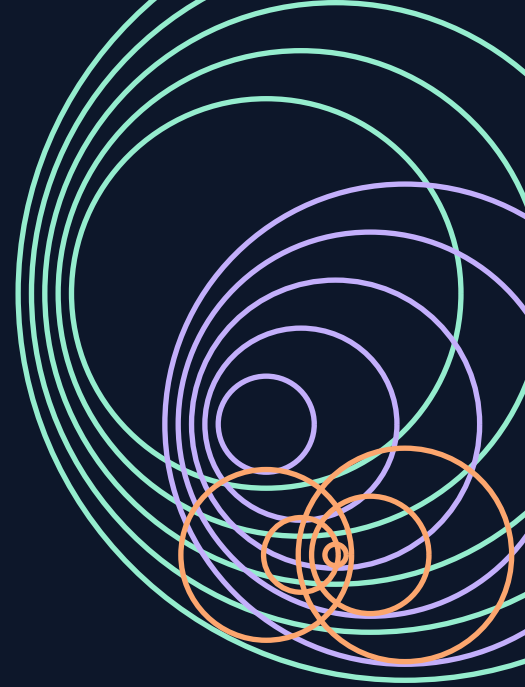


30 ORIGINAL THINKING MACHINES

# THE WILDCARD DECK



One mind. Unpredictable combinations. Thirty compact experiments for connecting distant disciplines without confusing a fresh hypothesis with a proven fact.

## DOMAIN A

Choose a starting lens

## DOMAIN B

Borrow a distant tool

## HUMAN QUESTION

Put a claim at risk

A FIELD GUIDE BY SAHIL TAYAL · SAHILVERSE

An invitation to test, notice, revise, and play.

# HOW TO PLAY THE DECK

A creative method, not a machine for discovering truths on demand.

## 01 Pick two domains

Read their combination as a proposed analogy, not an equivalence. Research is not perfume. Hip-hop is not therapy. The difference is often the most useful part.

## 02 Turn the analogy into a claim

Ask what you would expect to observe if the combination were helpful. Replace sweeping declarations with a prediction narrow enough to challenge.

## 03 Do the smallest honest test

A five- or fifteen-minute probe may reveal ambiguity, feasibility or a better question. It does not establish a general causal effect.

## 04 Record what actually happened

Separate observed action, a participant's words, your interpretation and what you could not see. Avoid identifying other people.

## 05 Name the possible failure

Every card proposes a way the idea could fail. A result that disagrees with your hopes is useful information; do not erase it.

## 06 Borrow carefully

Carry over mechanisms, not prestige. When a field has specialised standards—research methods, safety, ethics, law—those standards still apply.

REPRODUCIBILITY NOTE: The companion website serves exactly these thirty authored cards. "Mix" moves deterministically through the available cards, keeping locked attributes fixed. No language model or paid service is involved.

# THIRTY AUTHORED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CARDS

READ → QUESTION → TEST → ATTEMPT TO DISCONFIRM

**W01** RESEARCH × SCENT

## The Memory Trap

When does a smell seem to improve recall without actually improving accuracy?

**RATIONALE** Vivid sensory cues can increase a feeling of remembering; that feeling is not necessarily evidence of accuracy.

**TRY** Ask two volunteers to study six neutral words. Later, with permission, present a familiar non-irritating ambient scent for one recall attempt, and no scent for the other. Compare the correctly recalled words, not just confidence.

**DISCONFIRM** If confidence rises while correct recall does not, the claim that vividness equals accuracy fails.

10 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W02** RESEARCH × SCENT

## Name That Note

Can an evocative perfume description change what people say they notice?

**RATIONALE** Language can shape expectations, so descriptive poetry and blind observation are different activities.

**TRY** Write two contrasting descriptions of the same sealed scent blotter. Invite two consenting adults to smell it without seeing the copy, then with one description each. Record exact sensory words before and after.

**DISCONFIRM** If descriptions do not shift, the predicted suggestion effect was not observed.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W03** HIP-HOP × BEHAVIOUR

## Rhythm Is Not Discipline

Can a rhythmic cue lower the friction of starting a small task?

