

HAPPY (Creative) NEW YEAR!



*52 prompts to trigger
creative moments—
one for every week
of the year.*

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1 Look around the area where you're sitting and select a random object. What might archaeologists 10,000 years from now assume about its purpose? Write about or draw the object's new use.

2 Sketch a self-portrait for five minutes at the start of each day this week. At the end of the week, display them side by side to see how your portrayals compare based on the day and your mood.

3 Take the first line from any poem. Put it at the top of a page and start writing.

4 Empty your purse or pocket. Use the contents to inspire a story or piece of art.

5 Draw the simple shape of an object, such as a sailboat. Start writing within the shape using the object as a prompt (*The ship's sail was...*) until you fill it. There are no lines, so be creative and free. —Bonnie Neubauer, author of *Write-Brain Workbook* (www.bonnieneubauer.com).

6 Go on an artist's date with yourself. Graciously accept your own invitation to visit a museum or conservatory. Attend an art gallery opening or a poetry reading.

7 People have used mandalas (meaning "sacred circle") for meditation and prayer for thousands of years. To draw one, gather a pencil, paint, paintbrush and a sheet of watercolor paper. Draw a circle on the paper. Empty your mind of thoughts, especially negative ones; if you're trying to overcome a problem, focus on the solution. Then just begin to paint or draw random shapes in the circle, letting the painting or drawing take you where it will. Once you're finished drawing and painting, don't allow yourself to make any more marks; just contemplate your work. "Perhaps it will teach you about the rhythms of your life. Perhaps it will help solve a mystery, and perhaps it will just give you a great resurgence of joy." —Betsy Dillard Stroud, author of *Painting From the Inside Out*.

8 Which is better, the last day of school or the first? Put that feeling on paper in words or pictures.

9 Pick a word from the dictionary at random and illustrate it.

10 Use all the colors in your paint set to create free-spirited, abstract paintings on watercolor paper. After they've dried, cut them up into postcards and bookmarks. "You'll get a completely new feeling about your art." —Mary Deutschman, author of *No Experience Required: Water-Soluble Oils* (www.marydeutschman.com).

11 Have a meal or take a walk with someone who inspires you.

12 Look through a book for words and phrases that jump out at you—romance novels work especially well because they're so outrageous. Clip them out and use them to inspire a collage. —Claudine Hellmuth, author of *Collage Discovery Workshop* and *Collage Discovery Workshop: Beyond the Unexpected* (www.collageartist.com).

13 Take out all the leftovers from your refrigerator and develop a new recipe. Your goal isn't necessarily to make something that tastes good, but rather to focus on the process of experimentation.

14 Make a map of the town where you grew up; be sure to draw the sites and location of key events and memories (the playground where you broke your arm, etc.).

15 Who was the last person who said "thank you" to you? Write a story using this person as a main character.

16 For one week, set aside one hour a day to paint with children. Try to be as free as they are, and just paint from memory. —Mary Deutschman

17 Write about something that keeps you up at night.

18 Draw a picture of your dream studio or work space. Consider what supplies you would have, how they'd be arranged, and what you'd be working on.

19 Mix a color of paint and name it. Keep track of color ratios so you can mix it again.

20 Create a grab bag of art materials. Then randomly take five items from the collection and make a brand-new piece of art using only those items. You could work with a friend and even trade bags.

21 Carry a small notebook with you for a day. During your daily routine, take care to notice one unique or unusual thing, then write it in your notebook. Here's my journal entry from this experience: *I saw two brothers walking to the bus stop on a cold day, decked out in winter coats so thick they could barely move anything but their legs. Then, big brother did move, reaching out and putting his arm around little brother to warm and protect him.*

22 Make up a new Olympic event. List the rules.

23 Write down, in detail, how you would live your life if you won the lottery.

24 Close your eyes and scribble all over a page. Open your eyes and immediately start playing, filling in some of the shapes with either pencil or color. Don't pay attention to what you're creating until you're done, then look for interesting compositions or color schemes to include in other artworks. —Kathie George

25 Working on a piece of colored paper (yellow, for example), use the complementary color (in this case, purple) to paint only the negative spaces of a scene or object. —Mary Deutschman

26 Make a soundtrack of your art career. Select your favorite songs or musical works and make a mixed tape or CD, choosing one song for different works of art or phases of your career.

28 Take a paintbrush to something—a desk, your bedroom wall, a clay pot, a pair of shoes, whatever.

29 Play *Pictionary* by yourself. Draw a card at random and illustrate it quickly without using words.

30 Buy a piece of poster board, a package of markers, a ruler and a pencil. As if it were a school project, make a sign advertising yourself as an artist. Consider your strengths, selling points and other factors key to a solid ad.

