



From Ideas to Action

Course Syllabus



Course Calendar

July 2 - August 9

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
ORIENTATION				JULY 2 <i>Orientation Materials Open</i>			
LESSON 0 <i>Introduction</i>	JULY 6 <i>Assignment 0 Due</i>						JULY 12 <i>Assignment 1 Due</i>
LESSON 01 <i>The Art of Ideating</i>							JULY 19 <i>Assignment 2 Due</i>
LESSON 02 <i>Rapid Prototyping</i>							JULY 26 <i>Assignment 3 Due</i>
LESSON 03 <i>Iterate Your Way Forward</i>							AUGUST 2 <i>Final Project Due</i>
CONCLUSION							AUGUST 9 <i>Course Closed</i>



From Ideas to Action

Course Syllabus

Gain a practical understanding of the design thinking approach through our *Foundations in Design Thinking* Certificate. Earn the certificate by completing the *Insights for Innovation* and *From Ideas to Action* courses.

Courses in a certificate program can be taken in any order. You will receive your program certificate upon completion of your last course.

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Planning for a Successful Learning Experience

The IDEO U learning experience centers on four key ways of engaging, all designed to help you understand and retain new knowledge. In each lesson you have the opportunity to see, try, share, and reflect. This isn't a passive experience—to get the most out of each course, we recommend that you plan to engage with your fellow learners and practice your new skills with others in real-world settings.



SCHEDULE TIME FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Some assignments will require you to engage with others outside of the course—hosting a brainstorm, for example. It may be helpful to plan these sessions in advance. Find more information on assignments and activities in the lesson breakdowns in this syllabus.

PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL VIDEO CALLS

These optional sessions offer the chance to engage with your peers, dive deeper into course concepts, and broaden your perspective. If you can't attend each week, try to participate in at least one of these video chats.

GIVE FEEDBACK

We believe that asking for and giving feedback play crucial roles in learning. Use our in-course feedback guide to give constructive feedback and make valuable connections with your peers and the Teaching Team.

MEET DEADLINES

Put the deadline for each assignment on your calendar during your first week. These deadlines are suggestions to help you stay on track. The only hard deadline is the day your course closes, by which time you must submit all required course work to receive your certificate of completion.

STAY IN TOUCH

Your learning isn't over when the course closes. Tune in to hear from today's leading innovation experts and change makers on the IDEO U Creative Confidence podcast, get access to our LinkedIn alumni group, and consider guiding others through their IDEO U learning experience as an alumni coach or Teaching Lead.



Your Instructors, Teaching Team & Community

INSTRUCTORS

IDEO U courses are taught by IDEO practitioners who have honed their skills over many years in the field bringing new ideas to market. They bring real-world case studies and examples into their lessons, pulling from IDEO's 40+ years of work with global organizations across diverse industries.

TEACHING TEAM

Receive support from a team of design thinking practitioners with teaching and facilitation expertise. These experienced professionals are present to guide discussions, foster peer connection, and provide feedback on your assignments.

COURSE COMMUNITY

Learn alongside a cohort of hundreds of passionate professionals from around the world seeking to bring innovation and creativity to their work. The IDEO U community spans 120 countries and countless professions and industries. Build your professional network by making valuable connections in each course.

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS

From Ideas to Action



BRENDAN BOYLE

*Partner at IDEO and founder
of IDEO's Play Lab*

Under his leadership, the Play Lab has invented and licensed hundreds of consumer products. Brendan also consults with companies about redesigning their organizational behavior to include space for play, wrote the course From Play to Innovation offered at Stanford's d.School, and co-authored the award-winning encyclopedia of never-before-seen inventions, The Klutz Book of Inventions.



From Ideas to Action

Course Syllabus

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Apply ideation methods to generate new and useful ideas.
- Identify the right parts of your idea to test.
- Build quick and early experiments to prototype solutions.
- Refine your ideas by sharing them and gathering feedback.

From Ideas to Action is a deep dive into the design thinking skills of ideation, prototyping, and iteration. This 5-week course will teach you how to frame your ideas as experiments and bring others in on your vision of the future. Use experimentation to learn from failure and move from incremental to radical innovation.