**RATIONALE** A beat can make a first action salient; it cannot manufacture time, skills, or resources.

**TRY** Choose a two-minute tidy task. On three ordinary occasions try starting silently; on three others use your own simple four-beat count. Log delay until the first action.

**DISCONFIRM** If the cue produces no repeatable change in start latency, the proposed benefit is unsupported.

5 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W04** HIP-HOP × BEHAVIOUR

## From Heat to Form

Can one strong feeling become a crafted verse without becoming a factual accusation?

**RATIONALE** Rhythm gives expression a structure; structure can create distance from a first interpretation.

**TRY** Write four original bars about a frustration. Underline observable events and circle assumptions. Rewrite two lines so the uncertainty is audible.

**DISCONFIRM** If the revision preserves every unsupported accusation, form alone did not improve clarity.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W05** ENTREPRENEURSHIP × ORDINARY LIFE

## The Fair Queue

What does fairness mean when customers value different kinds of waiting?

**RATIONALE** People can judge a queue using speed, visibility and interpersonal attention, not merely minutes.

**TRY** In a hypothetical shop sketch two queue rules: strict arrival order and a clearly signed quick-item lane. Ask three people which feels fair and why; make no real policy change.

**DISCONFIRM** If everyone discusses only speed, the predicted role of visibility or attention lacks evidence here.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W06** ENTREPRENEURSHIP × ORDINARY LIFE

## Receipt of Trust

Which tiny shop behaviours communicate reliability more than a slogan does?

**RATIONALE** Repeated mundane fulfilment may convey trust better than a one-time branding claim.

**TRY** List five observable service behaviours: clear pricing, accurate change, stock honesty, follow-through, and acknowledgement. Ask a consenting customer which they notice; compare with your guess.

**DISCONFIRM** If slogans dominate the answers, the behavioural-trust hypothesis needs revision.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

# THIRTY AUTHORED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CARDS

READ → QUESTION → TEST → ATTEMPT TO DISCONFIRM

**W07** DESIGN × EDUCATION

## Mistake Museum

Can a visible worked mistake teach more than a flawless example?

**RATIONALE** A correct answer displays the destination; a recoverable mistake may expose the reasoning route.

**TRY** Create one tiny learning card with a common wrong solution and its correction. Give one learner the card and ask them to solve a parallel problem while explaining a step.

**DISCONFIRM** If they repeat the same error with no explanation, the design did not transfer.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W08** DESIGN × EDUCATION

## The Too-Many-Doors Test

Does offering every learning route at once make the first choice harder?

**RATIONALE** Abundance can widen access while increasing the effort required to choose a starting point.

**TRY** Prototype two paper menus for the same six learning links: a full grid, and three suggested doors plus all links. Ask two people to choose a first route and explain why.

**DISCONFIRM** If the full grid produces clearer decisions, the simplified-door hypothesis fails.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W09** WRITING × TECHNOLOGY

## The Autocomplete Voice

When does a helpful writing tool begin to smooth away the author?

**RATIONALE** Prediction saves effort but may steer word choice toward the familiar.

**TRY** Write a 90-word paragraph by hand. Rewrite using optional autocomplete. Highlight phrases you would never have chosen unaided. Restore three deliberate departures.

**DISCONFIRM** If all accepted suggestions preserve the intended voice, the homogenisation concern is not supported here.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W10** WRITING × TECHNOLOGY

## Archive With a Pulse

Can a personal website behave like a thinking index rather than a trophy cabinet?

**RATIONALE** Contextual links help readers follow questions across media rather than only chronology.

**TRY** Take four published pieces. Make a one-page map with links labelled by the question they share; invite someone to navigate from one starting question.

**DISCONFIRM** If visitors cannot explain links, the index is decorative rather than explanatory.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W11** SCENT × DESIGN

## The Scent Map

Could smell be used as a memorable wayfinding metaphor without scenting a public space?

