PREREQUESITES
- A topic to ideate or discuss
- Ideally somebody who is not involved in the project

TIME
15-45min

WHAT
The general idea for this method comes from **Zen Buddhism** and is called "shoshin", which means "beginner's mind" in English. This state of mind provides an attitude of **openness** and a **lack of preconceptions**. In contrary there also exists the "**expert's mind**" that describes the state when the constraints of the subject are **obvious** and there is only a few, very **clear solutions**.

WHY
When getting an expert in a specific field, our way of thinking changes. Mostly we benefit from this change as we can identify problems and find solutions quickly. We help ourselves by developing habits and assumptions that eventually push us to quick conclusions. Humans are good at adapting and eventually everything normalises

around us - we quickly lose the ability to see the details. Our experiences with the topic include assumptions, perceptions and stereotypes that we take for granted.

By applying a beginner's mind we open ourselves to **unexpected discovery** and innovation because we are not blinded by our prior assumptions and have a **better view of the details** and the bigger picture. In most cases there is more than one way of achieving a specific result - and our way is not necessarily the best. Humans are resistant to change and thus we have a tendency to repeat behaviour, but one of the **alternative paths** might be a better solution, or at least just a better solution for our specific use case. In general uncertainty gives us the courage to **try things out** anyway, regardless whether they will work or not - because we don't know better yet.

Apart from the discussed benefits, with a mind of a beginner you are able to empathise better with other beginners. By listening with an open mind you create trust and a deeper personal connection.

HOW TO

To apply this method you can either try to adopt a beginner's mind yourself or ask a real beginner - either somebody outside of your team that ideally has not much knowledge about the project, or you can even go out on the streets and ask somebody - e.g. at lunch. There are some general rules that apply to both cases, as we are always both a student and a teacher.

QUESTION EVERYTHING Use the strength of your imagination and question everything, especially those aspects, that you assume to fully understand. Think of a five year old asking tons questions - be truly curious.

CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS Pretty sure that something is given and can only work this way? Make sure to test it out!

DEFER JUDGEMENT Even though your current knowledge, constraints or best practices might conclude that something cannot be done a specific way, still you should try to focus on the possibilities. Any idea, no matter how crazy, can lead to a useful solution.

EMBRACE FAILURE Be open to discover something new and step outside of your comfort zone. Don't hesitate to ask "dumb" questions and learn from your failures.

EXAMPLE

This technique is mainly used for ideation on a given problem or topic. These can range from implementation details over system architecture to feature reframing. Additionally it can be also used for validation of ideas or prototypes.

#1
You are fixing a bug in your code. You are already three hours on it, and you are completely stuck.

You could show your code to somebody not familiar with your project, to get ideas on what to check. Maybe something that you assume is working, is actually broken - or you could get ideas on how to better debug your issue.

#2
You are developing a new UI feature and your first idea is to copy the layout of a similar feature already existing in the project.
Beginners would tackle the issue differently and propose a different layout because they are not biased with your project knowledge.

#3
You are analyzing a specific data set that you already know for some time. You need to find a new correlation between two attributes.
A beginner might ask some questions that you would take for granted and see details in your data that you already masked out.