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English Language
Center

Supplement to *Creative People Must Be Stopped*

created by

The Vanderbilt University English Language Center

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What is our Supplement to *Creative People Must Be Stopped*?

The English Language Center (ELC) created this guide for incoming multilingual undergraduate students at Vanderbilt University who use English as an Additional Language (EAL). Our Supplement to *Creative People Must Be Stopped* by David Owens¹ has two goals:




- to help you read texts about unfamiliar topics
- to help you apply relevant advice from *Creative People Must Be Stopped*

First, we include several tools to equip you for a more complete understanding of the text:

- **reading strategies:** develops skills such as building background knowledge, previewing, and skimming
- **chapter structure:** explores skills for improving reading accuracy and speed, including sections about using headings, recognizing chapter organization, and identifying definitions
- **Owens' writing style:** identifies informal stylistic elements to enrich your knowledge of academic writing style
- **reflecting on your innovation:** guides reflection on how to apply Owens' advice to your current and future innovation efforts

The second goal, applying relevant advice from *Creative People Must Be Stopped* is more difficult to achieve without your help. We hope this supplement helps clarify complex innovation issues raised in your classes and [Vanderbilt Visions](#) group and supports your scholarly reading skills during your first year at Vanderbilt.

Use the tools pictured below to help as you read:

 <p>Want to Know More?</p>	<p>Expand your knowledge with links to online resources in these boxes.</p>
 <p>Focus on...²</p>	<p>Complete activities to further your understanding by following the directions in these boxes.</p>
 <p>Notice...</p>	<p>Consider details not immediately apparent from examples or explanations.</p>

¹ *Creative People Must Be Stopped* by David A. Owens, 2011, Jossey-Bass. This supplement is based on the Kindle Edition.

² Target Icon adapted from <http://webicons.png.com/icon/78516>

Innovation and the Campus Reading at Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt actively supports problem-solving, [human-centered design](#), teamwork, and innovation on campus. The university opened the [Wond'ry](#) in 2016 and created the [Design as an Immersive Vanderbilt Experience \(DIVE\)](#) program to help our campus community focus on discovering solutions to problems and developing the skills to make those solutions a reality.

In fact, the Wond'ry is led by David Owens, the author of *Creative People Must Be Stopped*. Owens is a Professor for the Practice of Management and Innovation at the [Owen Graduate School of Management](#) and the Evans Family Executive Director of [The Wond'ry Innovation Center](#). He has consulted for NASA, the Smithsonian, LEGO, Daimler Benz, Apple, Dell, and many more Fortune 500 companies, and his presence on campus has helped drive the current focus on innovation.

Several of the interviews about the 2022-2023 [campus reading](#) have brought up the themes of innovation, reflection, and creative thinking to help you solve real-world problems. As Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs C. Cybele Raver stated, “Creative, [out-of-the-box thinking](#) is central to the Vanderbilt experience as we empower our students to expand their understanding, tackle complex problems and take risks.” The university has chosen *Creative People Must Be Stopped* as the campus reading so that you and your peers can more fully participate in the ongoing conversation about innovation, human-centered design, and creative problem solving at Vanderbilt University.

At the ELC, we want to create pathways for students who want to know more about U.S. culture or who speak English as an additional language to engage more fully in these campus-wide conversations. We have created this Supplement to *Creative People Must Be Stopped* to support your reading by looking at writing organization and style specific to the U.S. academic culture that are not addressed directly in the book.

We hope this strategy of identifying and clarifying cultural and linguistic cues can both enhance your reading experience for this book and model a reading approach you can use to enrich your reading comprehension and accuracy throughout your time at Vanderbilt.



Want to Know
More? ELC
Online
Resources

The [ELC Resources page](#) offers many downloadable guides to support your participation in campus life, including an [Academic Vocabulary Guide](#), [Email Messages Guide](#), and [How to Avoid Plagiarism](#) tutorial.

Reading Strategies

Building Background Knowledge

Before you read *Creative People Must Be Stopped*, consider what you know about the book's major topics: innovation and constraints blocking innovation. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you studied these topics previously?
- What can you remember about these topics?
- What is your understanding of these topics?