**RATIONALE** A sensory vocabulary can give spaces identity, but accessibility and consent set limits on physical use.

**TRY** Draw three imaginary rooms and assign each a scent adjective, colour and navigation role. Test the map as a paper/visual legend only; ask someone to reconstruct the route.

**DISCONFIRM** If the labels make recall worse, abandon the metaphor for this task.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W12** SCENT × DESIGN

## Expectation vs Encounter

Does packaging promise more emotional certainty than the actual experience can deliver?

**RATIONALE** Names and colour suggest narratives; lived perception varies across people and contexts.

**TRY** Design two labels for one hypothetical fragrance: poetic and descriptive. Ask two readers what each promises before showing the same neutral scent descriptor.

**DISCONFIRM** If both labels communicate similar modest expectations, packaging may not be driving the assumed difference.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

## THIRTY AUTHORED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CARDS

READ → QUESTION → TEST → ATTEMPT TO DISCONFIRM

**W13** BEHAVIOUR × TECHNOLOGY

### A Form With Friction

Which tiny interface obstacle turns intention into abandonment?

**RATIONALE** Effort, ambiguity and fear of mistakes can all interrupt a sincere intention to finish a form.

**TRY** Sketch two six-field signup forms: one with unexplained required fields, one with clear optionality. Ask one willing tester to narrate what would block them.

**DISCONFIRM** If ambiguity is not a barrier, investigate other causes instead of assuming a friction story.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W14** BEHAVIOUR × TECHNOLOGY

### Consent by Design

Can an interface make declining as easy to understand as agreeing?

**RATIONALE** Choice architecture conveys power through defaults, labels, and reversal costs.

**TRY** Redesign a fictional newsletter choice so accept and decline have equal visual weight. Ask a tester to locate both actions and describe what happens afterward.

**DISCONFIRM** If decline remains hidden or confusing, the redesign did not achieve symmetry.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W15** RESEARCH × ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### Shopfront Hypothesis

Can a retail intuition become a question someone could actually disprove?

**RATIONALE** Commercial hunches become more useful when predictions and counterexamples are named first.

**TRY** Write: "Customers who see a clear price tag ask fewer price questions." Observe a five-minute simulated shelf interaction with a consenting volunteer; record questions.

**DISCONFIRM** If tagged shelves provoke as many questions, revisit the hypothesis.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W16** RESEARCH × ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### Invisible Costs

What does a cheap business improvement cost in attention or dignity?

**RATIONALE** Optimising one metric may export costs onto workers or customers.

**TRY** Pick an imagined fast-checkout policy. Make a two-column ledger: minutes saved; interruptions, confusion, or exclusion introduced. Ask a second person to challenge the ledger.

**DISCONFIRM** If no hidden burden can be specified, the risk claim remains conjecture.

15 MIN · HIGH · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W17** HIP-HOP × WRITING

### Argument on the Beat

Can rhythm expose a weak claim in an otherwise confident sentence?

**RATIONALE** Stress and repetition can reveal what an argument keeps insisting on instead of demonstrating.

**TRY** Write a four-line original spoken-word argument. Remove one repeated claim and replace it with an observable example; read both aloud.

**DISCONFIRM** If the rewrite adds no observable support, rhythm did not strengthen reasoning.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W18** HIP-HOP × WRITING

### Two Narrators, One Event

How does point of view change the story without changing the basic facts?

**RATIONALE** Narrators distribute attention and uncertainty differently, even around the same event.

**TRY** Write eight original lines about a missed train from two voices: passenger and station worker. Keep three verifiable events identical.

**DISCONFIRM** If the "facts" also change between versions, the comparison is not controlled.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

## THIRTY AUTHORED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CARDS

READ → QUESTION → TEST → ATTEMPT TO DISCONFIRM

**W19** EDUCATION × ORDINARY LIFE

### The Two-Minute Curriculum

What can a mundane daily task teach when its hidden skill is named?

**RATIONALE** Everyday activity carries tacit concepts: estimation, classification, feedback, and cooperation.

**TRY** Choose preparing tea or arranging a shelf. Identify one underlying concept, teach it in two minutes, then ask for an unfamiliar example.