31 Make a list of your five favorite movies. Write a short story that incorporates a main character from each film.

32 Author Wendell Berry writes "Even in a place you know by heart, it's hard to go the same way twice." Take a sketchbook with you on a walk around your neighborhood. Stop and sketch something you never noticed before.

33 Tape sheets of paper together into a long strip. Play a favorite CD. Close your eyes and move a pen or pencil along the paper to the rhythm of the music.

34 Grab your camera and spend a few hours taking pictures of subjects that interest and inspire you.

35 What would happen if your friends or neighbors made up the cast of *Survivor*? Write the script.

36 "Paint" with lipstick.

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Pretend that your painting is an experiment. Select a smooth, hard painting surface or create one by coating watercolor paper with gel medium or gesso. Find some crayons with a lot of wax (usually, the cheaper, the better). Using crayons, along with canning wax, make random marks on your surface (be sure to press hard). You can close your eyes, use your nondominant hand or pretend you're writing in a secret language. Then pour paint over these marks. The wax resists the paint, so you see your random markings only after you pour the paint. Turn the painting to see what elements are dominant or look like good starting

places for a more in-depth painting. Use opaque paints to cover the areas you don't like. Work with the areas that appeal to you. —Mary Todd Beam, author of *Celebrate Your Creative Self* (www.marytoddbeam.com).

37 Design a backdrop for your creative space using a picture, drawing or collage that ignites your creativity. Hang it behind you so you can take mini-vacations by just turning around. —Bonnie Neubauer

38 Who's your favorite artist? What inspires you about his or her artwork? Create a collage that explores this artist. If you fell in love with her colors, use them. If you're fascinated by the starkness of his artwork, simplify. Work in quotes, images, even techniques.

39 Create a painting or drawing using both hands. You can't be as exact and careful when you use two hands—it's a little sloppy and uncontrolled. However, it's a good way to begin any artwork. Your brain quickly slips into a visual mode when both hands are engaged.—*Cristina Acosta*, author of *Paint Happy* (www.cristinaacosta.com).

40 Draw what you'd most like to be doing right now.

41 Put two pieces of fruit in a bowl and use only a 2-inch house painting brush and two paint colors to create the still life.—*Mary Deutschman*

42 Turn your favorite joke into a more elaborate short story. Have fun with the details.

43 Tone a piece of paper with charcoal and use an eraser to lift off light areas to create a "drawing."

44 Go into your studio or creative work area with absolutely no agenda. Just handle your materials: juxtapose colors, make marks, gather collage papers into appealing groupings. Tell yourself that you're there just to make discoveries, not to make something specific. Jot notes about all these discoveries and come back to them the next time you feel blocked.—*Lesley Riley*

45 Make a piece of art using your nondominant hand for everything—writing, cutting, gluing, mixing colors, painting—every step you need to do to complete an artwork.

46 Take your sketchbook, paints or journal outside to work. You may come up with a new idea or a unique technique with the help of Mother Nature.

47 Do five sketches—one each in pencil, crayon, charcoal, paint and pastels—of one object, such as an apple. Hang the pieces on the wall and discuss them out loud.—*Mary Deutschman*

48 Write about what your pet would do for a living if it were human.

49 Make art that is meant to be temporary: Play with clay, freeze a plastic cup of water and make a crude ice sculpture, do a sand or glitter painting, create sidewalk art with chalk, make a small quilt from leaves.

50 Take a trip to the art store. Break out of your comfort zone by choosing a new medium, surface or tool to experiment with.

51 Take a common object, such as a pencil, telephone or watch, and examine it in detail using all of your senses before creating artwork based on it. As creativity guru Mari Messer says, "The senses are the body's radar, and that body radar informs creativity." 5

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Scribble all over a 9- x 12-inch sheet of paper. Follow no rules; just make marks—circles, lines, dots, dashes, squiggles, zigzags, whatever comes out—without judging or thinking. Take another 9- x 12-inch sheet of paper, and randomly cut out a small, medium and large rectangle to create viewfinders. Place the viewfinders on your scribbled page and move the sheet around to isolate small sections. Look for designs you like, much like looking for animals or objects hiding in the clouds. You might find a beautiful abstract design or a dancing figure or a boat on a stormy sea. Once you isolate an image, enlarge it onto a journal page. Embellish the image by drawing or painting over it. "I do one of these every day and title it. As surrealist painter Joan Miró said of his art, 'When I put a title on it, it becomes even more alive.'" —*Dory Kanter*, author of *Art Escapes* (www.artworldtours.com).