Consult the following websites to build upon your current background knowledge:

<i>Creative People Must Be Stopped</i> Resources	Prof. David A. Owens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People Must Be Stopped Website • Six Ways We Kill Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Owens' Vanderbilt Page and Bio • Prof. Owens' TED Talk

Understanding the Book Title

The full book title is, *Creative People Must Be Stopped: 6 Ways We Kill Innovation (Without Even Trying)*. Does David Owens dislike creative people? No! In fact, the book title is contrasting two perspectives to show what often happens to innovative ideas:

1. The first part of the title, *Creative People Must Be Stopped*, is speaking from the perspective of “innovation killers.” Owens is referring to the problem that many people and organizations like to talk about innovation, but then discourage new ideas when they are proposed. Owens is offering a warning about what could happen to your idea.
2. The second half of the title, *6 Ways We Kill Innovation (Without Even Trying)*, is speaking from Owens’ own perspective, as he has identified 6 constraints that stop innovation. The book is organized around these 6 constraints and how we can counteract them (see the [Full Content Overview](#) for more details).

This book can help us identify which constraints may stop our innovation and how we can seek to overcome them.

 <p>Want to Know More?</p>	<p>This video of Owens offers a great overview of the 6 innovation constraints and ends with a summary of the argument he shares in the book: that by understanding the 6 innovation constraints, you can better overcome the challenges they pose.</p>
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Thinking Before You Read: Previewing the Text

Before reading each section in *Creative People Must Be Stopped*, browse through it. Ask yourself:

- How many pages do I need to read?
- How long will it take to read?

Knowing the approximate length of the parts will help you be realistic about the time you will need to read them.³ Also, because each chapter is similarly structured, knowing whether you are at the beginning, middle, or end of each chapter will help you know how much time you will need to finish.

Skimming and Scanning

Before reading *Creative People Must Be Stopped*, it is helpful to glance through the pages and focus on the important parts to better understand what the text is about.⁴ This practice is called **skimming**.

Ask yourself:

- What do the chapter titles and section headers mean?
- What are the keywords in each title?
- What will each section’s content be?
- How will each section support the book’s overall argument?

For example, by looking at the **table of contents**, you can see that the middle chapters in *Creative People Must Be Stopped* are all titled with a different type of *innovation constraint*. You can see the names such as “individual innovation constraint” and “societal innovation constraint” and predict the chapter’s main idea, which can improve your reading accuracy and speed, as you know what content to expect.

³ *Academic Reading: A Content-based Approach* by Holschuh & Kelley, 1988, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2

⁴ *Academic Reading: A Content-based Approach* by Holschuh & Kelley, 1988, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 2–3

You can better understand the organization of the text by **skimming** the material for important elements, which may also help you predict what comes next. For instance:

In each chapter, Owens uses section **headings and subheadings** to highlight his main ideas. They can help you preview what each section will be about and **predict the purpose of the section**. For example, sections listed in the Table of Contents with “Overcoming” in the title have subheadings and even topic sentences written in the imperative form, such as, “Change Your Perspective.” The **imperative form** offers a clue about the content, as this part of each chapter offers concrete actions you can take to counteract an innovation constraint. The “Change Your Perspective” section confirms the meaning of the clue, describing strategies to adjust the way you perceive your surroundings.

A similar skill is **scanning**. Scanning is to quickly look over a text without reading every single word. By looking over the text for keywords, definitions, and the central themes—not reading for complete understanding—you may quickly understand the important elements of what a specific passage mentions and how it fits into the larger argument.⁵

As you read, you will notice that some passages are descriptions of short **case studies** (true stories) illustrating when innovations failed or were successful. When found inside the subheadings, these short case studies are not always essential to the main argument, and it might benefit you to skim or scan these parts to focus on the main ideas Owens is communicating. See the section on **Chapter Structure** below for more help finding places to skim and scan.

Chapter Structure in *Creative People Must Be Stopped*

Think of *Creative People Must Be Stopped* as a long argumentative essay meant to support Owens’ overarching thesis: If you can identify the main constraints stopping your innovation, you can take concrete action to overcome those constraints. *Creative People Must Be Stopped* shows us how to identify and work around the six innovation constraints he has identified. To offer such complex advice, Owens breaks his thoughts into chapters, headings, subheadings, and paragraphs.

Recognizing a text’s structure can help you read more accurately; it can help you understand the purpose of each section as you read.⁶ This section can help you do two things to improve your reading comprehension and speed in *Creative People Must Be Stopped* and other non-fiction materials you read at Vanderbilt:

1. Focus on Sections: Recognize pieces of the organizational puzzle
2. See the Big Picture: See how the pieces fit together to support the overarching argument

Headings and Subheadings

After Owens divides his argument into chapters, he further separates his thoughts into large sections with **headings**, and then, into even smaller sections with **subheadings**. Reading headings and subheadings can help you see what each section will focus on as you read and even help you fit the content of those sections into the broader argument in its chapter.