**DISCONFIRM** If the concept cannot transfer beyond the original task, the micro-lesson is too narrow.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W20** EDUCATION × ORDINARY LIFE

### Beyond the Grade

When can evidence of mastery appear without a numeric score?

**RATIONALE** A learner explaining and correcting a process may show understanding a single mark misses.

**TRY** Choose one small skill. Draft a rubric with three observable behaviours and ask a learner to demonstrate them. Compare rubric language with “good” or “bad.”

**DISCONFIRM** If observers cannot agree what the behaviours mean, the rubric needs redesign.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W21** DESIGN × BEHAVIOUR

### A Visible Boundary

Can a boundary be clear without becoming an accusation?

**RATIONALE** Behavioural limits often work better when the action and available alternative are explicit.

**TRY** Write two versions of a fictional boundary: one with blame and hidden expectations; one with a simple limit and option. Ask someone what action each requests.

**DISCONFIRM** If both versions are equally ambiguous, the rewrite is not useful.

5 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W22** DESIGN × BEHAVIOUR

### Feedback Without Shame

What changes when feedback describes an observable action rather than a person?

**RATIONALE** Specific observations can make correction possible without claiming access to someone’s character.

**TRY** Rewrite three hypothetical feedback lines (“You are careless”) into evidence, impact, and a request. Ask a reader which version supports a next step.

**DISCONFIRM** If the rewording loses important accountability, the simplification failed.

10 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W23** SCENT × ORDINARY LIFE

### Smell and the Scene

Does remembering a place require remembering the actual smell?

**RATIONALE** Autobiographical memory can combine sensory details with later stories and cultural expectations.

**TRY** Describe a childhood kitchen without using scent words, then with scent metaphors. Label remembered sensations separately from plausible inventions.

**DISCONFIRM** If most vivid scent words are conjectural, vividness was not a reliability test.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W24** SCENT × ORDINARY LIFE

### Invisible Rituals

Which repeated sensory cue marks a change between work and rest?

**RATIONALE** Transitions may be easier to notice when paired with a simple repeatable ritual.

**TRY** Choose a safe non-scent ritual, such as changing a desk lamp or washing a cup. Over three days note whether it marks the end of work more clearly.

**DISCONFIRM** If the cue has no consistent relationship with stopping, do not infer that it works.

5 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

## THIRTY AUTHORED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CARDS

READ → QUESTION → TEST → ATTEMPT TO DISCONFIRM

**W25** TECHNOLOGY × EDUCATION

### Show the Rule

Can a learner make a better choice when an algorithm explains its sorting rule?

**RATIONALE** Understanding a recommendation's basis may support agency, but a simple explanation can also conceal complexity.

**TRY** Create six imaginary lesson cards. Sort them by difficulty, then by topic; make the rule visible and ask a learner to choose a next lesson.

**DISCONFIRM** If the transparent rule produces no clearer understanding, clarity alone was not sufficient.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W26** TECHNOLOGY × EDUCATION

### Adaptive or Unfair?

When does helpful personalisation become a hidden ceiling?

**RATIONALE** Systems that tailor challenges can support learning or quietly restrict opportunity.

**TRY** Make a paper simulator with two fictional students and a rule that offers easy questions after mistakes. Change the rule to include periodic challenges; compare resulting routes.

**DISCONFIRM** If the revised rule does not expand opportunities, the proposed fix is weak.

15 MIN · HIGH · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W27** WRITING × RESEARCH

### The Honest Sentence

How much certainty should a sentence carry when the evidence is small?

**RATIONALE** Qualifiers can clarify the scope of evidence rather than dilute a useful idea.

**TRY** Take three confident claims you have written. For each note its evidence and rewrite with an explicit scope, alternative explanation, and next test.

**DISCONFIRM** If rewritten claims remain impossible to dispute, the revision lacks scientific bite.

10 MIN · LOW · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W28** WRITING × RESEARCH

### Story Versus Signal

When does a beautiful anecdote become a misleading data point?

