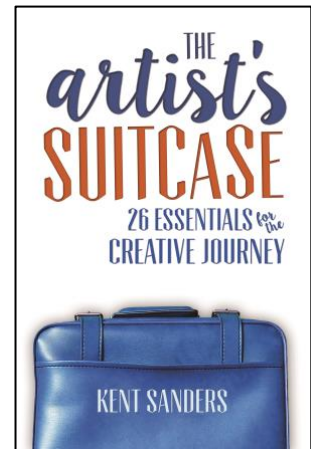
If so, this book is for you! *The Artist's Suitcase* is all about getting back to the basics of what it means to be an artist. You'll discover...

- How your attitude determines whether you're like a thermostat or thermometer.
- Why a monster lurks behind every blank page.
- How "Ratatouille" can help you learn to deal with critics.

... and much more encouragement and practical wisdom!

Sometimes in the complexity and confusion of life we forget about the basics. *The Artist's Suitcase* will help you re-orient your creative spirit and remind you of the essentials for your journey as an artist.

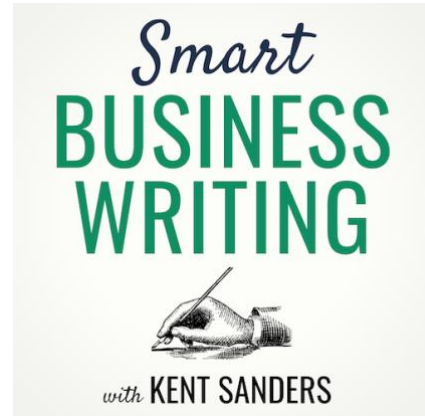
Available on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Audible](#), and [iTunes](#).



# The Smart Business Writing Podcast

The Smart Business Writing podcast gives you the inspiration, resources, and practical know-how to help you write with excellence and increase your impact.

Each week, ghostwriter and entrepreneur Kent Sanders brings you solo episodes as well as interviews with business leaders, authors, and other experts.



You can listen to the show on [Apple Podcasts](#) or [Google Podcasts](#), as well as your favorite podcast app. Be sure to check out all our [previous episodes](#).

## A Little About Me

Hi, I'm Kent. My wife calls me "Honey" and my son calls me "Dad." My students call me "Prof. Sanders."

Since I work on the assumption that we're already friends and fellow travelers on the creative journey, you can just call me "Kent."



By day I'm a professor at [St. Louis Christian College](#) in Florissant, Missouri. By night I'm a masked vigilante fighting crime on the streets of the Gateway to the West. (Not really, but a middle-aged guy can dream, can't he?)

In addition to being a family man and teacher, I'm also a ghostwriter, author, and guitarist. I live in St. Peters, Missouri with my wife Melanie, and son Ben.

You can read more about me [here](#), and connect with me here:

[Email](#) | [Blog](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)