For example, here are the headings and subheadings found in Chapter 2 on pages 32-35. Notice that the heading contains the word “overcoming” in it, a clue that concrete advice will be shared in this section. Each subheading then names a different strategy to counteract perception constraints.

⁵ *A Good Read: Developing Strategies for Effective Reading 2* by Islam & Steenburgh, 2009, Cengage Learning, p. 8

⁶ *Reading Skills for Academic Study: Understanding Texts* by Gillett, 2020
[The Vanderbilt University English Language Center](#)

As mentioned in our [skimming](#) example, this “overcoming” section, like the others, has headings and subheadings written in the [imperative form](#), a further clue that these sections will share concrete advice about how to *broaden*, *use*, *change*, and *enrich* your perceptions.

- Heading: Overcoming Perception Constraints
 - Subheading 1: Broaden Your Sources of Data
 - Subheading 2: Use Practiced Empathy
 - Subheading 3: Change Your Perspective
 - Subheading 4: Enrich the Input

For more information about how the chapters are organized, see the next section: [Full Content Overview](#).



Notice:
Headings and
Notetaking

You can also use headings and subheadings as dividers to organize your notes. The author has already taken the time to arrange the information for you – use their organization to shape your notes and save some time!
For more information, watch this [short instructional video](#).



Notice:
Roadmaps

Sometimes Owens uses a roadmap, which is one or more sentences telling you what he is about to discuss. For example, on page 7, Owens writes:

“There were, I discovered, six basic perspectives on innovation and what impedes it.”

Now you know what information to look for in the rest of the section: Owens will describe each of the six perspectives, numbering each one. Identifying roadmaps can help you follow an argument with complex evidence and examples spread over multiple pages.

Full Content Overview

Chapter 1

The first and last chapter frame the advice in the middle of the book. **Chapter 1** introduces the definition of an innovation constraint and the six types of constraints Owens has identified. It ends by describing how to use the book and includes a helpful summary on page 24.

Chapters 2 through 7

These chapters in *Creative People Must Be Stopped* each focus on one type of constraint, and the chapters are organized similarly.


1. **Case Study:** At the beginning of each chapter, Owens provides a brief [case study](#) about individuals or organizations failing to innovate. Each case study is about the innovation constraint in the name of the chapter, so you will have a clue about where the story is heading as you begin reading. At the end of each chapter, Owens returns to the case study to illustrate how the advice in the chapter might have helped.
2. **Innovation Constraint Definition:** In this part of the chapter, Owens defines the overarching innovation constraint named in the chapter title.
3. **Innovation Constraint Components:** These smaller sections describe the various aspects and types of the innovation constraint. For example, in Chapter 2, there are three types of individual innovation constraints: perception, intellection, and expression.
4. **Overcoming _____ Constraints:** Each section that describes a constraint component is paired with a section about how to counteract that constraint. Multiple such pairs appear in each chapter.
5. **Putting the Framework to Work:** These helpful sections contain a diagnostic survey, a self-evaluation to help you see if this is a type of constraint that might be affecting you.

6. **Summary:** Each chapter includes a breakdown of the main points in a helpful chart at the end. While the summary does not offer the full experience of reading the book, it's a great place to check your comprehension of the chapter content and review main points before book discussions with your [Vanderbilt Visions](#) group.
7. **Chapter Reflection:** On the last page of each chapter, Owens provides questions to help you consider what you have learned and apply it to your own innovation experience.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 ends the book by offering advice about managing innovation in institutions and groups. Owens offers the final point that we are all creative and we each have the power to foster our own creativity and innovation.

Recognizing the book's structural elements can help you read more quickly and accurately because it can help you understand the purpose of each section as you read.⁷

 <p>Want to Know More? Reading Efficiently</p>	<p>The ELC has published a Scholarly Reading Guide to help you better read and comprehend scholarly texts, such as peer-reviewed journal articles. If you would like to review the information about skimming and scanning, click here to read the section titled, Reading Efficiently.</p>
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Considering Cultural Perspectives

Owens' personal background and professional experiences have shaped how he expresses his opinions in the book. Even though he has consulted for many international companies, including Nissan LEAF, LEGO, Apple, Dell, and Daimler Benz, every case study in the book takes place in a U.S.-based company and features American employees. Each story (and the point Owens makes by sharing it) is influenced by the U.S. **cultural context** in which it takes place. This can be illustrated by the first case study Owens shares on page 26:

“Silver developed what should have been a high-end version of one of its core products. Unfortunately, the product he had invented simply could not compete against the firm's current product lineup. Still he thought it might be interesting to play with. Instead of throwing the experiment away and starting over, Silver insisted on showing the thing to his colleagues. He characterizes the reception as ‘not stellar.’ Still he continued to play with it and show it around.”

