

## Smart ideas to unlock your creative mind

*We've all heard of writer's block - here are some hints and tips to help activate the potentially endless stream of ideas that can relate to your chosen topic. Writing an article of 400 words doesn't take long if you're creative.*

Back in the 18th century, a man by the name of John Locke recounted that all ideas are based on human experience. The baby is a blank sheet of paper, and all life experiences are absorbed and stored in the dim recesses of the brain until, in a flash of inspiration, some long dormant memory bursts through to appear as an idea.

He further postulated that these ideas could be categorized into two sections - simple ideas (such as taste, smell etc - sensations), and complex ideas (such as invention, deliberation etc - reflections).

So let's take this as the basic building block on which to build our ideas machine. Starting with the first category, let's look at sensations. We've all had them - we can all remember what mint, or coffee, or chocolate or salt tastes like. They're the easy ones. But if you were looking to write a descriptive piece about an apple pie (without actually having one in front of you), you have to rely on your memory to visualize it. And the chances are, you're going to find yourself describing the best apple pie ever! From the golden, crimped pastry, to the sweet apple filling (do I detect a hint of nutmeg?), with a great dollop of cream on top.

This is the sensations side of the equation. The reflection side is slightly more lateral. To give an example; suppose you were asked to write a piece on a canteen of cutlery. Work it around so that you take the audience through a perfect meal, finishing with - you've guessed it - apple pie for dessert!

So ideas come through personal experiences. But the brain will also store away the experiences of others that you witness or have been told of. These third person experiences will also come to the fore when you sit there in front of your computer screen searching for inspiration. Take the subject matter, give it a name (no, not Mary), and tumble it around in your head to try and link it with people you know or have known - make a story out of it and start writing. For example; canteen of cutlery - call them eating irons. When did we start using forks at table? Who did it first? Start writing.

We have all heard of writers block, and I'm sure we all know how easy it is to go and play with the dog/ just pop to the shops / make a coffee. Instead of all that, try these links and associations - you never know, the juices might just start flowing.