**RATIONALE** Narrative selects memorable details; research needs sampling and comparison logic.

**TRY** Write a 100-word fictional customer story. Mark which details are observed, invented, or inferred. Then write what additional observations would challenge it.

**DISCONFIRM** If the story already states its limits clearly, sensationalism is not the issue.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W29** ENTREPRENEURSHIP × HIP-HOP

### The Improvisation Budget

When is an improvisational business move adaptive rather than reactive?

**RATIONALE** Freestyle performance and entrepreneurship share responsiveness, but both benefit from constraints and practice.

**TRY** Give an imaginary shop team three sudden changes and a strict resource limit. Improvise a response, then review what had to remain non-negotiable.

**DISCONFIRM** If every spontaneous idea violates the budget, improvisation needs stronger rules.

15 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

**W30** ENTREPRENEURSHIP × HIP-HOP

### Read the Room

How can a creator respond to audience signals without surrendering a core idea?

**RATIONALE** Feedback offers information; chasing every reaction can make a project incoherent.

**TRY** Write two fictional audience reactions to a new product or performance. Revise one surface feature and keep one core principle unchanged; explain both decisions.

**DISCONFIRM** If no principled distinction can be named, responsiveness may be drift.

10 MIN · MEDIUM · SEE WEBSITE FOR CAUTION + NOTES

# FIVE FULLY WORKED TESTS

These are hypothetical protocols for thinking, not verified study results.

## W01 / MEMORY VERSUS CERTAINTY

**POINT** Use the comparison to demonstrate the difference between confidence and accuracy, not an unqualified effect of scent.

**PREP** Prepare two equal word lists, a neutral environment and participant consent. Keep any scent optional; the no-scent version is valid on its own.

**DO** Read words for 20 seconds, wait 30 seconds, ask for recall; repeat with the second list under the alternate condition. Counterbalance order for a second volunteer.

**NOTICE** Count correct words, record confidence after each attempt, and ask which condition felt easier.

**INTERPRET** If confidence and accuracy move differently, focus on that discrepancy. If both are similar, report no visible difference.

**GUARDRAIL** Never interpret a two-person probe as evidence of a population effect.

## W04 / ANGER WITHOUT INVENTED MOTIVES

**POINT** Borrow hip-hop form as a constraint that encourages revision rather than a claim that music treats distress.

**PREP** Write down one mundane frustration and decide in advance not to name or attack a real person.

**DO** Create four original lines. Mark one observational clause and one speculation. Rewrite the speculation as a question or an expression of uncertainty.

**NOTICE** Record how many claims became more specific and whether the revision still communicates the emotion.

**INTERPRET** A louder or funnier verse is not necessarily a clearer or fairer statement.

**GUARDRAIL** Stop if writing escalates a real conflict; privacy and consent still govern publication.

## W11 / A SCENT MAP THAT NEVER RELEASES SCENT

**POINT** Keep the learning in conceptual mapping, not an inaccessible scented environment.

**PREP** Sketch three fictional rooms on paper; choose colours and scent adjectives, not chemicals.

**DO** Assign one label to each room. Hand the visual legend to another person, hide the route for 30 seconds, then ask them to reconstruct it.

**NOTICE** Record the route, any wrong turns and the exact words the reader used to navigate.

**INTERPRET** If the labels compete with the route, simplify; the metaphor may not transfer.

**GUARDRAIL** Physical scenting requires separate safety, accessibility and consent considerations.

# FROM IDEA TO FIELD NOTE

These are hypothetical protocols for thinking, not verified study results.

## W17 / CADENCE DOES NOT EQUAL EVIDENCE

POINT Test whether a rewrite replaces an assertion with an example.

PREP Write four original lines defending a harmless position; circle unverified generalities.

DO Read the lines aloud, swap one abstract claim for a specific, checkable example, then compare versions.

NOTICE Highlight whether the new example really supports the conclusion rather than merely decorating it.

INTERPRET If a persuasive rhythm survives without evidence, the argument remains unsupported.

GUARDRAIL Never reuse protected lyrics as though they were original writing.