In professional settings in the United States, persevering in the face of rejection can be viewed as brave, strong, or committed as long as you are not breaking any ethical codes. As you read such case studies, ask yourself:

- Might this story be different if it happened in your home country, surrounded by its culture and traditions? Why or why not?
- What is Owens trying to illustrate with this case study example? If the story took place in your home country, would the takeaway be the same?

When you join conversations about innovation on campus, consider that your cultural background and individual experiences can add a new dimension to the conversation, enriching the conversation by helping your peers think beyond their own cultural expectations. We encourage you to recognize the value your perspective brings to such conversations in the Vanderbilt community and hope this recognition will embolden you to share your thoughts.

⁷ <http://www.uefap.com/reading/underst/undfram.htm>
[The Vanderbilt University English Language Center](#)

Identifying In-text Definitions

Because this book was written for a general (non-expert) audience, Owens has included definitions for many difficult terms. Finding these definitions as you read will help you avoid stopping to look up words in a dictionary, which increases your reading speed and flow. Also, dictionary definitions are not always helpful, as words often have more than one meaning and you will need a definition specific to the context of this book.

If you see an unfamiliar word or phrase, do not immediately stop reading. Instead, look for a definition in the text.

As you keep reading, you can follow these steps to find definitions:

1. Definitions can be spotted by paying attention to punctuation, synonyms, defining verbs such as “called” and “means,” and descriptions in surrounding sentences.⁸
2. Look for a [prefix](#) or [suffix](#) that might help you guess the meaning of the word and identify what part of speech (noun, verb, or adjective, etc.) the word has in the sentence.⁹
3. If the meaning of the word is still unclear, you can search for the definition in a dictionary. The ELC recommends using an English–English dictionary (such as the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) or [Merriam Webster](#)). Choose the definition that best fits the context and part of speech for the sentence you are reading. If you prefer simpler definitions, you can use a learner’s dictionary, for instance, the [Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries](#).
4. If you are using a digital book, some e-reader apps allow you to select a word in the text and see a definition. For example, in the Kindle app, a definition from the New Oxford American Dictionary will appear. However, some of the dictionary definitions may not fit the book’s context, so be sure to read each of the definitions carefully and choose the one that makes the most sense in the sentence. Also, keep in mind that some dictionary features do not work for multiple or hyphenated words.



Notice: Key Phrases

You may notice that throughout the book, Owens pairs “innovation” (one of the most frequently used words in the book) with other words: more than 10 different combinations in the first 40 pages! These phrases will not be in the dictionary, but you can use the strategies listed above to understand the phrases in context.



Focus on Identifying Definitions

Use the table on the next page to help identify definitions in *Creative People Must Be Stopped* without using a dictionary. Then you can use the blank spaces to list your own quotes and definitions as you read.

⁸ *Ready to Read More* by Blanchard & Root, 2006, Pearson Longman, Chapter 3: Use Vocabulary Strategies

⁹ *Academic Reading: A Content-based Approach* by Holschuh & Kelley, 1988, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 11

Term	Quote with a Definition	How I Recognized It
<i>Innovation Constraints</i>	p. 1: Innovation is a natural and desirable outcome of human interaction, yet it is systematically stopped in organizations, often by the very people who say they want it and who stand to benefit from it. I term these systematic stoppages <i>innovation constraints</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition is in the previous sentence • Defining verb: <i>term</i>
<i>Innovation Imperative</i>	p. 5: As the rate of product and service innovation speeds up, so does the need for a meaningful competitive response. For executives, managers, and employees in many organizations, this “ <i>innovation imperative</i> ” has been successfully met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A synonymous description: <i>the need for a meaningful competitive response</i>
<i>Ideation Goal</i>	p. 42: One easily avoidable constraint is limiting our idea generation to the first five or ten ideas we come up with. Although your best idea is probably not going to be the 101st one you generate, it is not usually going to be the first or second one either. (Besides, unless you generate lots more, how would you know?) Setting an aggressive <i>ideation goal</i> ensures that you explore the search space sufficiently and increases the chances that you will arrive at an idea or combination of ideas that can work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description surrounds the term
<i>Task Conflict</i>	p. 67: The second kind of conflict is <i>task conflict</i> . This includes any kind of disagreement about the correct answer to a question connected with the task (as opposed to the process).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition is in the following sentence

When interpreting in-text definitions, your explanation will not be as exact as a dictionary. However, a quick analysis such as those shown in the chart above allows you to comprehend the text and maintain your reading speed and flow. If you are interested in more detailed information, you can always choose to pause and look up definitions.

