

SILLY SOLUTIONS

Component: Critical Thinking
ILO: To generate solutions to a problem

TOOL

This TLA is useful for getting students thinking about creative solutions to problems. You start by asking for the silliest, craziest solutions to a problem (beware that you don't lose their attention here though, so keep them focussed on the task). Then you explore how you can take one of those crazy ideas and modify it to make a more plausible solution. You may need to stop and scaffold their thinking with extra facts as you go along. This can be part of an ongoing project or part of a research lesson.

ACTIVITY

Chose a problem that you want students to suggest solutions for. It could be how to market a band, where to host a festival etc. You may wish to add some element of craziness to keep it fun. For example, how do you sell heavy metal music to a group of OAPs?

HOW

1. Set the problem. Ask students to discuss in pairs a list of solutions, the sillier the better.
2. Now ask them to share their favourite solution with the group. Have a discussion about what could actually be done.
3. Either give pairs someone else's solution or allow them to work on their own. They now have to tone down the solution and make it plausible. Ask them to use some of the relevant vocational skills they have been learning to do this.
4. Share the ideas with the whole group and ask for a list of pros and cons for each one.
5. You may wish to choose the best solution and take this forward into another activity or ask each pair to take their idea forward.

EXTRA QUESTIONS

Which elements can be taken from each one to build a great solution?

How easy was it to come up with solutions?

Which frameworks did you refer back to?

What needed to be adapted and why?

LARGE GROUP TEACHING

This would work well with large groups. You may need to have small groups rather than pairs, so you only have a few groups feeding back to the large group.

SUCCESS

Students will be generating problems and solutions and trying to "think outside the box".