Week 1	INTRODUCTION	An introduction to three approaches that will get you from ideas to action: ideation, prototyping, and iteration.
Week 2	LESSON 01 <i>The Art of Ideating</i>	Get comfortable with generating an abundance of ideas, even ones that might seem ridiculous at first.
Week 3	LESSON 02 <i>Rapid Prototyping</i>	Learn how to make your ideas tangible so you can share, get feedback, and push them even further.
Week 4	LESSON 03 <i>Iterate Your Way Forward</i>	Learn how to move your idea forward through multiple rounds of ideation and prototyping.
Week 5	COURSE CONCLUSION <i>Final Project</i>	Wrap up with a final project summarizing your key takeaways and highlighting your plans for the future.



INTRODUCTION

Choose Your Challenge

In this lesson, you'll get a brief course overview, review how insights help spark ideas that lead to action, and choose your challenge. The challenge you choose should be a problem you're genuinely interested in generating ideas about and bringing to life through prototypes.

VIDEO

From Ideas to Action—Ideate, Prototype, and Iterate your way forward

What prevents us from sharing our ideas with the world? Or, bringing them to life in droves? Is it fear of judgement or failure? Or not knowing where to start? We want to explore these questions with you in this course. To begin, let's look at three approaches that will get you from ideas to action.

VIDEO

Design Thinking & Insights—Understanding the role of insights

You might have already taken our *Insights for Innovation* course. If so, this will be review for you. If you haven't yet, we're going to give you our best recap in less than three minutes to help better situate you in the design thinking process.

ACTIVITY

Choose the challenge that you will explore during this course.

JOIN A LEARNING CIRCLE

Your Learning Circle is a place to connect with a smaller community of peers working on the same challenge as you. Learning Circles are peer-led, and provide an opportunity to discuss assignments, gain inspiration, and dive deeper into course content. Join a group with those who will inspire and push your thinking. Note: Joining a Learning Circle is optional and you may also create your own.



LESSON 01

The Art of Ideating

In this lesson, we're going to talk about ideation. Ideation is all about exploring new possibilities and coming up with solutions to challenges. That means you have to quickly generate, develop, and test ideas.

LEARNING GOAL

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VIDEO

What is Ideation?—Getting comfortable with divergent thinking

If you land on a solid idea, why should you keep generating more possible solutions? Shouldn't you just stop when you've come up with something good? At IDEO, we believe some of the most brilliant ideas come when you fight the urge to stop on an early solution and embrace the discomfort that comes from exploring more. Let's take a look at how divergent thinking invites you to play longer and stretch beyond your early ideas.

ACTIVITY

Creative Muscle Warm Up

Here's your chance to warm up your creative muscles.

VIDEO

Ideation Methods—Ways to generate ideas

Our world needs more ideas. Outrageous ideas. Brilliant ideas. Paradigm-shifting ideas. There's a lot to figure out, and we need your input. In the name of that game, let's introduce you to some effective ideation methods that will help you generate tons of ideas.

VIDEO

Brainstorm Rules—Leading your own brainstorm

What do you think of when you hear the word brainstorm? What is it? Why is it useful? Take a minute or two to jot down what comes to mind. In this video, you'll hear what David Kelley, founder of IDEO, has to say about what makes for an effective brainstorm.

ACTIVITY

Zoo Ideation Activity

Run your own ideation session to generate ideas for how to increase attendance at the local zoo. Share back with the community. What were some of your wildest ideas? Get visual if you can. Show us. What were some of the key takeaways?

VIDEO

Observe Experts Brainstorming—See an IDEO team in action

Now that you've run your own zoo ideation session, take a look at how we approached the same challenge here at IDEO. What stands out to you?

VIDEO

Converging After Idea Generation—How to make choices and move forward

Generating tons of ideas is great. But it's equally important to know when and how to focus in on the ideas with true potential. In this video, we'll help you get from what could be to what should be.

ACTIVITY

Ideate

It's time to ideate around the project challenge you selected in the Introduction. Let's get comfortable with quantity.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

In a few sentences, reflect on your ideation session. What were some of the challenges you faced as a facilitator? What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges? If you went through the ideation session solo, what did you find challenging about the process? What hurt a little? To deepen your reflection, comment on another learner's post.



