

problem can certainly be a block, as can a lack of the information necessary to solve the problem. For example, attempting to solve complicated satellite communications problems without sufficient background in the area would soon result in blocked progress. Additional background, training, or resources may be necessary to solve a problem. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

**Expressive blocks**—that is, the inability to communicate your ideas to others, in either verbal or written form—can also hinder your progress. Anyone who has played a game of charades or Pictionary can certainly relate to the difficulties that this type of block can cause. Make sketches and drawings, and don't be afraid to take the time to explain your problem to others.

As we have just seen, many types and causes of mental blocks exist. If you find your problem-solving efforts afflicted by one of them, what can you do? Try one of the blockbusting techniques found on the Web site. A great way to avoid blocks altogether is to increase your creativity by learning new attitudes, values, and ways of approaching and solving problems and by heeding the guidelines presented in the next section.



### IMPROVING YOUR CREATIVE ABILITIES

It is now established that everyone is innately creative and that they can enhance their creativity by practicing regularly. As with any other skill, the more you practice or concentrate on it, the better you get. Raudelsepp<sup>3</sup> has suggested a variety of techniques that can be used to improve your creativity, which you should try to practice as often as you can. These techniques are listed in the following table.

#### Improving Your Creative Abilities

<b>Keep track of your ideas at all times.</b>	
	<p>Many times ideas come at unexpected times. If an idea is not written down within 24 hours, it will usually be forgotten. Some people even keep a notepad and pencil at their bedside in case they wake up in the night with a creative idea and want to write it down.</p>
<b>Pose new questions to yourself every day.</b>	
	<p>An inquiring mind is a creatively active one that enlarges its area of awareness. If you are doing a homework problem, ask yourself how to make the problem more difficult or more exciting. Apply the critical thinking questions discussed in Chapter 3 to <i>yourself</i>.</p>

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