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Functional Fixedness
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Functional fixedness is the inability of a problem solver to use an accessible and handy entity to accomplish task A just because this tool is associated with task B (although this entity may be very suitable to accomplish this task). *(Editor's note: Some TRIZ people know this as part of the "psychological inertia" phenomenon. In the organizational change world, it is frequently called "paradigm paralysis.")*

In my view, overcoming functional fixedness accounts for about 80 percent of creative ideas from any field. That is, people view ideas that overcome functional fixedness as highly creative.

Here's an example from History: The guests that visited Thomas Edison's house noticed that moving the gate was very hard.

When the guests asked Edison why it was so hard, they got the answer that the gate is connected to the system that pumps water from the well.

Edison actually used the visitors to his house as an energy source!

We like this idea (although we may not like Edison) because it involves overcoming functional fixedness.

Here is a more practical idea: using electric wires as data wires or using USB data connection as a source of energy.

The enemy of overcoming functional fixedness is having an alternative. People are more prone to finding an idea that does overcome functional fixedness simply when they have no other choice.

There is almost no other way of overcoming functional fixedness. Our mind will always home-in on ideas that do not need overcoming functional fixedness when such ideas exist.

Here comes ASIT's Closed World principle into play. By not allowing us to introduce new objects into the system it forces us to find new uses for existing objects, or in other words find overcome functional fixedness. This is just one of the mechanisms through which ASIT helps us become more creative.

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Innovation tip: Innovation does not mean that we need something new! When ever you need to accomplish a new task always try to review existing resources before bringing in new ones.

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