Owens' Writing Style

Informal Stylistic Elements

Owens wrote *Creative People Must Be Stopped* to teach people working in any industry how to innovate effectively despite common constraints. This goal and broad audience have influenced his writing style and formality. You may notice the following stylistic elements in the book which are not often found in formal academic writing:

- **Using *I*:** In some academic fields, writers are encouraged to use *I*, but it is uncommon in many fields of study
- **Direct Address:** When the author speaks directly to the reader, he often uses [imperative verbs](#) (e.g., “Change Your Perspective”¹⁰) or pronouns such as *you*
- **Informal Word Choices and Idioms:** Word choices and idioms that reflect a more casual audience (for example, words or phrases often used in conversation, but not in formal writing)

Example	Informal Stylistic Elements
p. 4: Our firm was in a bit of a slump . We had a hugely successful product a few years ago, but now we were facing increasing pressure to come up with the follow-up product, the next big thing .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal idioms
p. 43: Keep your idea production up by remembering that ideas are (relatively) cheap and easy to generate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Address: imperative and <i>you</i> • Informal Word Choice



Want to Know
More?
[writeELC](#)

If you would like to learn how to make your writing sound more formal and scholarly, consider signing up for our [writeELC](#) course or [1-to-1 Consultations](#) at the English Language Center.

Reflecting on Your Innovation

Owens' main goal in *Creative People Must Be Stopped* is to inspire you to reflect on your creativity and innovation as well as what might be blocking it. You can use this book to ask yourself:

- How can I best support my innovation efforts?
- What innovation constraint(s) might be limiting me?
- How might I counteract common innovation constraints in my personal and professional life?

As you read, compile the results of the quizzes at the end of each chapter in Appendix A (p. 249). Can the results help you find acceptable strategies to counteract the innovation constraints you identified?



Focus on
You

Reflect on the cultural, linguistic, family, ethnic, religious, and educational background you bring to Vanderbilt. How can your perspective and experiences help maximize your innovation efforts?

¹⁰ *Creative People Must Be Stopped* by David A. Owens, 2011, Jossey-Bass. Kindle Edition, p. 34.
[The Vanderbilt University English Language Center](#)

Looking Forward: Putting the Framework to Work

Upon arrival at Vanderbilt University, you will begin a new phase of innovation and discovery in your life. How do you want to spend your time on campus? What are you most passionate about? These questions can feel overwhelming at first, but you do not need to know the answers yet. In fact, the Vanderbilt community will help you explore answers during orientation and Vanderbilt Visions events throughout the fall semester.

Here are some campus resources that can support your innovation journey:

- [The Wond'ry: Vanderbilt's Innovation Center](#)
- [Engineering and Science Building Innovation Pavilion](#)
- [Design as an Immersive Vanderbilt Experience \(DIVE\)](#)
- [Undergraduate Research at Vanderbilt](#)
- [Vanderbilt Student Organizations](#)

Your years at Vanderbilt University will offer a time for change, discovery, and growth that can both challenge and inspire you. You can use this opportunity to borrow some wisdom from Owens and overcome innovation constraints no matter how they arise:

“Being creative is human and natural, and using it to the ends of positive change, it has power to bring joy and meaning to life. If anyone has the power to facilitate your creativity, it is you. All you need now is the will.”¹¹

Summary

We hope that you are ready to implement our advice as you continue reading *Creative People Must Be Stopped*. As needed, refer to this guide to develop your reading skills throughout your time at Vanderbilt University.

For further guidance from the English Language Center, sign up for [1-to-1 Consultations](#) while classes are in session. If you have questions, please contact elc@vanderbilt.edu.

Find this supplement and more online [here](#) or by copying and pasting this URL:

<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/elc/resources/supplement-to-creative-people-must-be-stopped/>

¹¹ *Creative People Must Be Stopped* by David A. Owens, 2011, Jossey-Bass. Kindle Edition, p. 248.
[The Vanderbilt University English Language Center](#)