## W25 / A RULE YOU CAN EXPLAIN

POINT Let a learner inspect a recommendation rule instead of presenting a black box as infallible.

PREP Create six imaginary lessons with difficulty and topic tags. Draw two sorting columns.

DO Ask the learner to pick one next lesson first under a topic-first rule, then under a difficulty-first rule. Explain each rule.

NOTICE Write their choice, their explanation and any preference for a different path.

INTERPRET If neither rule helps them decide, additional context or autonomy may matter more than transparency.

GUARDRAIL Toy algorithms cannot validate real educational recommender systems.

# OBSERVATION FORMS

Print the sheet, duplicate it, or copy the blank structure into a notebook.

## THE CLAIM / WHAT I EXPECTED TO HAPPEN

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---

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## THE CONTRAST / WHAT I WOULD COMPARE

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---

---

## WHAT I OBSERVED / NO INTERPRETATION YET

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---

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## WHAT I INFERRED / ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

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---

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## WHAT WOULD CHANGE MY MIND / NEXT CHECK

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ZERO-RESULT RECORD: "I tried \_\_\_ in context \_\_\_. I noticed \_\_\_. That observation does / does not support \_\_\_. I still cannot conclude \_\_\_."

# THE ANTI-HYPE PROTOCOL

The risk in interdisciplinary thinking is not imagination. It is mistaking a productive analogy for knowledge.

## 01 ANALOGY $\neq$ TRANSFER

Two activities can look alike while depending on different mechanisms. A beat that structures a verse does not automatically change habits; a shop queue is not a laboratory sample.

## 02 NOVELTY $\neq$ VALUE

An idea can be unusual and still be unhelpful. Ask: who gains, who bears the cost, and what is learned? An intervention may impress its designer more than its intended participant.

## 03 A TINY TEST $\neq$ VALIDATION

One anecdote can reveal unclear instructions or a promising question. It cannot settle causality, generalise to strangers or replace domain-specific standards.

## 04 CONFIDENCE $\neq$ ACCURACY

A strong narrative or vivid experience makes a claim feel real. Whenever possible, measure observable behaviour separately from self-report and expectation.

## 05 INTEREST $\neq$ CONSENT

Never force scent, extract customer details or turn others into unwilling participants. Use simulated cases and ask permission; record no identifying details.

## 06 DEPTH MAKES BREADTH USEFUL

Invite practitioners to reject bad analogies. Learn the constraints of each field before transferring its vocabulary. Return to the original context after the experiment.

# BREADTH. THEN DEPTH.

Keep the monkey curious; give the fox a notebook.

An unexpected connection is a doorway, not a conclusion. The interesting question is whether the doorway leads to a sharper distinction, a testable expectation or a more useful intervention. Borrow a question from another field, but do not quietly import its authority.

The best wildcard leaves behind more than a clever comparison: a record of what you tried, what surprised you, what did not work, and what knowledge you still need. If the test is inconclusive, that is a respectable outcome. If it is informative, do it again with better design.

## ANNOTATED EXPLORATION

### **Sahilverse — [sahiltayal.com](https://sahiltayal.com)**

A central index of Sahil Tayal's public writing and experiments; start by finding a question rather than a badge.

### **The Identity-Action Gap — [identityaction.sahiltayal.com](https://identityaction.sahiltayal.com)**

A proposed framework for separating aspiration from the friction of execution; its provisional status is explicit.

### **The Olfactory Cathedral — [olfactorycathedral.sahiltayal.com](https://olfactorycathedral.sahiltayal.com)**

An educational conceptual fragrance instrument that distinguishes composition, perception and safety.

### **The Reciprocity Atlas — [reciprocityatlas.sahiltayal.com](https://reciprocityatlas.sahiltayal.com)**

A reflective atlas for distinguishing observation, inferred motives and possible responses.

## REFLECTION // AN IDEA WORTH RETAINING

The domains I combined were: \_\_\_\_\_. The real mechanism I wanted to borrow was: \_\_\_\_\_. The result that would have changed my mind was: \_\_\_\_\_. The next person who could challenge my reasoning is: \_\_\_\_\_.