LESSON 02

Rapid Prototyping

Getting tangible with your ideas is a great way to work through the kinks and get to better solutions faster.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn how to make your ideas tangible so you can share, get feedback, and push them even further.

VIDEO

Why Prototype?—Make your ideas tangible and shareable

Let's say you have a brilliant idea. How do you invite others to experience something that exists only in your brain? How do you start making your idea tangible? We'll explain how prototypes help us solve for each of these questions.

VIDEO

Types of Prototypes—Anything can be prototyped

What's a prototype? Is it a model made out of glue and scrap wood? Is it the first draft of a story? Let's find out in this next video.

VIDEO

Show Me Your Prototype—Predict what became of early prototypes

We're about to take you on a virtual tour of IDEO to check out some early ideas. Let's play a little game we call "Show me your prototype."

VIDEO

3 Steps for Prototyping—Build, share, and reflect

Building a prototype is only part of the process. In this video, we'll share a simple framework that will help you move your prototype forward.

ACTIVITY

Tinfoil Hat Activity

In this activity, you're going to get your hands dirty and build to think.

VIDEO

Tinfoil Hats in Action—IDEOers tackle the challenge

Let's see how a group of IDEOers approached the Tinfoil Hat Activity. As you watch, pay attention to the energy of the room. What would it take for you to host your own tinfoil hat challenge?

ACTIVITY

Prototype

Now, it's time to prototype your idea from Lesson 1. Don't overthink it. Just start building.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you push yourself to truly 'flare' again, and to move beyond honing your initial idea? Remember, if you haven't built a prototype that has failed yet, you haven't pushed far enough! What about prototyping felt uncomfortable? Which aspects of your prototype were people drawn to? To deepen your reflection, comment on another learner's post.

EXPLORE MORE

There's still a lot to explore in the world of prototyping. Check out these additional resources.



LESSON 03

Iterate Your Way Forward

When we iterate, we repeat the process of ideation and prototyping to move our ideas forward.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn how to move your idea forward through multiple rounds of ideation and prototyping.

VIDEO

*Why we Iterate—
Fail early to succeed sooner*

Thomas Edison said, “I haven’t failed. I’ve just found ten thousand ways that do not work.” Why is trial and error so important? In this video, we’re going to explore the power of repetition.

VIDEO

*4 Steps to Iterate—Managing
risk and refining your ideas*

It’s easy to fall into the trap of racing ahead the second your idea gains traction. But you should take your time. Iteration will save you time in the end. Resist the urge to charge forward. Rinse. And then repeat. So, how do you start iterating?

VIDEO

SFUSD School Lunch Project

Let’s take a look at the larger scope of the SFUSD School Lunch Project. We hope you enjoy hearing from some key players of this collaboration.

ACTIVITY

Iterate

Now it’s time to apply what you’ve learned to your challenge.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers’ assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Did you push yourself to truly ‘flare’ again, and to move beyond honing your initial idea? How has your plan for future prototyping shifted in surprising ways? What helped you get there?

VIDEO

Conversations with Brendan

We caught up with Brendan at the IDEO Toy Lab to have him answer a few questions we have been seeing in discussions and hearing in Community Conversations.

EXPLORE MORE

For more on iteration, check out the following resources.



Course Conclusion: Final Project

In this final lesson, you'll hear some closing remarks from Brendan and wrap up with a final project to create a pitch summarizing your key takeaways and highlighting your plans for the future.

VIDEO

*Course Conclusion—
Play, build, and experiment*

You're almost there. Let's turn it over to our professor of play to wrap up this course.

ACTIVITY

Final Project

It's time to bring together everything that you've learned in the course. You'll be building upon your previous assignments to create a pitch to senior leadership.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

What was your creative confidence before and after the course? Really think about how or why it changed. What was the most revealing moment for you in the course? The "a-ha" moment.



*“Design thinking isn’t just a method —
it fundamentally changes the fabric of
your organization and your business.”*

DAVID KELLEY

Founder of IDEO and the Stanford d.school

For any logistical questions, reach out to us at hello@ideou.com